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Research Article

Sport and International Relations: Qatari Soft Power and Foreign Policy Making

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Abstract

Sport plays a significant role in politics and international relations. However, the relationship between soft power and hosting a sports mega-event such as the Olympic Games, or the FIFA world cup is unclear. Most literature that has examined the role of sport in Qatari soft power adheres to the Realist School of international relations theory. It has tended to emphasize the size of the country in understanding what motivates its engagement in sports diplomacy. This paper attempts to move beyond this realist analysis of soft power by drawing on the post-structuralist-interpretive approach and discourse theory. This perspective better accounts for how sports diplomacy is used in different cultural contexts. In arguing that Qatar represents particular cultural and historical traditions, and sports define the country's distinct political identity, the paper looks at how Qatar has exercised soft power through sports diplomacy and hosting major international sports events. The paper will analyze formal state discourses surrounding Qatar's decision to host FIFA World Cup 2022, and we discuss how this use of sports diplomacy is helping achieve several Qatari foreign policy goals.

Keywords: Foreign policy; International Relations; Sport; Soft Power; Discourse; Policies

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مقالة بحثية

الرياضة والعلاقات الدولية: القوة الناعمة القطرية وصناعة السياسة الخارجية

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ملخص

تلعب الرياضة دورًا مُهمًّا في السياسة والعلاقات الدولية، لكن العلاقة بين القوة الناعمة واستضافة الفعاليات الرياضية الضخمة مثل الألعاب الأولمبية وكأس العالم غير واضحة. تتقيد غالبية الأدبيات المتوفرة حول دور الرياضة في القوة الناعمة القطرية بالمدرسة الواقعية لنظرية العلاقات الدولية، وتميل إلى تأكيد حجم الدولة في فهم دوافع البلد للانخراط في الدبلوماسية الرياضية. تحاول هذه الورقة تجاوز هذا الطرح باعتمادها على مقاربة ما بعد بنيوية تأويلية ونظرية الخطاب، تأخذ بالاعتبار التباينات في الكيفية التي تستخدم بها الدبلوماسية الرياضية في سياقات ثقافية مختلفة. ومن خلال اعتبار أن قطر تمثل تاريخًا وتقليدا ثقافيا متميزا، تشكل ضمنه الرياضة هوية سياسية للدولة، تنظر هذه الورقة في الكيفية التي تمارس بها دولة قطر القوة الناعمة من خلال الدبلوماسية الرياضية واستضافة الفعاليات الرياضية الكبرى. تحلل الورقة الخطابات الرسمية المرافقة لاستضافة قطر لكأس العالم فيفا 2022، وتناقش كيف أن استخدام الدبلوماسية الرياضية ساهم في تحقيق العديد من الأهداف الدبلوماسية الخارجية للدولة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السياسة الخارجية، العلاقات الدولية، الرياضة، القوة الناعمة، الخطاب، السياسات

للاقتباس: الدوسري، نوف، «الرياضة والعلاقات الدولية: القوة الناعمة القطرية وصناعة السياسة الخارجية»، **مجلة تجسير**، المجلد الثالث، العدد 2، 2021، عدد خاص حول «الثقافة أداةً لصناعة القوة الناعمة»

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© 2021، الدوسري، الجهة المرخص لها: دار نشر جامعة قطر. تم نشر هذه المقالة البحثية وفقًا لشروط Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0). تسمح هذه الرخصة بالاستخدام غير التجاري، وينبغي نسبة العمل إلى صاحبه، مع بيان أي تعديلات عليه. كما تتيح حرية نسخ، وتوزيع، ونقل العمل بأي شكل من الأشكال، أو بأية وسيلة، ومزجه وتحويله والبناء عليه، طالما يُنسب العمل الأصلي إلى المؤلف.

1. Introduction

Sport may be conceived as a neutral concept that is not relevant to politics; but this is not the case. The nature of sport as a social practice among individuals, and states assert the basic premise that there is a relationship between sport and politics. Sport matters and the role of sport in politics can be seen when some "countries have gone to war over sport, fought for sovereign recognition through sport, and that people around the world have it as a daily part of their lives"[1]. However, sport as a phenomenon remains understudied in international relations. As "the field of international relations is traditionally concerned with state interactions, and political structures in which these interactions take place, international sport (governed by a collection of distinctly private trans-national organizations) is seemingly excluded from such analyses"[2].

Nonetheless, there is a growing body of literature on sport and politics in international relations, which takes into consideration of the role of non-state actors, and their relationship with global politics. "It also necessitates a basic reconsideration of sport's place in the international system. Specifically, moving from an analytical approach which assumes states alone possess authority to one in which an array of actors can potentially possess authority requires recognizing private sport organizations' autonomy and, by extension, their potential to possess and exert authority"[3]. For example, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) is a non-state actor, which has a role in international relations by working as a transnational sport governance, while the hosting countries of these sports' mega events produce, or represent the different meanings and strategies of soft power. This explains the vying between different countries for hosting sports' mega events, as they have various political and economic benefits for the hosting state.

Scholars study the concept of soft power in sport studies in an attempt to study the lure of sports mega events. In most cases, studies show how hosting sports mega events can boost the country's image, making its cultural and political values more attractive. In short, sport as a soft power can be regarded as states' foreign policy tool. The paper will shed light on the role of identity and discourse in the subject of sport as soft power. Taking Qatar host of FIFA World Cup 2022 as an example, the paper suggests understanding Qatar uses of sport as a soft power through states formal discourses on hosting FIFA World Cup 2022. The paper use of post-structuralist interpretive approach is to move away from Joseph Ney's fixed concept of soft power. The political identity of each state represents the different subject positions of states on the role of sport in international relations. Thus, it reveals the role of identity discourse, and its influence in generating different understandings and practices of the meaning of soft power among different state's political identities and cultures.

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1 - Victor D. Cha (2009) A Theory of Sport and Politics, The International Journal of the History of Sport, 26:11, 1581-1610, DOI: 10.1080/09523360903132972.
See more: Allison, L. (1986) Sport and politics. In L. Allison (ed.) The Politics of Sport. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 1–26.

2 - Scott R. Jedlicka (2018) Appropriated authority: a theory of transnational sport governance, International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 10:4, 637-652, DOI:10.1080/19406940.2018.1490334.

3 - Ibid.

1.1. Research problem and question

The relationship between soft power and hosting sports mega events is problematic. It is "somewhat unclear how to measure the soft power generated through being a host of the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup"[4]. Furthermore, the meaning and definition of soft power is not completely determined. All scholars in the field do somehow not acknowledge the definition of soft power proposed by Joseph Nye. The latter defined soft power as "the ability to achieve goals through attraction rather than coercion (Nye,1990)"[5]. Nonetheless, some scholars see Nye's definition of soft power not clearly defined. There is even little agreement on how to define soft power, as Nye's definition of soft power miss the point of how and under what conditions soft power can be defined. Furthermore, "there is little consensus as to whether 'soft power' is a universal resource across ideologies, geographies, economies and cultures or simply a notion developed in, and pertaining to, the 'west'"[6]. This brings us to the fact that the meaning of soft power may be a product of imperialism and imperialist powers like the U.S. Hence, Nye's neoliberal perspective on the definition of soft power is limited in understating the meaning, and function of soft power for different countries with different political cultures.

In 2010, Qatar won the bid for FIFA 2022 World Cup. Since that time and up until now there were a number of questions raised around the role of **sport as a soft power in Qatar's foreign policy.** The hosting of sports mega events brought policy analysts to make a close focus on Qatar's soft power and the role of sport, and sport diplomacy in Qatar's foreign policy. However, most of **the literature on the role of sport as a soft power in Qatar's foreign policy making is based on the Realist School, which is taking (state smallness) as an analytical category in understanding the reasons for small states participation in sports mega events. This means that it is focusing on (state) capacity and its wealth (material power) in pushing against the vulnerability of smallness**[7]. Nevertheless, there is less work done on the relationship between smallness and the neoliberal paradigm in international relations relating to sport and sports mega events. Realist School emphasize that the reason behind Qatar hosting of FIFA World Cup is that Qatar is a small state, and it seeks to avoid its vulnerabilities and insecurities. However, if we move beyond the Realist school reasoning, different interpretations may appear; one of which is that Qatar, like any other Western state or a rising power like China, is using the opportunities of sport as soft power within the neoliberal global context. As within this context, "the neoliberal paradigm gives less emphasis to capabilities and more to institutions and the institutionalization of interests. It takes account of a broader range of political actors including non-governmental organizations

4 - Bairner, Alan, John Kelly, and Jung Woo Lee, eds. *Routledge handbook of sport and politics*. Taylor & Francis, 2016.

