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JONATHAN FITZGERALD

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QUALIFYING QATAR'S SPORTS INVESTMENTS AS LEVERS OF SUBTLE POWER

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
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BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. Samer Shehata (Chair)

Dr. Joshua Landis

Dr. Katerina Tsetsura

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# ABSTRACT

Qatar has recently risen from relative obscurity and ascended to a role as a larger regional power, with greater geopolitical ambitions still. One major part of this rise has been Qatar's recent heavy investment into sport, both international and professional. In this work, I demonstrate the existence of a newer type of power, "subtle power", then documenting the recent different facets of the Qatari sports investment strategy, before unifying the two concepts to demonstrate how Qatar's sports investments can be translated into increased international power projection capabilities.

# Qualifying Qatar's Sport Investments as Levers of Subtle Power

By: Jonathan Fitzgerald

## Introduction and Conceptual Clarifications

Qatar, a small nation state, albeit blessed with an abundance of financial resources due to its exports of liquified natural gas (LNG), despite military and geographic limitations, has nonetheless recently emerged as a major player in Middle Eastern and global affairs. Qatar has been "punching above its weight" in the international arena for nearly two decades, both as a regional player, but also on a global scale.[1] Qatar has carved out a unique niche for itself, a small state with little more than 300,000 nationals, to project power and advance its influence.[2] One main tenet of Qatar's power projection has been done through a heavy investment in sport, making the state into a global sporting hub.

This strategy can be seen in investments such as the creation of multinational company Qatari Sports Investments, headed by the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and run through Qatari ex-Tennis player Nasser el-Khelafi, which secured a controlling stake in one of Europe's elite professional football clubs, Paris St. Germain in 2011.[3] Furthermore, Qatar has hosted many international sporting events since the turn of the twenty-first century, including the Asian games in 2006 with a second a successful bid for the Asian Games in 2030, the Asian Cup (football) in 2018, and most notably the FIFA World Cup, (arguably the biggest international

[1] Joost Hilterman, "Qatar Punched Above Its Weight, Now It's Paying the Price," *The New York Times*, June 18, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/18/opinion/qatar-saudi-arabia-iran-muslim-brotherhood.html.
[2] Mehran Kamrava, *Qatar: Small State Big Politics* (Cornell University Press, 2013).
[3] Robin Bairner, "Who Is the PSG Chairman? Nasser Al-Khelaifi's Net Worth & Qatar Ownership," Goal.com, 2019, https://www.goal.com/en-kw/news/who-is-the-psg-chairman-nasser-al-khelaifis-net-worth-qatar/1qceaqzo6n54t1wuvs1nt0xbg1.

sporting event) in 2022. Finally, the Qatari government is also the controlling body of BeIn Sports, an international television channel which has broadcasting rights to many widely followed professional sports league and reaches a global audience in the hundreds of millions. Sport is one tenet of Qatar's initiative to transform the country into a modern, progressive state and force itself into global affairs. Indeed, major western news outlets such as the *Wall Street Journal* and *The Guardian* have taken note of this trend and feel that it is set to continue well into the future.[4]

Qatar's power accumulation strategy is unique because it has been relatively successful despite the limitations outlined above. Qatar's form of power can be understood as what Mehran Kamrava in his 2013 book, *Qatar: Small State Big Politics,* dubbed "subtle power".[5] Kamrava outlined how Qatar uses this new understanding of power to differentiate itself from the larger players in the region, namely Iran and Saudi Arabia, and take a more concrete stance in the politics of the region. Subtle power is an interesting concept because it provides a more nuanced understanding of power that is different than the normal hard/soft power divide which has dominated International Relations discourse for the majority of the century. Subtle power can be understood as "the ability to exert influence from *behind the scenes*" achieved by "bringing resources to bear, enjoying international prestige derived from and commensurate with norm-entrepreneurship and being positioned in such a way as to manipulate circumstances and the weaknesses of others to one's advantage."[6] By embracing this concept of power, Qatar has been

[4] Joshua Robinson, "The Qatar-Ification of Global Sports Is Just Beginning," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 4, 2019, https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-qatar-ification-of-global-sports-is-just-beginning-11570186801; David Conn, "How Qatar Became a Football Force: From Barcelona to PSG and World Cup," *The Guardian*, November 18, 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/football/2013/nov/18/qatar-barcelona-psg-world-cup-2022.
[5] Kamrava, *Qatar: Small State Big Politics*.
[6] Kamrava, 60.

able to do away with resigning itself to the traditional power confinements of a small state in international affairs, and actually project power across the region. In the past, small states attempting to make their way in the international arena would often be resigned to creating a network of alliances, more often than not on terms which benefit the regional or global hegemons disproportionately.[7] However, the case of Qatar, a small state sandwiched between two regional powers jockeying for influence in the Persian Gulf – Iran and Saudi Arabia – yet still able to achieve a status of relevance in the international arena, shows that there is a need to embrace a more complete understanding of power outside of the traditional hard/soft duality.[8]

Power can still be understood as the ability to make others do what they otherwise would not. While traditional hard and soft power have provided an effective way for understanding the dynamics which drive international politics for most of the history of the field, Kamrava is one of many scholars who have noted that hard power over another is not the only mechanism through which states can exert influence.[9]

In the past, it was assumed that military and economic might were the main ways through which states accrue and project power. The concept was simple, military might and perceived asymmetry in favor of one state would lead to other state acquiescing to the demands of the former, for fear of entering into a conflict they could not win. This concept was expanded in the 1990s by Joseph Nye with his conceptualization of "soft power." According to Nye, there was another way which states could make others change their behavior, but through cooptation

[7] David R. Mares, "Middle Powers under Regional Hegemony : To Challenge or Acquiesce in Hegemonic Enforcement," *International Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (1988): 456.
[8] Mehran Kamrava, "Qatari Foreign Policy and the Exercise of Subtle Power," *International Studies Journal (ISJ)* 14, no. 2 (2017): 91–123, http://hdl.handle.net/10822/1048298 (16.06.2020).
[9] Kamrava, *Qatar: Small State Big Politics*.

instead of coercion and without payment.[10] Soft power could be gained through things such as the perceived attractiveness of culture or through economic might. Soft power could also be exercised through economic growth which will allow for investment in public diplomacy efforts aimed at painting a positive image of the country to the world.

Nye's concept of soft power has given rise to a similar concept of "nation image" first proposed by Kunczik in 1997.[11] Nation image can be understood as the cognitive representation which a person has about a given place or country. This concept was expanded upon by Buhmann and Ingenhoff in 2015, as they provided four subsets of nation image which all combine to form the larger. These subsets are: nation brand, nation reputation, nation identity and nation image.[12]

A large distinction exists between Kunczik and his later contemporaries, however, in their thoughts on the ability of a country to have an influence on their national image. Kunczik felt that national image is largely akin to a stereotype, which is out of the control of the host country. However, in their model, Buhmann and Ingenhoff demonstrate that there are certain aspects of national image, namely country brand or, "strategically communicated self-representations" and country image, defined as "subjective attitudes towards a country among foreign publics" which can be influenced by state governments.[13] Essentially, state governments can invest in efforts to alter opinion or put out a self-propagated image of themselves in a way to achieve a favorable nation brand. In doing such, perceptions of a country can be altered for the

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[10] Joseph S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 94–109, https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311699.
[11] Michel Kunczik, "Introduction to the Problems of International Image Cultivation," *Images of Nations and International Public Relations*, 1997, 1–84, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203811917-1.
[12] Alexander Buhmann and Diana Ingenhoff, "The 4D Model of the Country Image: An Integrative Approach from the Perspective of Communication Management," *International Communication Gazette* 77, no. 1 (2015): 102–24, https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048514556986.
[13] Buhmann and Ingenhoff.

positive, which presents a key link to Nye's concept of soft power as well as Kamrava's more recent, subtle power. Crucially, however, the ability to have an effect on nation brand is closely tied to economic stability, which gives policy makers the capability and resources to invest in strategic communication efforts. State governments will only be able to focus on bolstering their brand and image if the state enjoys relative domestic bliss and physical security. As such, the economic and financial lever of power is something which has become increasingly salient in contemporary international affairs.

Through having a strong economy and financial strength, states are able to invest in other means of influence outside of military coercion. This is certainly the case with Qatar. As Qatar's economy has grown, largely through the export of fossil fuels and liquified natural gas (LNG), the state is able to gain some leverage in negotiations with other, more powerful states. Qatar has used its economic power to brand itself as a progressive, stable mediator in an increasingly conservative and volatile region. By doing this, Qatar has allowed itself a "seat at the table" and a voice among its more powerful neighbors, which in itself, is a form of power.[14] There is power, for example in the ability to set an agenda, or shape the circumstances through which engagement takes place.