5 - Grix, Jonathan, and Paul Michael Brannagan. "Of mechanisms and myths: conceptualising states'"soft power" strategies through sports mega-events." *Diplomacy & statecraft* 27, no. 2 (2016): pp. 251-272.

6 - Grix, J., Brannagan, P. M., & Houlihan, B. (2015). Interrogating States' Soft Power Strategies: A Case Study of Sports Mega-Events in Brazil and the UK.Global Society, 29 (3), pp. 463-479.

7 - However, according to Barrie Houlihan & Jinming Zheng: "To explore the sport politics of small states purely within the realist, paradigm would be unwise as there are plenty of examples from mainstream IR of small states confounding the assumptions made about them and demonstrating their capacity to pursue successfully their interests, often collectively, in the face of major power opposition. Barrie Houlihan & Jinming Zheng (2015) Small states: sport and politics at the margin, International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 7:3, 329-344, DOI:10.1080/19406940.2014.959032.

(NGOs) such as the IOC, Sport Accord and Ifs.[8] While small states share many of the concerns of large states when it comes to self-determination and securing their borders, many had more concerns over their trade because of their narrow economic base, their small geographical and their population size as well. Small states, therefore, are looking for new arenas to pursue their national sports interests through international organizations and international policy regimes. Hence, the neoliberal paradigm supports the examination of states move beyond state to state relations to pursue their interests.

This paper, therefore, will move beyond the Realist School traditional analysis of sport as soft power of small states politics. It will depend on analyzing the **role of sport as a soft power in Qatar's foreign policy making by using a poststructuralist interpretative approach focusing on Qatar's discourse for hosting FIFA 2022 World Cup.**

Soft power discourse and practice reveal particular tensions across contexts where some aspects of power are more salient than others. The differences included the relevance of human agency in international affairs compared to other forms of actorhood, the conception of the "subject" for soft power interventions, and the cultural specificity of symbolic inducements and other forms of international rhetoric. Soft power articulations contain a host of not necessarily stable assumptions about politics, agents, and the utility of communication modalities[9].

Based on this states' sport discourse as a soft power in international relations is intersubjective, a country's sport as a soft power discourse in particular context, define the rules of the game to condition politics. This means moving beyond Nye's centric and fixed definition of soft power to understand the role of sport as soft power in different contexts and forms. So, in hosting sports mega events the question may be "how do international actors articulate the art of the possible?"(Guzzini, 2005). The translation of a country's soft power articulations into policies and programs is the configuration of this particular country meaning of soft power. "Soft power gains meaning in its articulation both discursively and in material resources put to use with anticipated effect"[10]. Hence, soft power cannot be seen as an abstraction. The argument around the role of small states like Qatar and other countries participation in hosting sports mega events is actually an argument about the meaning and function of soft power. The international political discourse on hosting sports mega events is no longer a discourse bounded within the Western states boundaries. As sports mega events in itself become to take place in nonwestern countries by the power of discursive political struggles. Therefore, when discussing the use of sport as a soft power in states foreign policy making it is important to state here that: "the invoking and specification of soft power refers to an expected ontology of influence and contestation outside the austere geometry of material power –but where global controversy may be located and resolved"[11]. The paper seeks to discuss the following question: if Qatar uses of sport as a soft power in foreign policy is generating a

8 - Barrie Houlihan & Jinming Zheng (2015) Small states: sport and politics at the margin, International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 7:3, 329-344, DOI: 10.1080/19406940.2014.959032

9 - Hayden, Craig. *The rhetoric of soft power: Public diplomacy in global contexts*. Lexington Books, 2012, p. 63.

10 - Ibid, p. 54.

11 - Ibid, p. 55.

Qatari soft power, how then can we understand the role of sport as a Qatari soft power in foreign policy and diplomacy? The aim of this paper is to analyze Qatari soft power by unpacking the role of identity, and discourse in hosting FIFA World Cup 2022.

1.2. Research Theory

The paper will depend on post-structuralist discourse theory. Discourse theory: "begins with the assumption that all objects and actions are meaningful, and that their meaning is a product of historically specific systems of rules. It thus inquiries into the way in which social practices construct and contest the discourses that constitute social reality. These practices are possible because systems of meaning are contingent and can never completely exhaust a social field of meaning"[12]. Discourse theory takes discourses more than set of ideas and beliefs that policy makers or social movements share. Discourse theorists stress on the discursive aspect of all social practices and objects. Furthermore, discourse theory rejects rationalist and positivist approaches to political analysis. It "takes its lead from interpretive methods of social inquiry in which emphasis is placed on understanding and explaining the emergence and logic of discourses, and socially constructed identities they confer upon social agents"[13].

Discourse theory provides "novel interpretations of events and practices by elucidating their meaning, it does so by analyzing the way in which political forces and social actors construct meanings within incomplete and undecidable social structures. This is achieved by examining the particular structures within which social agents take decisions and articulate hegemonic projects and discursive formations"[14]. Not only discourse theory works on problematizing fixed concepts but also it seeks to examine social practices and logics in larger historical and social contexts to understand and critique existing practices, and social meanings, which will serve as an opportunity to provide alternatives to such practices. **The role of sport in international relations offers an arena for state actors to socially construct their identities.** Hence, sport as a soft power exist within Arab and Gulf states foreign policy discourse.

For example, in the context of the 50s and the 60s, which witnessed Pan Arabism[15] movement, sport was used to reinforce Arab identity and unity. "The establishment of the Arab Games began with the Arab League's first General Secretary, Abdulrahman Azzam, years before the first Games were held in 1953. Up until 1965, the Arab Games played an important role as a vehicle of communication regarding the ideals and aspirations of a Pan-Arab movement"[16].

During this context, Arab Games was promoting for the Pan Arabism movement, as the documents of the Arab Games emphasized that sport, more than politics, will be able to unite Arab people. Arab

12 - Howarth, D. R. (2010). *Discourse*. Buckingham u.a.: Open Univ. Press, p. 8.

13 - Norval, D. R. H. A. J., Stavrakakis, Y., & Ehrlich, A. (2000). *Discourse theory and political analysis: Identities, hegemonies and social change*. Manchester University Press, p. 7.

14 - Howarth, D. R. (2010). *Discourse*. Buckingham u.a.: Open Univ. Press, p. 129

15 - A form of Arab nationalism suggesting that 'all Arabs should live in a single great Arab nation state'. Khalidi, 'Arab Nationalism'. 1366.

16 - Hong, Fan, ed. *Sport in the Middle East: Power, Politics, Ideology and Religion*. Routledge, 2017, p. 12.

Games served as an easy way to plant the meaning of Arab identity and unity among youths at that time, therefore reinforcing the meaning of Arab imagined community. Arab Games represents Arab countries as one nation, in one region that has been divided and weakened by colonial powers. Hence, Sport in Pan Arabism functioned as a tool of resistance against imperial powers. For example, "the boycott of the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games by Lebanon, Egypt, and Iraq, in protest against the tripartite invasion of Egypt by British, French, and Israeli troops, was the first instance (and may be the only example) of a joint Arab sport-based diplomatic action against foreign military intervention in the region"[17].

Even though Arab Games used to resist colonial powers in representing Arab nations, the first Arab Games invited all Arab countries; even the ones that had not achieved independence, yet. Nevertheless, "to invite these countries and to document this in writing, has an anti-colonial, revolutionary quality. At the same time, the list is a sore reminder of the fragmentation of the Arab world"[18]. Therefore, Arab Games in this historical political context symbolized a hegemony of Arab identity, and Arab political independence against colonial powers. This demanded using sport as a tool for unifying Arab and cultural identity. For example, the first four Arab Games "established a set of cultural practices to celebrate Arab identity. The lectures and speeches mentioned in the printed documents can be seen as practices to bind the Arab people together through a common past"[19].