Kamrava provides one such conceptualization of this in his concept of subtle power. Subtle power is made up of four sources, each of these tenets is built through unique capabilities and provides unique benefits when exercised properly.[15] The first component is physical and military security and stability. This concept is straightforward enough, a state which is preoccupied with an external threat will unlikely be able to divert attention to other forms of

[14] Kamrava, *Qatar: Small State Big Politics*.
[15] Kamrava, 60.

exerting influence, due to the existential threat on its sovereignty which exists. Secondly, subtle power comes from effective marketing and branding, or strategic communication efforts. By cultivating a favorable nation brand, states can achieve a level of prestige, which will allow states the ability to carve out a niche for itself in international affairs and allow others to defer to them on matters perceived to be relevant to said niche. The third manifestation of subtle power is a proactive presence on the international stage. This lever of subtle power is also achieved through favorable branding efforts aimed at portraying the state as a good global citizen which abides by international rules and norms. The final lever of subtle power is one that is present in both hard and soft power theory, that of economic and financial might.[16] Through the ability to make international purchases and investments, smaller states like Qatar are able to effectively gain influence over the actions of others in the international arena.

By employing this conceptualization of power, we are able to see how a small state like Qatar has made itself into a regional power, with the ability to shape outcomes in its immediate neighborhood and abroad, despite its geographic limitations. Crucially, subtle power is different from other forms of power discussed in the literature, as it does not solely rely upon access to resources and military might which has become known as "hard" power, nor is it congruent with Nye's "soft" power conceptualization which relies upon communication and perceived attractiveness of different aspects of a society's culture.[17] Qatar, on the other hand has used a combination of diplomacy, marketing, domestic politics and of course, the strategic use of its valuable LNG fields, to build its power.[18] To be sure, there is a good deal of overlap between this newer, conceptualization of subtle power, and Nye's soft power, but the main distinctions arise

[16] Kamrava, *Qatar: Small State Big Politics*.
[17] Kamrava, 49.
[18] Kamrava, 50.

in subtle power's reliance upon resources and material wealth as a way to build and promote international attraction of Qatar. According to Nye, soft power relies solely upon *intangible* resources (culture, values, ideas etc.) as a tool through which perceptions can be shaped and outcomes altered.[19] Subtle power on the other hand, dictates that a state must both have economic stability as well as physical security through which it can then seek to invest in campaigns such as the sporting one outlined in this thesis.

While Kamrava has provided a useful conceptualization of how Qatar has risen to its larger status as a regional power, one part of Qatar's strategy which is relatively underdiscussed in his book is the role which Qatar's sport investment strategy has played in achieving its geopolitical goals. While Qatar's hopes for using sport to bolster its international image and strengthen its soft power has been well documented in the literature, this thesis fills the gap that is present by demonstrating how different aspects of Qatar's sports investment strategy fit into its larger subtle power strategy, as outlined by Kamrava. In this research, I will discuss the relationship between sport, diplomacy and soft power, before outlining Qatar's recent geopolitical ambitions and rise before I unite the two concepts and demonstrate how each of the four areas of subtle power outlined above are affected by the different types of sports investments seen from Qatar.

## Relationship between Sport and International Relations

While this thesis will serve first and foremost to discuss the power implications of Qatar's sport investment strategy, this thesis will also contribute to a larger, emerging discussion on *sport diplomacy*. Investing in sport is a medium through which many different outcomes can

[19] Kamrava, 55; Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power."

be achieved. First, there is the possibility for diplomatic engagement between leaders as a result of a given sporting event. One recent example of this can be seen when leaders from North and South Korea watched a women's soccer match between the two countries together.[20] Secondly, there is the effect which hosting an international tournament, or popular professional leagues, can have upon a country's brand, international image and prestige. In a similar vein, the role and power associated with the international institutions that award these events, most notably, the IOC and FIFA give these bodies a "pseudo-diplomatic" essence, due to their abilities to act as kingmakers, and award countries the prestige and soft power potential that comes with the awarding of a mega-event.[21] Finally, there is the role which sport can play in advancing a societies' norms, or values, the propagation of which, will likely align with a state's foreign policy objectives.[22]

## International Sport as a Means to Encourage Diplomacy and Build International Image

Scholars have recently examined how sport, both professional and international, can play a concrete role in a state's ability to gain soft power. Sport and international diplomacy have long shared a bond, dating back to the Olympic games being used as a way for warring city-states to engage with each other. More recently, sport has become an effective way for states to promote an image or "brand" themselves to the world, aided by the increase of technology access, especially among many populations in the global south.[23] As the global south continues to grow, both in terms of economic and political capabilities, the importance of engaging with

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[20] Choi Si-yung, "Inter-Korean Soccer Match: Stalemate Reflects Relations," *The Korea Herald*, October 16, 2019, http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20191016000783.
[21] Victor Cha, "Role of Sport in International Relations: National Rebirth and Renewal," *Asian Economic Policy Review* 11, no. 1 (2016): 139–55, https://doi.org/10.1111/aepr.12127.
[22] Cha.
[23] J. Simon Rofe, "Sport and Diplomacy: A Global Diplomacy Framework," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 27, no. 2 (2016): 212–30, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2016.1169785.

these audiences grows as well. In observance of this trend, there has been a call for a greater understanding into the power which is associated with this growing platform.[24] This call has been answered, most notably by Dubinsky (2018) who discussed the relationship between sport and nation brand. According to Dubinsky, as the technology has increased global audiences for sport, it has provided states a medium through which they can share their culture and values with the world. Dubinsky's discussion is built upon by Krzyzaniak who discusses how sports diplomacy fits into the larger umbrella of strategic communication and public diplomacy, demonstrating how it can be used as a tool for actors to propagate a certain message. [25]

When the actor is a nation-state, as is the case with Qatar, the most effective way through which this nation branding can be accomplished is through the hosting of international mega-events such as the Olympics or the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup. Each of these events draw global audiences and have opening ceremonies through which states can demonstrate their cultural values and heritage. In addition to the opening ceremonies, the prospect of having nearly universal press coverage from outlets across the world speaks for itself in terms of potential soft power benefits.[26] It is no surprise, then, that Qatar has recently submitted bids to host both the 2018 Olympics which was unsuccessful, but also the 2006 Asian Games and the 2022 FIFA World Cup which were successful. While mega-events can also serve to bolster a state's international image, there are ways in which it can harm said image as well. In the case of Qatar, the potential benefits of the awarding of the World Cup in

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[24] Geoffery Pigman and Simon Rofe, "Sport and Diplomacy: An Introduction," *Sport in Society* 17, no. 9 (2014): 1095–97, https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2013.856612.
[25] Yoav Dubinsky, "From Soft Power to Sports Diplomacy: A Theoretical and Conceptual Discussion," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 15, no. 3 (2019): 156–64, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-019-00116-8; John S. Krzyzaniak, "The Soft Power Strategy of Soccer Sponsorships," *Soccer and Society* 19, no. 4 (2018): 498–515, https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2016.1199426.
[26] Agata Dembek and Renata Włoch, "The Impact of a Sports Mega-Event on the International Image of a Country: The Case of Poland Hosting UEFA Euro 2012," *Perspectives* 22, no. 1 (2014): 33–47.

the form of increased international media attention have also served to highlight some of the less desirable aspects of Qatari society, namely the *kafala* labor system, which some critics have likened to modern day slavery.

The *kafala,* or "sponsorship" system arose from a need for cheap labor by many Gulf states. Under this system, companies are allowed to sponsor foreign workers, usually providing them housing and a visa to enter the country to complete a given project. However, there are several important caveats to note. For one, these foreign workers are not eligible for protection under any of the state's labor laws and are often subject to exploitation and unable to unionize or otherwise negotiate with their sponsor. Furthermore, the housing conditions are often subpar, normally lacking running water and/or proper protections from the sweltering Qatari heat. Finally, many of these workers face a type of indentured servitude relationship with the sponsor, who often will pass on any cost it takes to transport a foreign worker into Qatar, onto said worker. The workers debt, combined with little legal protections, unsafe living and working conditions give these workers little means to adequately improve their conditions once they enter into a contract.[27] In Qatar, the situation is especially unique because foreign workers make up the vast majority of the workforce and population of Qatar, with native Qatari nationals only comprising some 13% of the country's population.[28] This dynamic will be discussed in more detail later in the paper, yet it is important to understand that the prospect of having increased

[27] Kali Robinson, "What Is the Kafala System?," *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 23, 2021, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-kafala-system?gclid=CjwKCAjwpKCDBhBPEiwAFgBzj8pjYfbqp5sgbZCDCocLQbV1bq6biaKroB0WNfeFfT4_jvrSFCnUrxoCuGAQAvD_BwE.

[28] Online Qatar, "Qatar Population and Expat Nationalities," 2019, https://www.onlineqatar.com/visiting/tourist-information/qatar-population-and-expat-nationalities#:~:text=Qataris constitute only 10%25 of,Egyptians and 4.35%25 Sri Lankan.

attention from the international community while hosting a mega-event can serve as a double-edged sword.