The political discourse of ***al uruba*** **العروبة** and its political role in Arab sports events is interesting to note. The Arab Games is the only international game that openly declared its political goals and aspirations. Thus, the ceremonies and speeches of these sports events carried with it a number of political connotations pertaining to *al uruba*. For example, in the first Games, the Egyptian President Mohammed Naguib through his opening ceremony speech emphasized the role of Egypt as the mother of all Arabs, and its ability also to lead Arab countries. He stated that: "I am very pleased to welcome the Arab Youth and their friends, who have come to join us in Egypt. I hope they consider this land as their home. They are neither our guests nor us their hosts We are all one family"[20]. At the same time Abdul-Khaleh Hassoma, General Secretary of the Arab League gave a speech that which delivered with political connotations on the role of Arab identity and Arab states unity. He stated: "you [athletes] have to know, any single shot from your gun, or kick from your leg and all the movement from your body in this place, it is the power of your body, it is the power of your Arab nation"[21]. The contextualization of Arab sport needs further study and analysis, in its importance for the meaning of Arab political identity and Arab unity. As these political concepts still exist in Arab politics today. How much sport is unifying Arabs is a question to be raised. Furthermore, the speeches mentioned earlier by Egyptian president and General Secretary of Arab League evidently show that political leaders articulate political goals and future

17 - Bairner, Alan, John Kelly, and Jung Woo Lee, eds. *Routledge handbook of sport and politics*. Taylor & Francis, 2016.

18 - Hong, Fan, p. 5.

19 - Ibid, P. 5.

20 - Ibid, p. 7. The author also explained the meaning of the word family in Arab culture: "The family ideal represented a common basic societal structure in the Arab world: the family shares the same past, it nourishes the same culture, like language and religion, and it fights for the same cause".

21 - Ibid, p. 8.

aspirations in Sports events discourse. It is noteworthy that "these speeches were highly political as the speakers presented the sporting festival as a training ground to tackle challenging tasks in the future. The speeches politically appropriated the physical performance and the physical ability of the athletes and gave them a meaning that went well beyond the mere competition in the stadium"[22].

2. *Khaliji* Cup: the Rise of *Khaliji* National Identity in Sport

The idea of making *Khaliji* Cup (Gulf Cup) was initiated by Saudi Amir Khaled al Faysal, but Bahrain worked on making it happen. The Gulf Cup is happening every two years, and Bahrain hosted the first Khaliji Cup in 1970[23].

The idea of *Khaliji* Cup emphasizes the relationship between sport and politics. As *Khaliji* states find themselves compelled to represent their distinct sub regional Arab identities vis-à-vis Arab identity. While the Arab Games promoted Arabness, and the importance of Arab political identity and unity, Khaliji Cup also promoted unity of *Khaliji* states, and *Khaliji* identity.

Aside from seeking to present political identities of *Khaliji* states against the identity of Arab states in sports events, Gulf states also tried to use sport as a diplomatic tool with their *Khaliji* neighbors. Nevertheless, sport was and is not a good tool for ending Gulf political problems diplomatically. It only serves to keep the situation calm between Gulf states, and to boost an air of collective national identity among Gulf nations.

The *Khaliji* Cup as a soft power is used at one point for sending peaceful messages and at other point used for sending messages of resistance or rejection to political circumstances. For example, the Iraqi team was banned from participating in Gulf Cup, because of the Second Gulf War. Nevertheless, how much sport helped to bring peace to *Khaliji-Khaliji* political struggles? The answer is not much. For example, the Gulf diplomatic crisis, which is the first crisis in Gulf states history, to serve as threat of dismantling the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Saudi, UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt took the step of blockading Qatar in June 2017. At the same year, the 23 *Khaliji* Cup was supposed to be in Doha, but the blockading states refused to participate, which made Kuwait host the event as mediating Gulf state between the disputing countries. However, in 2019, Qatar was able to host the 24 *Khaliji* Cup, and the blockading states' teams participated even though the crisis between Qatar and the blockading Gulf states was not yet resolved. In this case "Sport is a diplomatic lubricant"[24], but it has some limitations.

Qatar witnessed three years of blockade and no *Khaliji* Cup served to soften the diplomatic crisis between Qatar and the blockading states. On the contrary, the participation of blockading states in Doha *Khaliji* 24 revealed how Gulf states football is still related to Gulf politics and international relations. The national representation of each state and its distinct political identity and ideology in sports events revealed that there is a struggle of political identity and ideology among Gulf states. This revealed more

22 - Ibid.

23 - See a short video of this historical period : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWycVeu46UU

24 - Cha, Victor D. "A theory of sport and politics," *The international journal of the history of sport* 26, no. 11 (2009): 1581-1610.

clearly, when *Khaliji* Cup took place during Qatar Crisis. At this time, an air of clash against Qatar national identity and ideology brought to place by the leaders of the blockade. During this crisis however, Qatar motto for 24 *Khaliji* Cup was: "welcome all in Doha for all". While an Emirati scholar wrote in his twitter account that: "the decision of Saudi, United Arab Emirate (UAE), and Bahrain to participate in 24 *Khaliji* Cup is a political decision more than sportive decision"[25]. The effects of the Gulf crisis spilled over the Asian Cup(AFC) which was hosted by UAE in 2019. The UAE banned the Qatari fans to enter to its land and cheer Qatari team. "The match between the Qatari and Emirati teams in the semi-finals of the Asian Championship also witnessed unfortunate events in which the "Qatari" players were mistreated by Emirati fans, which cost the UAE a double penalty; financial and administrative, imposed by the AFC game".

3. Research Methodology

Post-structuralism interpretive approach in IR

Post structuralism "focuses on language and meaning". It helps in re-interpreting and rearranging the already given structure of reality. In international relations, therefore the language of leaders and their concept of the world is important in understanding the meaning of their political relationships and their political actions[26]. Moreover, according to Gadamer, "understanding international relations is, one might recognize, first of all an attempt to make sense of intercultural relations where language, social practice, and social meanings meet and challenge each other (Farrands, Chris 2010)"[27]. The role of sport as a soft power is best be understood from a post-structuralist interpretive approach in IR. There are two reasons for using this approach:

The first reason is pertaining to the unresolved nature of soft power as a concept, and as a practice in IR. The second reason is pertaining to deconstructing and re-interpreting non-western post- colonial states uses of soft power in international relations.

Post-structuralism advocates for an approach that is different from both traditional realist and idealist perspectives in international relations. Post-structuralism offers significant understanding on the "construction of the national-international dichotomy, the relationship between national identity and security politics, the discursive character of the concept of security, and the late-modernist transformation of security (Lene, Hansen 1997)"[28].

By working on re-reading number of things (sovereignty, states) in international relations, it seeks through the use of language to unsettle the already established social reality. Language is social actors' tool for holding different human interactions. Social actors use language to communicate a specific idea

25 – «بطولة كأس الخليج: هل ستكون كرة القدم مفتاح الحل لرفع الحصار عن قطر؟»، فرانس 24. 25/11/2019. https://bit.ly/3k65Y2V

26 - Sayin, Y., Davut, A. T. E. S., & SAYİN, Y. (2012). Poststructuralism and the analysis of international relations. *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 11(2), pp. 12-25.

27 - Ibid.

28 - Ibid.

which translates the different meanings of their social actions.

"It plays a 'bridge' role between thought and action; it reflects the humanity's conception and perception world. The approach that comes with post-structuralism is that we should save from stable patterns and review our perception on language and discourse"[29].

Depending on discourse theory, the paper will be using the discourse analysis method.

Discourse analysis is "the process of analyzing signifying practices as discursive forms" (Howarth 2009). Thus, in analyzing discourses, the focus is on both linguistic and non-linguistic materials. For example, interviews, reports, ideas, "even organizations and institutions as 'texts' or 'writings' that enable subjects to experience the world of objects, words, and practices" (Howarth 2009).

4. Problematizing soft power in IR

Joseph Ney's definition of soft power states that soft power existed as a concept in international relations and foreign policy making in 1990. The literature of soft power that depends on Joseph Nye's definition eschewed the idea that soft power existed in western and non-western states long before his definition. It is noteworthy to state that there is some sort of distinction in the interpretation of soft power literature between western (world powers) and non-western states. The former is described as more legitimate while soft power of non-western states is more questionable. More importantly, scholars use of Ney's definition of soft power, means making different states and different international actors fit to Ney's concept of soft power, while overlooking how such concept is evolved or generated in different states and contexts. Thus, looking at soft power production of meaning and function in sport and international relations can be seen through different political contexts. For instance, states use of FIFA as a soft power tool during colonialism, and its significance in the power relationships between the colonized and the colonizer.

The FIFA organization was established with 7 members only in 1904, now it constitutes 200 members. Born during Imperialist expansion in the world, it eventually became for postcolonial states in Latin America, Asia, Africa as a tool for national self-determination and a symbol of national identities against imperial forces in world stage. For example, African football is framed totally by colonialism and the postcolonial experience. Football came to Africa on the wings of empires. European colonial administrators, military personnel, diplomats, traders and itinerant workers and fortune-seekers introduced the game throughout the continent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Murray 1994: 229–56)[30].

In Ghana, for instance football came to be known by the locals through British sailors. The game was not exclusive to colonial white elite who were having few expatriates in compare to the locals. Thus, it became popular with the local population who played against their colonial masters. The use of FIFA

29 - Ibid.

30 - Bale, John, and Mike Cronin, eds. *Sport and Postcolonialism*. Routledge, 2020, p. 182.

today as a soft power by non-western states in international relations is in the context of post-colonialism; significantly, in the context of emerging powers in global economy. These emerging powers, "as fast developing economies have become game changers and more influential in global economic affairs. They also influence the governance of international economic organizations such as the World Trade Organization and economic summits such as the G20 and the G8"[31]. These states use of FIFA World Cup as a soft power tool, not only because of material resources, but also because of their non-material resources. States' political ideologies, identities, and political values have a role in influencing power relationships in the international stage. Thus, understanding emerging powers host of FIFA depends on decolonizing the centered concept and definition of soft power by Joseph Nye.

There is a significant aspect behind the meaning of soft power from Arab and Gulf state perspective, Qatar as an Arab Gulf state host for FIFA 2022 stand as an example of this.

The fact that Qatar has begun partaking part in world politics economic and political power relationships, which determines its soft power and the kind of state political representations it is projecting in international relations. Qatar hosting FIFA 2022 has to do more with the new roles non-western states like Qatar aspire to seek through acting as a rising power in international relations. That is to say, Qatar participation in hosting FIFA 2022 is about re-centering the story of non-western Qatari, identity, power and ideology in the international political system.

The literature of Gulf states analysis of sport as a soft power, especially pertaining to Qatar host of FIFA2022 depend on Realist mainstream approach of foreign policy analysis, which depends on Realism in defining Qatar's soft power; more specifically, the use of Joseph's Ney's definition of soft power. Nye's concept of soft power is being used by realist scholars in international relations, although the concept is mostly about non-material power rather than material power. "Soft power describes the impact of norms, ideas, and culture on the capacity to effect change. Hence, soft power is not easily reconciled with Realist assumptions about international relations"[32].

Nye's definition of soft power is complicated and vague. For him, soft power operates between international actors, over varied amounts of time, and very often reflects constitutive elements of the actors themselves. Nye's basic notion of "getting others to want to do what you want without the resort to material compulsion" gets complicated quickly when one considers just what things (resources, processes, etc.) incentivize action and indeed, what relations constitutes competitive actors in a field of international relations (Barnett, M., & Duvall, R. 2005).

The question is how Nye's definition of soft power is limiting our understanding of Qatari soft power? "In Nye's *The Future of Power*, he defines soft power as: "the ability to get preferred outcomes through the co-optive means of agenda- setting, persuasion, and attraction"[33]. For him, "soft power

31 - Grix, Jonathan, and Donna Lee. "Soft power, sports mega-events and emerging states: The lure of the politics of attraction." *Global society* 27, no. 4 (2013): pp. 521-536

32 - Hayden, Craig. *The rhetoric of soft power: Public diplomacy in global contexts*. Lexington Books, 2012, p. 31.

33 - Nye, Joseph S. The future of power. Public Affairs, 2011, p.16.

involves an ability to get preferred outcomes through specific behaviors (agenda setting, persuasion, attraction). That draw upon specific types of resources (culture, political ideas, and foreign policy legitimacy)[34].

Nye's definition provides that power as soft power can be materialized into practices coming from resources, and producing some certain outcomes. He stated that there is a need for power conversion in order to know how soft power works, which means, "how international actors get from resources to behavioral outcomes"[35]. Still, Nye's concept of soft power is set to represent a specific or ideal model for soft power that resulted from a specific western historical event related to the U.S. For example, the transformation of U.S global leadership at the end of the Cold War, and continues to provide justification for more recent reinvigoration of US public diplomacy. Yet the concept has chained out to inform, explicitly otherwise, the strategies of other international actors. And many of the analytical problems with soft power- such as the somewhat unclear specification of soft power's function and resources-stem from its origins as a corrective of U.S foreign policy[36].

Thus, Nye's definition of soft power does not take soft power to be myriad concept, rather his definition is set to give a fixed meaning of soft power. Furthermore, his definition is also opposite to how soft power is spreading as a global phenomenon and producing different strategies for managing soft power in different contexts. Furthermore, "when policy makers, pundits, and other public intellectuals talk about soft power, they endow the notion with an operative significance that extends beyond the straightforward explanation originally voiced by Nye. Likewise, programs like public diplomacy are also encoded with an intrinsic sense of ideal modes for communication, intended audience, and outcomes"[37].

The international report: Soft Power 30 Index of 2019[38] does not list Qatar in its index. The index is about the use of soft power as a tool in foreign policy. The index work is based on Joseph Nye's definition of soft power and his methodology of soft power conversion into desired outcomes (Nye's model for converting soft power). The index focusing on a model for understanding soft power means that there is an ideal model for understanding the work of soft power. This ideal model is limited by the definition of Nye's soft power. On the other hand, the Global soft power index 2021 ranked Qatar 26th globally. However, Craig Hayden's study of different countries' soft power shows that there are different conceptions and uses of soft power. For example, culture may signify a range of possible interpretations, and thus be expected to be pertinent to different kinds of influence. While culture plays a significant role in Chinese arguments about soft power as a kind of globally resonant heritage, culture in the Japanese context reflects a capacity to adapt to shifting global cultural tastes. Culture, in other words, represents different mechanisms for soft power that in turn rely on different communication modalities (media, technologies, etc.)[39].

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34 - Hayden, Craig, p. 29.

35 - Ibid, p. 29.

36 - Ibid, p. 30.

37 - Ibid, p. 31.

38 - The Soft Power 30 Index. https://softpower30.com/

39 - Hayden, p. 60.

Nye's definition of soft power takes power as a defined concept and typological concept. However, what Nye's overlooks is that soft power resides in discourse, thus soft power is contingent. That there is the need to " understand how soft power is both understood and identified by actors as soft power in particular circumstances lest its mechanisms work in entirely predictable ways in an uncontroversial explanation or set of expectations"[40].

The analysis of actors' articulation of soft power is important. Hence, the interpretation of power and the interplay between: subjects, context and discourse. Therefore, the paper work is drawing on the constructivists and poststructuralist literature in the study of soft power.

According to the constructivist school of International Relations, power cannot only be understood in material terms, but also as the "capacity to reproduce the intersubjective meanings that constitute social structures and actors alike" (Hopf, 1998: 178). To understand what interests motivate actors to act, constructivists highlight the importance of understanding what identities these actors attribute to themselves and others (Hopf, 1998: 175; Wendt, 1999: 122). Another fundamental constructivist tenet is the mutually constitutive relationship between agency and structure. While it is the intersubjective structure that ultimately determines what meanings and identities actors attribute to themselves and others, their own actions and particularly interactions with other actors constantly shape and reproduce this structure (Hopf, 1998: 175)"[41].