Another political benefit that is associated with hosting of a mega-event is the level of prestige that is associated with the hosting of a mega-event.[29] It is an assumption that to be awarded any such mega-event, some conditions in the home state must be met. The state must be physically secure and developed enough that it cannot only build the requisite infrastructure for the hosting of the events themselves, but also to be able to accommodate the vast influx of supporters, media and other personnel which will descend upon the country during the course of the event. One might remember the significance of the Olympics and FIFA World Cup which were hosted in Brazil, and the high amount of media coverage regarding Brazil being the first South American country to be awarded the games. Similarly, the 2010 World Cup in South Africa was also significant, as it was the first World Cup to be hosted in the Southern Hemisphere and on the African continent. It is significant, that these two rising powers were given the events as it signaled that these states had arrived as at least middle powers, on par with say, Australia or Norway in the international arena.[30]

While it is difficult to paint a causal relationship between the awarding of the mega-events with the subsequent rise in power and influence of Brazil and South Africa, the awarding of the games is a significant indication of the change in status and of the two states. Similarly, Qatar, being the first Middle Eastern and Arab state to be awarded a FIFA World Cup signals that Qatar is ready to take a larger place on the international stage. Qatar being the first Middle

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[29] Kamrava, *Qatar: Small State Big Politics*; Cha, "Role of Sport in International Relations: National Rebirth and Renewal."
[30] Jonathan Grix and Donna Lee, "Soft Power, Sports Mega-Events and Emerging States: The Lure of the Politics of Attraction," *Global Society* 27, no. 4 (2013): 521–36, https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2013.827632.

Eastern state to be awarded an event of this magnitude also showed Qatar's neighbors that Qatar was a force to be reckoned with in the region. While the nature of Qatar's tense relationships with the other states on the peninsula will be discussed later in the paper, it is worth noting that Qatar's successful bid for the World Cup was followed with the Saudi-led blockade seven years later, indicating that Qatar's neighbors might not have been as willing to award the same level of prestige on the country which FIFA had. The blockade has since been lifted, and there was a myriad of other factors which led to this decision, but the World Cup was almost certainly one of them. In addition to bolstering a state's power through the prestige of award, international mega-events also provide a medium through which political exchanges can take place, providing the state with another form of power.[31]

Given the high amount of power that is associated with the awarding of the mega-events, it is also worth examining the role that the non-state actors tasked with awarding such events carry in the international arena. Many scholars, notably James Pamment and Victor Cha, have taken notice of this dynamic. These organizations can act as de-facto "kingmakers" in the international sphere, effectively awarding states a degree of prestige and legitimacy by deeming them capable of hosting one of these events.[32] Gaining influence in one of these groups – e.g. the International Olympic Committee (IOC), FIFA or the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) – is comparable to gaining influence in a more established international organization like the United Nations or European Union. It is crucial to understand, however, that there are limited political and policy objectives which can come from said influence. Nonetheless, being

[31] Cha, "Role of Sport in International Relations: National Rebirth and Renewal."
[32] James Pamment, "Rethinking Diplomatic and Development Outcomes through Sport: Toward a Participatory Paradigm of Multi-Stakeholder Diplomacy," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 27, no. 2 (2016): 231–50, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2016.1169787; Cha, "Role of Sport in International Relations: National Rebirth and Renewal."

recognized and awarded a mega event by one of these bodies is still an effective way to gain soft power.

Another crucial point worth noting, especially for the case examined here, is that FIFA is not beholden to any state government or has any official representation on a state level from its member nations, FIFA's officials are normally career executives in sport, and are not beholden to any requirements of transparency, as their counterparts in the IOC or UEFA or in other multinational organizations are. This dynamic was something which was understood by Qatar, as their successful bid to host the World Cup was mired in controversy, which eventually led to the resignation of Sepp Blatter, then president of FIFA due to allegations of corruption and unfair practices.[33] It was eventually revealed that the awarding of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar was done with some under the table payments to FIFA executives, which could explain the drastic amount of exceptions to FIFA's norms which were disregarded when awarding the World Cup to Qatar. For example, the 2022 games will take place in the Winter, in the middle of the professional club season, to accommodate for the potentially unsafe temperature or playing conditions which exist in Qatar during the summer, when the games are normally slated to be held. Summer temperatures in Qatar are often average above 40 degrees Celsius, which would have presented a potential hazard to the athletes. Nonetheless, the adopted solution will still see that players are required to continue the club season long into the summer, and the extended run of games will pose an increasing injury risk.