For example, Stefano Guzzini draws constructivist methodology of studying power in discourse and practice. He argues that analysis of power should examine the "performative aspects of the concept" by arguing for attention to "what does power do? (Guzzini, 2005)"[42].

Nye dealt with the concept of soft power as an unproblematic concept. He proposes that the concept is agency driven as actors use their resources to reach certain outcomes. However, soft power has to do with relationships in communication, networking which prompt for the actor to project their own subjective understanding of the meaning of soft power in international relations; meaning it is an intersubjective task between international actors.

Making sense of soft power as evidenced in strategic discourse and programs that are justified in the terms of soft power. Discourse and policies represent generative assumptions about the resources and behaviors that make up the soft power concept contingent sets of policy justifications and worldviews from which programs can be derived. Each nation state case reflects a different "conversion" process between resources and behaviors. Conversion, as Nye's asserts reflects an actor's "contextual intelligence"-ahow soft power agents design interventions that reconcile resources and outcomes"43.

Following on this understanding, soft power can be different in different contexts by taking soft

40 - Ibid, p. 54.

41 - Simpanen, T. T. (2018). Soft Power and the Social Construction of Collective Identity. Why Does the European Union Fail to Attract the British Public? P. 11.

42 - Hayden, p. 54.

43 - Ibid, p. 56.

power as discursive practice. **Looking at Qatar's policies and programs as an argument, and as representations of states political identity and ideology**. It also supports the study of soft power as a genealogical interpretation of a state soft power, values, historical and cultural experience that is influencing the actor's definition and choice of soft power resources (strategic preferences). Thus, the paper when referring to Qatari soft power, is neither referring Ney's fixed concept of soft power, nor any ideal model of soft power.

5. Deconstructing Western narrative on Qatar's use of sport as a soft power

Qatar's political identity in hosting sports mega events serves to be a counter hegemony over the western meaning of sport as a soft power in the sports mega events. That sport as a soft power is a tool and a resource for non-western states also. The counter hegemony of Qatar's political identity and ideology demonstrates that the very meaning of sport as a soft power is not going to be necessarily constructed and diffused by the first world countries. Since football is originally a European game, and that playing symbolically in western field means following the western rules of the game in international relations. This, however, is no longer the case, especially after seeing the different political roles Qatar is taking before and after FIFA2022 World Cup bid. Qatari sport soft power is a counter hegemony against the neoliberal and the orientalist political narratives about Qatar specifically, and the Arab and Muslim world generally.

Such colonial narratives do appear in the twenty-first century. There was a difference between Western and Arab media representation of Qatar in its bid for hosting FIFA World Cup. For example, both the Guardian and the Telegraph newspapers' emphasis on us-them narrative and orientalist images of World Cup after the announcement that FIFA is heading to Middle East (Griffin, Thomas, 2019). It is worth noting that "over the last decade or so, the Gulf state has been persistently reported as little more than a dusty outlier on the edge of the civilized world, one whose inhabitants, riven by double-dealing and corruption, clearly 'oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race" (Said,1987)[44].

"Sport offers a symbolic, high-profile, and yet tactful tool for diplomatic statecraft that can accomplish what a standard embassy demarche could not dream of accomplishing"[45]. Qatar sports diplomacy is paving its way to world stage by trying to shatter western stereotypes about the Arab and Muslim world. Qatar is working on presenting a counter narrative of the ability of non-western countries (especially from Arab and Muslim world) in hosting sports mega events vis-à-visWestern suspicion of such states' ability for hosting sports mega events.

Qatar sports diplomacy provides the new narrative of what mega sports events look like in the Arab world. Qatar is using its political identity and political context to pull the rug out from under Western centers of power in giving meaning and definition of sports mega events in a non-Western world. This may disturb Western centers of powers as they want to preserve their own model of sports mega events.

44 - Griffin, Thomas Ross. "National identity, social legacy and Qatar 2022: the cultural ramifications of FIFA's first Arab World Cup." *Soccer & Society* 20, no. 7-8 (2019): pp. 1000-1013.

45 - Cha, Victor D. "A theory of sport and politics." The international journal of the history of sport 26, no. 11 (2009): pp. 1581-1610.

A model that is based on Western culture and values is moving to non-Western countries. Qatar sports diplomacy is a hegemony against sport as Eurocentric.

The Eurocentric narrative deems Qatar as a small state wants to have a voice in the world. A state with no history of sport and sportive culture is using its vast wealth for hosting mega events to generate more wealth and prestige. An old strategy by white colonial discourse of belittling non-western states in depicting non-western states as a threat to the west cultural values and model of sport mega events hosting. The way the host of Qatar is depicted in western narrative "represents an ideological agenda with little relevance to the actual culture of Qatar and their exposure challenges the reductive hierarchies of neo-colonial racism that they promote; with little relevance to the actual culture of Qatar and their exposure challenges, the reductive hierarchies of neo-colonial racism that they promote"[46].

FIFA as a sport mega event does not only signify a football game, it is to signify also modernity, especially western's definition of modernity. However, the rise of emerging non-western sates in hosting sport mega events serves to be a political act of redefining modernity, which entails that their behavior is a political intervention against established international political norms and cultures of sports mega events. In *The United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain as a Modern Sport Hub*, Bromber and Krawietz argue that Gulf participation in sports events do affirm their prestige in the world, and that they work on bringing their commodified identity and history to make the west recognize or approve them as modern national states. However, this is not the case exactly, because modernity is contested as much as legacies are contested. If there is no agreement between states on the meaning of modernity, how can such states wait for approval?

6. Qatari soft power: An argument for soft power in World politics

"Policies are representations of shared meanings, yet also sustain such meanings. Policies and strategies are more than rational, calculated adaptions to situations: policy inevitably reflects historical experience and cultural attitudes. If policies are formed from such constitutive elements, then what gets "constituted" in the way that different countries argue for soft power…"[47]. Qatar participation in hosting FIFA 2022 World Cup demonstrate that Qatar has its own argument about using sport as soft power in international relations. Qatar is no different than China, which "strives to (re)-build and project its soft power through communication"[48].

The Qatari communication among international actors is an argument that reveals the role of Qatari soft power in international relations. A role that will not be similar to China, or any other state that participated in hosting sports mega events. Thus, having an index of soft power is misleading. 'Guzzini draws inspiration from the pragmatic linguistic, which leads him to argue that conceptual analysis of

46 - Griffin, R. "Football in the Hands of the Other: Qatar's World Cup in the British Broadsheet Press." *Arab World Geographer* 20, no. 2–3 (2017): pp. 170-182.

47 - Hayden, p. 57.

48 - Wang, J. (Ed.). (2011). *Soft power in China: Public diplomacy through communication*. Springer, p. 1.

power (or in this case soft power) is not so much about what exactly is meant by the concept, but what it achieves in communication"[49].

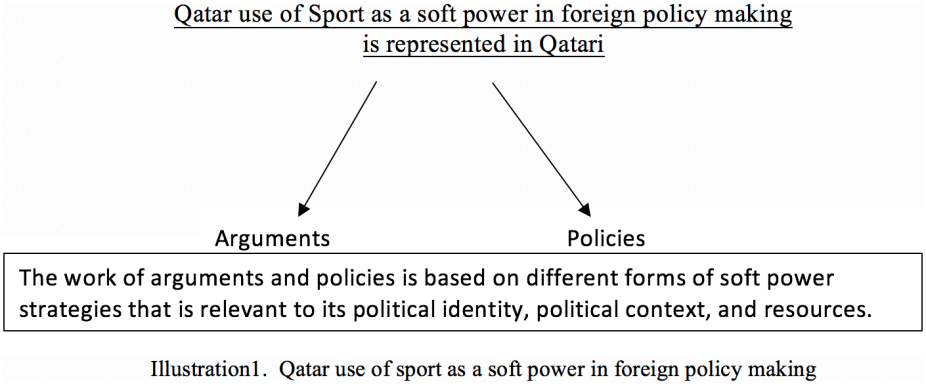

Figure 1. Qatar use of sport as a soft power in foreign policy making.

The Realist School policy analysts depend on Nye's fixed meaning of soft power which is: to make others do what I want through attraction (and persuasion) rather than take coercive actions. However, what is attractiveness for Doha? How Doha is going to make some ideas about its political, and national identity, culture…etc., attractive for the world in its sports diplomacy? It is noteworthy to refer to the work of Janice Bially Mattern: "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics", in which he provided that attraction is a form of force in international politics. In "the context of world politics, it makes far more sense to model attraction as a relationship that is constructed through representational force—a nonphysical but nevertheless coercive form of power that is exercised through language"[50].

Qatar and other emerging powers in world politics use of soft power is not about persuading state actors in world politics, their participation and uses of sport soft power in sports mega events is about their ontological security and insecurity socio-linguistically constructed subjectivity. These states have their own meanings and interpretations of how to define, use and gain soft power. This matter is fought over verbally between states. **Hence, in order for Qatar to come on the stage of world politics through sports diplomacy, it will bring out its own argument to world politics through representational force**[51]**,** not through an evidence-based argument. Therefore, attraction is a "socially produced reality, 'reality' is produced through communicative exchange and that the type of communicative exchange through which a 'reality' of attractiveness is most likely to be produced in world politics is a competitive form called verbal fighting. Since verbal fighting is characterised by representational force, attractiveness tends to be suffused with coercion. Soft power is not so soft"[52]. The Muslim Arab world is a reality, and

49 - Ibid, p. 54.

50 - Mattern, Janice Bially. "Why soft power'isn't so soft: representational force and the sociolinguistic construction of attraction in world politics." *Millennium* 33, no. 3 (2005): pp. 583-612.

51 - According to Janice B. Mattern, " Representational force is a form of power that operates through the structure of a speaker's narrative representation of 'reality'".

52 - Mattern, Janice Bially.

Qatar host of FIFA 2022 World Cup means bringing **the argument of the Muslim Arab world's political security, political values, and rights to the world stage through sports mega events.**

When Qatar won the bid for hosting FIFA 2022 in 2010, Qatar stated officially that it is a wining for all Arabs. Also, in 2018, during the Russian ceremony for passing over the mantle of World Cup host to Qatar, Sheik Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani said: "we said it in 2010, and we will say it again that FIFA 2022 World Cup is for all Arabs, and it is for all Arabs, so in the name of all Arabs, we welcome the world in FIFA 2022 World Cup[53].

Furthermore, Hassan Al-Thawadi, Secretary General of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy stated that: "from day one, the vision of Qatar hosting the tournament was never that it is a tournament for Qatar... it is a tournament for the region, for the Middle East, for the Arab world, and ultimately it is a global legacy"[54]. Saying that Qatar host of the World Cup is for all Arabs is not a simple sentence. It is full of embedded political meanings, most importantly the rise of Qatar as a regional actor capable of taking a leading role in the Arab world. In diplomatic terms, Qatar is promoting the narrative of its soft power as a powerful mediating actor in the region. Qatar speaking in the name of Arabs, means also wanting to take for itself a bigger role in the region more than that of the role of Jamal Abdulnaser's Arabism. Hassan Al-Thawadi also emphasized that: "for me the most important message that we deliver during the bid and people recognized that it was the time for the Middle East to host a major event. An event that has the ability to unify people, which has the ability to deliver positive messages such as the world Cup, there is no other event in the world that has this unifying capability"[55].

By hosting FIFA 2022 Qatar will be able to reconcile between religion and politics in international relations. Qatar will serve as the first Arab Muslim state that sets the Muslim Arab world political argument in international politics through sports diplomacy. Hassan Al-Thawadi "believes in the transformative power of sport, in this case, soccer, which he feels can be a great contributor to a positive breakthrough in relations for his nation and religion"[56].

Qatar in representing the Arab and Muslim world will be able to frame important issues that are politically contested in the region. In international relations, there are competing worldviews about different political issues are to be fought for or resolved, hence Qatar use of attraction is taking part of competing world views especially in regards to Arab issues. As mentioned earlier, attraction is a representational force. "This force is not of attractive ideas, but rather competing worldviews that can challenge the very foundation of an audience's sense of "ontological security"[57].

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53 - AlJazeera Mubasher.Speech of Shiek Tamim Bin Hamad AlThani. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpCl-3L8EUI

54 - Berger, Larry, 2021. *World Cup 2022: With huge investment, Qatar seeks global unity*. [online] USA Today. Available at: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2019/10/04/world-cup-soccer-qatar-unity-hassanalthawadi-muslim-arab-infrastructure-investment/3778062002/>

55 - Talk to Al Jazeera - Hassan Al-Thawadi: A Clear Bias Against Qatar. Aljazeera English. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LwoI27pGEc

56 - Berger, Larry. (Oct 4, 2019). World Cup 2022: With huge investment, Qatar seeks global. *USA Today*. unityhttps://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2019/10/04/world-cup-soccer-qatar-unity-hassanalthawadi-muslim-arab-infrastructure-investment/3778062002/

57 - Hayden, p. 48.

Sports mega events represent the ideological struggle between different states in international relations. Thus, "the domain of international sport has long constituted an alternative realm of state interaction. Sport has been a sphere of world engagement in which states selected to signal their interests, to follow particular courses of actions or to **forge diplomatic alliances**"[58]. The choice of making Qatar a hub of world sports events is maintaining that this hub is a representational force that which narrates and will continue to narrate the image of the state and its ideological discourse in world politics. Qatar through building Doha as a world sport hub will be able to make shifts in ontological security and foreign policy making that will support its foreign policy goals. **Security and securitization using sports mega events is a way to foster the role of Qatar in world politics.**

7. Qatar is Arguing for Broader Geopolitical Roles

"A standard interpretation holds that mega-events are used as a signaling strategy, that is, as an attempt to reframe perceptions of the host nation on the international stage for place promotion or **broader geopolitical goals** (Whitson 2004, Preuss and Alfs 2011, Horne and Whannel 2016). Sven Daniel Wolfe (2020)"[59].

Hosting mega sports events will support Qatar's foreign policy making as a mediating actor in the region. Therefore, the hosting of sports mega events is a tool for sustaining the idea of "stability" in unstable Middle East. As there are number of political crises that is affecting the political environment of Qatar such as: the war on Yemen, Iranian- Saudi conflict, U.S-Iranian nuclear conflict, Iraq and Lebanon and other Arab countries political protests. Qatar will be able to use its soft power in "mediation" and in "balancing" between different conflicting powers in the region. It will also affirm the idea of being a regional mediator and trustworthy ally in the region.

Sports mega events is a representation of political, social and economic stability. However, because of the number of political unrest in the region Qatar will have to argue for its position in the region as a state that is not affected by regional turmoil. "For Qatari foreign policy-makers, one way to overcome this 'neighbourhood effect' (Steiner, 2010), is through the hosting of first- and second-order sports mega-events. These major international events do, of course, reach a wide-ranging audience, and thus can be used to educate foreign publics on Qatar's difference from some of its more volatile regional counterparts"[60]. Hassan Al-Thawadi stated that: "Qatar is one of the safest states in the world"[61].

The role of sport in Qatar's foreign policy is about asserting independence. Moreover, "Sport and identity are linked through the assertion of national independence. Throughout history, sport has served

58 - Cornelissen, Scarlett. "The geopolitics of global aspiration: Sport mega-events and emerging powers." *The international journal of the history of sport* 27, no. 16-18 (2010): 3008-3025.

59 - Sven Daniel Wolfe (2020) 'For the benefit of our nation': unstable soft power in the 2018 men's World Cup in Russia, International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 12:4, pp. 545-561.

60 - Grix, Jonathan, Paul Michael Brannagan, and Donna Lee. "Qatar's Global Sports Strategy: Soft Power and the 2022 World Cup." In *Entering the Global Arena*, pp. 97-110. Palgrave Pivot, Singapore, 2019.