This example is just one case of the extreme lengths which FIFA went to in awarding the games to Qatar, demonstrating the immense influence and leverage, albeit mainly financial in

[33] Sam Borden, Michael Schmidt, and Matt Apuzzo, "Sepp Blatter Decides to Resign as FIFA President in About-Face," *The New York Times*, June 2, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/03/sports/soccer/sepp-blatter-to-resign-as-fifa-president.html.

nature, which the state had at its disposal in its interaction with FIFA. The role of FIFA and its ability to award these events and the power capabilities that are associated with them is something which has been noted in the literature by the aforementioned authors, but the case of Qatar demonstrates the need for greater study into how these organizations can be influenced by other levers of power found at the state level. This thesis hopes to fill this gap, albeit indirectly.

While international mega-events are a way for states to build their power and international image, the opposite can also be true. The increased media coverage can also serve to expose some of the less desirable aspects of a given state or society, as easily as it can propagate a government-sponsored strategic communication campaign. In the case of Qatar, for example, the awarding of the FIFA 2022 World Cup also saw the international community begin to look at the state with more scrutiny.[34] Indeed, in anticipation of the potential public outcry, the Qataris have engaged in several "damage control" efforts by granting the system some slight reforms, including building of new housing and pledges for the workers to have greater leverage in their dealings with higher ups, but the system as a whole is still largely intact.[35] The plight of Qatar's migrant workers under the *kafala* system has recently under increased scrutiny, even leading for some clubs to call for their countries to boycott the upcoming World Cup.[36]

So, the awarding of a mega-event, while it may come with a certain level of prestige, to ensure that prestige remains present, the event must also be successfully carried out. Failure to meet the conditions needed to host the event after its award could see any soft power potential

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[34] James Dorsey, *The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer* (Oxford University Press, 2016); Sarath K. Ganji, "Leveraging the World Cup: Mega Sporting Events, Human Rights Risk, and Worker Welfare Reform in Qatar," *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 4, no. 4 (2016): 221–59, https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241600400403.
[35] Ganji, 231.
[36] til.no, "TROMSØ IL CALLS FOR A BOYCOTT OF THE WORLD CUP 2022," 2021, https://www.til.no/nyheter/tromso-il-calls-for-a-boycott-of-the-world-cup-2022.

which a mega event holds be reduced. For example, Brazil and China were suffering from dangerous levels of pollution in the run-ups to their respective Olympic games, causing the governments of each state to adopt drastic policies lest they be subject to the international embarrassment and high financial loss which would have accompanied the revocation of the games.

### Professional Sport as a Means to Build Prestige and International Image

International mega-events are not the only means through which states can share their values with the world, professional sport also provides a global platform through which actors seek to promote a message. Professional sports teams, leagues and athletes can also serve as effective branding mechanisms or quasi-diplomats for their home nations. In a much similar fashion to international mega-events, elite professional sport normally brings in global audiences as well, albeit on a smaller scale. Globally followed sports leagues, such as the English Premier League (United Kingdom), and the National Basketball Association (United States) enjoy global followings, often drawing in viewers on every continent for any given game. However, building a league of elite quality which is able to bring in these amounts of viewers is not something which all states can accomplish. These leagues are institutionalized in the sporting psyche and as such, attracting top players to a newer league is not a straightforward task. This is not to say that Qatar has not tried, however. While the Qatari professional soccer league, the Q-league, does not share the same level of prestige of the elite competitions in Europe, it has succeeded in drawing some big names of the sport, most notably Jay-Jay Okocha, Raul Gonzalez (better known by his first name only) Josep (Pep) Guardiola and Xavi, to come play in Qatar in the twilight of their careers.

However, one much more effective way for middle states to use professional sports to bolster their international image, and by extension, their power, is through engaging in professional sports sponsorship campaigns of state-run enterprise. This relationship is discussed by Krzyzaniak (2019) and Chadwick et. Al (2020) who outline the relationship between a state's soft power capabilities and state-run enterprise sponsorship campaigns.[37] Chadwick et. Al, notably provide an analysis of several case studies (one of them being Qatar) through which they show that sponsorship of a professional team by a state-owned company provides tangible benefits for the home state. Essentially, these sponsorship campaigns can be seen as sponsorship of a professional team by the state government itself.[38] The soft power capabilities that can be achieved through sports sponsorships are directly tied to the success of the team that is being sponsored. The concept here is relatively simple, successful teams will demand more media coverage, and attract better players, therefore are able to reach a larger global audience.[39] It is no surprise then, that many of the professional sports teams which Qatar has chosen to sponsor through various state-run enterprises are teams at the very top level of professional soccer. In addition to QSI's takeover of Paris St. Germain, the Qatari tourism authority and Qatar Airways have purchased shirt sponsorships with clubs such as Bayern Munich and FC Barcelona, both of whom tend to dominate their respective domestic leagues and cup competitions and have won the UEFA Champions League (arguably the most prestigious competition in club football) within the past ten years. Paris St. Germain, since the QSI takeover has also made no secret that it is the