61 - Qatar's World Cup 2022 chief Hassan Al-Thawadi | Full Interviews. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXI1nTqxmzY

as a channel for expression of a distinctive identity and political independence. In Europe, for example, Irish sport was intimately linked with opposition to English rule for over a century"[62]. Hence, one of the powerful aspects of hosting sports mega events is representing Qatar as a sovereign state that has a distinct national identity. Its sports diplomacy will work on using different strategies of representation, resources and policies that is part of its soft power capabilities to take part in world stage politics. In addition, its sports diplomacy is not only about using its soft power but it also about gaining soft power and its different tools and resources in world politics. Qatar sports diplomacy by asserting through representational force its sovereignty, and distinct national identity is giving an emphasis on Qatar's sovereignty. It is an independent actor that has independent foreign policies in world politics.

Another image that Qatar sports diplomacy is promoting in its national narrative about its state and nation is peacefulness. Qatar did not participate in long wars, nor did it act against international laws and norms since its independence. This is an advantage that shapes soft powers tools and resources of Qatar sports diplomacy to meet its foreign policy goals. Peacefulness as part of Qatar's political values, and political culture serve to be its soft power tool in sports diplomacy. It promoted Qatar to be a trusted mediating actor among competing powers in the region. The map of Qatar represents a state that is capable of promoting peace and stability in the region through its mediating and peaceful powers. Hassan Al-Thawadi stated that: " we do not politicize sport but we make sure to use every platform that enhances integration, that enhances dialogue, sport is most of the powerful ones"[63].

However, this does not mean that sports diplomacy does not set boundaries for friends and enemies alike. By hosting sports mega events, Qatar will represent an image of a state that seeks to establish good peaceful relationships with its neighbors and the world. A state that emphasize its role as bridge between East and West, can still emphasize that it can deter any intervening power against its state sovereignty. As one of the functions of mega sports events is to serve as "a deterrent role in respect of potential enemies. They were unable in any event to be the object of manoeuvres to which a foreign country could retaliate"[64].

8. Qatari soft power: the uses of Sport to Affect Change Regionally and Internationally

Reviewing states, political actors, governmental and non-governmental institutions and citizens roles in hosting sports mega events provide us with the role of sport as a soft power capable of constructing states' sense of self, diplomacy and capacity for change. Qatar is a state that has number of political and economic aspirations for itself and the region; the hosting will positively affect nation building and national identity image. This is especially after the complex political unrests in the region. Qatar is seeking for the rebirth of Qatari state and national identity. For example, "when Vladimir Putin won the bid for the 2014 Sochi Games, he proclaimed that "Russia is back" "[65].

The Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that: "hosting the World Cup in Qatar is a regional

62 - Cha, Victor D. "A theory of sport and politics." *The international journal of the history of sport* 26, no. 11 (2009): pp. 1581-1610.

63 - Qatar's World Cup 2022 chief Hassan Al-Thawadi | Full Interviews. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXI1nTqxmzY

64 - Arnaud, Pierre, and Jim Riordan, eds. *Sport and international politics: Impact of Facism and Communism on Sport*. Routledge, 2013, p. 5.

65 - Ibid. p. 139.

accomplishment that will contribute to development in the Middle East. This event will change the image of the Middle East and create an atmosphere of positive interaction between the region and the World"[66].

Qatar sports diplomacy is about using sport as a soft power for change through development. Qatar sports diplomacy is working on a number of programs, cooperation, and partnerships with different states and international organizations for the sake of political development. For example, in 2018 "the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) signed an initiative with Qatar Charity and the International Center for Sports Security (ICSS) to promote peace and development through sport for the Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Darfur, entitled "Sport for Peace and Development"[67].

Another example of Qatar sport for development initiative is the 'Generation Amazing' program was established in 2010 as part of Qatar's bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The program is designed to use the power of sport to improve lives, at home and away, by driving social change and sustainable social development. The program challenges issues such as gender inequality, social exclusion, poor health and well-being, and lack of educational and employment opportunities"[68]. Qatar sports diplomacy takes sport as a vehicle for development. Especially taking number of development initiatives of various types like promoting education for all and ending poverty. Qatar sport diplomacy is fostering a kind of global discourse for supporting development initiatives as an actor taking political actions in world stage based on international norms.

Through Sport narrative Qatar's diplomacy is achieving some of its foreign policy goals.

The sport narrative is taking an agenda of broader foreign policy goals, which can provide an informal way for cooperation, negotiation, and produce massive public diplomacy opportunities. The sport narrative is represented in the motto of Qatar FIFA 2022 World Cup host.

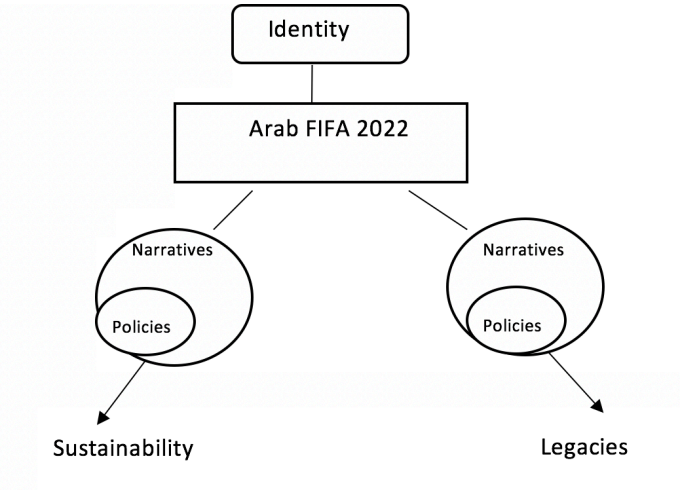

Illustration2. Qatar sport narrative achieving foreign policy goals

Figure 2. Qatar sport narrative achieving foreign policy goals.

66 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs. https://www.mofa.gov.qa/en/foreign-policy/international-cooperation/sports-diplomacy

67 - Qatar Fund for Development. https://qatarfund.org.qa/en/sport-for-peace-and-development/

68 - Your Personal Guide to FIFA 2022. https://living2022.com/

Working on sport for development Qatar is participating in forging different partnerships to meet its development goals which is in line with United Nations(UN) sustainable Development goals. "an international framework for such partnerships was initiated in 1999 when the UN launched a new global compact (UNGC) program with more than three thousand companies willing to partner with NGOs, governments, and other international agencies to work toward meeting UN development goals"[69]. Furthermore, "over the past two decades, the idea of using sport to "better world" has achieved unprecedented social, political and cultural momentum"[70].

The profile of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 is also working on more than 70 initiatives to deliver a sustainable FIFA world Cup. Its strategy is about building a legacy and sustainable development that it will be lasting post tournaments. The strategy is working in line with Qatar National Vision 2030, and UN Sustainable Development Goals. This will bring world focus on Qatar's country development and its sense of nationhood.

According to Hassan Al-Thawadi: "when Qatar bid to host the FIFA World Cup 2022, it did so with a vision to use the tournament as a catalyst for sustainable, long-term change in Qatar and across the Arab world"[71]. Hassan Al-Thawadi stated that Qatar from the start believed in the power of Football and FIFA world Cup in building a social transformation that is capable of brining different cultures and peoples together. He alluded that the success of the tournament will be in its ability to leave a legacy. This will help Qatar to achieve its goals and realize the vision it wants for itself.

Qatar sports diplomacy is not only about presenting Qatar's values and culture but also about having global partners. Qatar by using sport as a soft power: behaviors, language, tools, resources, discourse, and polices is working through modern diplomacy. As "in the twenty-first century, Hockings (2004, 2006, 13) "multi-stakeholder" paradigm, where "diplomacy is an activity concerned with the creation of networks, embracing a range of state and non-state actors," aptly describes the character of modern diplomacy"[72]. Diplomacy is no longer a practice between states official representatives. It became a plural effort that involves multinational corporations, CSOs, intergovernmental institutions and it can even involve "celebrity diplomats". Such actors work in an ad hoc network (Wiseman 1999, 2).

By hosting sports mega events, Qatar is going to be a world sport city. This will mean that it will be the center of sport events and sport management. Qatar will also be competing with other European world sport cities, using sport as a political space for its foreign policy goals, and be a political attraction. Here, we can see the use of sport as a soft power as an attraction. An attraction which serves to be a representational force in sport and international relations. Qatar owns world football club Paris Saint-Germain (PSG), and invests in sport business and sport industry (Qatar Sport Investment) in order to diversify its economy, and move from gas/oil industry to tourism and knowledge economy.

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69 - Gruneau, Richard. *Sport and modernity*. John Wiley & Sons, 2018, p. 170.

70 - Ibid, p. 177.

71 - FIFA and hosts Qatar present joint FIFA World Cup Sustainability Strategy. FIFA.com https://www.fifa.com/what-we-do/sustainability/strategy/

72 - Murray, Stuart. "Sports diplomacy in the Australian context: theory into strategy." *Politics* & *Policy* 45, no. 5 (2017): pp. 841-861.

The state is also involving different governmental sectors in sports investments and in sponsoring major international sports. For example, "Qatar Airways, which offers various levels of support for prominent European football clubs, FIFA itself, the US NBA's Brooklyn Nets, equestrian sport, tennis, squash, and Australian Rules football., the company's official statements is: 'Qatar Airways proudly supports a wide range of sporting activities and initiatives around the world, expanding our brand visibility and establishing lasting and loyal relationships with our customers' (QA 2019)"[73].

Qatar Airways worked on branding the state and the nation values love for football through sponsoring sports events and sport club partnerships. "Millions of fans watch their heroes play on television wearing the Barcelona shirt with the airline's logo on it, not to mention the millions of fans buying the football jersey and wearing it everywhere around the world. The brand visibility of the airline carrying Qatar's name has become a global brand that consumers are familiar with"[74]. Qatar also uses famous local and international football players as ambassadors for social change across the region, and around the globe. For example, captain Xavi Hernández, who is a former FC Barcelona player, is now involved in the Generation Amazing program. "It uses football to educate and inspire young people, enabling them to make long-lasting social changes in their communities. In 2016, Xavi's first act as an ambassador was to promote football for girls at a pitch in Al Baqa'a refugee camp in Jordan"[75].

Furthermore, Qatar sport management is about investing in global events. In a globalized world, Qatar is taking the steps in building a world sport city. There are also a number of governmental and private sectors working on this as part of Qatar National Vision 2030. This will benefit tourism which is already benefiting from the World Cup preparations. Furthermore, "in the build-up to the World Cup, the Qatari government aims to develop a $20bn sporting industry by attracting international companies and investors. As part of this plan, it intends to bring more foreign sporting companies to the country, setting a goal of licensing 150 companies by 2022"[76].

Other than using sport research, Aspetar and Aspire academy, for sport management, Qatar also is going to host World Association for Sport Management Congress (WASM) in 2022. It will bring different opportunities for Qatar, and promote better Qatar role in the world as a port city. Thus "the WASM 2022 Congress in Qatar will be an opportunity to promote education, research and publications in the multi-disciplinary area of sport management in Qatar and in the region, including sport governance, sport policy and strategy, sport marketing, sport and event management, to name but a few"[77].

Qatar use of sport as soft power in hosting mega sports events is going to boost the country's image,

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73 - Koch, Natalie. "The Geopolitics of Gulf Sport Sponsorship." *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy* 14, no. 3 (2020): pp. 355-376.

74 - Almaskati, Bader.Qatar's Nation Branding Strategies: The Effectiveness of Soft Power. MA thesis. SOAS University. P 26.

75 - Global Ambassadors. Supreme Committee of Delivery and Legacy. https://www.qatar2022.qa/en/about/ambassadors

76 - Qatar's position as an international sports and hospitality centre is supported by increased investment. Oxford Business Group. com https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/analysis/track-improvements-infrastructure-and-hospitality-position-country-destination-international_

77 - Qatar to host World Association for Sport Management Congress in 2022. https://staddoha.com/en/general/qatar-to-host-world-association-for-sport-management-congress-in-2022/

and will help in bridging between East and West. In addition, "the popularity of world-class sport events can enable the initiation of multilateral diplomacy. In terms of foreign policy tools, sport also serves as an instrument to wield soft power"[78]. Sport as a soft power can facilitate some peaceful negotiations between states. In a globalized world, sport is serving states and governments in diplomatic relationships. "Indeed, in the 21st century more non-state actors such as individuals, teams, and even companies can function as representatives of their nation. This is another reason why today even sports teams or individuals can become messengers of their nation's diplomatic messages"[79]. Nonetheless, sport as a soft power cannot serve to end different international conflicts and different confrontational issues between states. States, by organizing a sport event, will not reach a solution for their conflicts (i.e. U.S and Iranian nuclear conflict). Hence, sport as a soft power has its own limitations.

9. Conclusion

Sport in international relations is not free politics. Sport as a soft power works as a tool in diplomacy and foreign policy making. Different Western and non-Western states took advantage of the symbolic power of mega sports events to meet their foreign policy goals. The paper tried to discuss the role of Qatari soft power in hosting FIFA 2022. The paper rejects Ney's Realist approach in defining soft power. Such fixed concept fall short in understating soft power as a practice and discourse in international relations. The paper instead uses a post-structuralist interpretive approach in analyzing the discourse of Qatari official statements for hosting FIFA 2022. Together with this approach, the paper bases its theoretical framework on discourse theory which "takes its lead from interpretive methods of social inquiry in which emphasis is placed on understanding and explaining the emergence and logic of discourses, and socially constructed identities they confer upon social agents"[80].

By stating that the relationship between soft power and hosting sports mega events is problematic, the paper sought first to problematize soft power within IR then to problematize sport as a soft power in IR. It also tried to deconstruct western narrative on Qatar's use of sport as a soft power to demonstrate that Qatar's host of FIFA 2022 is a counter hegemony of Qatar's political identity and ideology on the western meaning/practice of sport as a soft power, and that Qatari use of sport as a soft power is not going to be necessarily constructed and diffused by the first world countries. The argument around the role of small states like Qatar and other countries participation in hosting sports mega events is actually an argument about the meaning and function of soft power.

Thus, Qatar uses of sport as a soft power is not similar to China's uses of soft power. As states' different political identities project different subject positions on the meaning and practice of soft power. Hence, soft power is a contested concept.

78 - Trunkos, Judit, and Bob Heere. "Sport diplomacy: A review of how sports can be used to improve international relationships." *Case studies in sport diplomacy* (2017): pp. 1-18.

79 - Ibid, p. 4.

80 - Norval, D. R. H. A. J., Stavrakakis, Y., & Ehrlich, A. (2000). *Discourse theory and political analysis: Identities, hegemonies and social change*. Manchester University Press, p. 7.

Qatar is utilizing sport as a soft power in arguing for soft power and for generating soft power. This is represented in Qatar's argument for having broader geopolitical roles, and its practices in engaging in change and development domestically, regionally, and internationally. Hosting mega sports events will support Qatar's foreign policy making as a mediating actor in the region. Therefore, the hosting of sports mega events is a tool for sustaining the idea of "stability" in unstable Middle East. Moreover, Qatar sports diplomacy takes sport as a vehicle for development. Especially taking number of development initiatives of various types like promoting education for all and ending poverty. Qatar sport diplomacy is fostering a kind of global discourse for supporting development initiatives as an actor taking political actions in world stage based on international norms.

Qatar sports diplomacy is steered by the state political identity thus the paper interpret the Qatari construction of meaning of sport as a soft power against Ney's fixed concept of soft power. Qatar's sport narrative is producing different policies and arguments on sport as a soft power. Such sport policies, and arguments are helping in meeting number of Qatar's foreign policy goals. Hosting mega events is a great opportunity to boost a stage image, national identity, modernity as a prestigious world class state. It is part of modern diplomacy, something that traditional diplomacy tools were not able to achieve. Nonetheless, sport as a soft power has its limitations in international relations. It cannot bring a diplomatic breakthrough in conflicts or international struggles just though organizing a sport event!

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