[37] Simon Chadwick, Paul Widdop, and Nicholas Burton, "Soft Power Sports Sponsorship–A Social Network Analysis of a New Sponsorship Form," *Journal of Political Marketing*, 2020, 1–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2020.1723781; Krzyzaniak, "The Soft Power Strategy of Soccer Sponsorships."
[38] Chadwick, Widdop, and Burton, "Soft Power Sports Sponsorship–A Social Network Analysis of a New Sponsorship Form."
[39] Stefan Szymanski, *Money and Soccer: A Soccernomics Guide* (New York: Nation Books, 2015).

club's eventual goal to lift the UEFA Champion's League trophy, and have come close but never reached that pinnacle, losing in the 2020 final to Bayern Munich.

While some scholars have demonstrated the concrete link which exists between these sponsorship campaigns and a state's soft power, another potential form of power which can be accrued is through the corporate success which can be gleaned from these sponsorships or investments. While the bulk of this paper is focused on Qatari investments in sport, another interesting case study worth examining is that of the Emirati takeover of Manchester City Football Club in 2008 by Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed al-Nahyen, a member of Abu Dhabi's royal family. Sheikh Mansour shocked the international sporting community by his purchase, and subsequent heavy investment into Manchester City, essentially turning them into a continental powerhouse overnight. Mansour used his investment to lure top players to a club which might not have crossed their minds before, and also built a new state of the art football complex in a run-down, postindustrial husk that was east Manchester, branding it the "Etihad Campus", named for Emirati state-owned Etihad Airways.[40] Through his investment, Manchester City was able to achieve great heights and rocket up the standings of both English and European football in an astonishingly short time. However, Mansour's case differs from that of Qatar in so far as it was primarily a self-admitted financial motivation and not a geopolitical one driving his purchase and investment, although it is reasonable to assume that, through the models discussed above, that the United Arab Emirates also saw their soft power capabilities increase as a result of this purchase, which the *New York Times* has since called "a [public relations] exercise for Abu Dhabi".[41] Mansour's success was certainly watched and noted by his GCC neighbors in Doha,

[40] David Conn, *Richer than God: Manchester City, Modern Football and Growing Up* (Clays Ltd, 2012).
[41] Conn; The Daily Podcast, "The Super League That Wasn't," The New York Times, 2021, https://open.spotify.com/show/3IM0lmZxpFAY7CwMuv9H4g?si=IcZqBFfbSfO1UKq_q6MhFA.

who quickly found themselves a club to transform and brand in their own right (PSG) a mere three years later. In addition to simply using a club, their kits and players as a de-facto advertising board for a state-run business, there are other ways in which state-run sponsorships can bring about power capabilities.

Scholars have noted that concepts central to our discussion, whether they be nation brand, or Kamrava's subtle power, are closely tied to economic and financial stability and disposable funds.[42] Kunczik, in his seminal work on national image, discusses how, especially for smaller states, the ability to effectively cultivate a national image and brand are reliant upon strong economic and financial institutions.[43] As such, by investing in the success of, as is the case with Mansour's purchase of Manchester City and QSI's purchase of Paris St. Germain, and/or piggybacking off the success of, established teams, as is the case with other sponsorship campaigns, it can bring tangible benefits in the form of financial and economic gain back to the home state which in turn can bolster a state's international image.[44]

In addition to bringing in financial and corporate gain to a state which allow them to invest in the public diplomacy efforts needed to cultivate a positive nation brand and image, professional sports teams present another mechanism through which public opinion can be influenced. Professional sports teams are unlike other corporations in so far as they can connect with the public through emotion. The "product" which these corporations' market is entertainment, but it is entertainment with a side of emotional attachment, especially for socialized fans. The relationship between a sports team and a fan is inherently an emotional and

[42] Kunczik, "Introduction to the Problems of International Image Cultivation."
[43] Kunczik, 111.
[44] Buhmann and Ingenhoff, "The 4D Model of the Country Image: An Integrative Approach from the Perspective of Communication Management"; Kunczik, "Introduction to the Problems of International Image Cultivation."

irrational one. Fans of any given team or player, (both professional and international) experience happiness and elation during successful times, and sadness and anger when the team does not perform well. This emotional attachment creates the potential ability for a sports team to shape a person's preferences. This dynamic is noted first in Thomas Pettigrew's 1998 work on intergroup contact theory which was expanded upon by Norman Miller in 2002.[45] According to this theory, repeated interactions between groups, in our case, sports team and fan base, allows for the ability for perceptions of an audience to change over time.[46] If the investments into professional sports teams by a foreign entity, in this case the Qatari government, lead to success on the field of play, which in the case of PSG, it has, then it is reasonable to assume that the perceptions of Qatar among fans of the game (and PSG especially) has been altered as a result. By exploiting the emotional nature which exists in sport, it provides actors who choose to invest in it a tangible and easy medium which can be exploited to affect the preferences among a large audience. This dynamic is especially important in the case of Qatar, it allows a state whose style of governance, and alleged ties to extremist groups are at odds with many Western values generally held by the international community to alter their national image and brand, without making too many substantive changes at home.[47] Given the unique emotional nature of sport, some observers of the situation have dubbed Qatari efforts as "green-washing" or "sports-washing", in effect, attempting to capitalize on the international and universal love of sport, to mitigate some of the

[45] Thomas Pettigrew, "Intergroup Contact Theory," *Annual Review of Psychology* 49, no. 1 (1998): 65–85; Norman Miller, "Personalization and the Promise of Contact Theory," *Journal of Social Issues* 58, no. 2 (2002): 387–410, https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-4560.00267.
[46] Miller.
[47] James Dorsey, "The 2022 World Cup: A Potential MonkeyWrench for Change," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 2014, https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2014.929115.

less desirable aspects of Qatar's national image, namely its alleged ties to violent extremism, as well as the controversial *kafala* system.[48]

## Qatar's Geopolitical Ambitions and Regional Tensions: An Overview

### Qatar and the GCC: A Short History.

As stated earlier, Qatar is a relatively small state, both in terms of geography and population, yet is has carved out a unique niche for itself in both regional and global politics. This feat is even more impressive when one considers the vast balancing act Qatar must play when attempting to grow and project power when it shares a border with a potentially hostile government in Saudi Arabia and is less than one hundred miles by sea away and shares a major LNG field with Iran who has hegemonic ambitions of their own. These two regional powers are often at odds with one another and have a very low tolerance for dissent within their respective perceived spheres of influence, both of which include Qatar. Qatar has long been a bit of a maverick in the region, especially among states on the Arabian Peninsula, when it comes to outlining its relationship with Riyadh. Other GCC states, most notably the UAE and Bahrain have aligned their foreign policies closely with that of Riyadh in recent years, yet Qatar normally sees itself in a different light.

Relations between the Saudi and Qatari ruling family, the al-Thani's, have long been turbulent. The rift dates back to the nineteenth century, when Faisal bin Turki al Saud – grandfather of Ibn Saud, founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia – laid claim to the peninsula of Qatar in 1835 and 1851 respectively. As Ibn Saud later continued to expand his Kingdom in the

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[48] Carlos A Rabassó, Martin Briars, and Javier Rabassó, "Royal Family Business in Qatar and the Emirates through Sports Club Management: 'Green Washing' or a Sustainable Model? The Cases of FC Barcelona and Manchester City," *International Journal of Employment Studies* 23, no. 2 (2015): 5–25, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=112778239&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

1930s, there was a real fear that he would eventually seize the small Sheikhdoms of Qatar, Bahrain and the Trucial States (modern day UAE), and he might have been successful had it not been for British intervention.[49] This did not stop the Saudis from continuing to make aggressive expansionist claims towards Qatar, however, especially after the discovery of oil on the peninsula in the 1930s. Relations were perhaps the most tense at this time with Bahrain, who declared a full economic embargo on Qatar in the late 1930s, crippling the Qatari economy and ensuring their oil could not serve to meet the increased global demands for it prompted by the outbreak of World War II. During these times Qatar relied heavily upon British support for their protection, and it is not unreasonable to presume that without it, modern Qatar which we know today might not exist.[50]

The next large regional breach occurred in the 1950s, when the Saudis again laid claim to vast areas of the peninsula, many of which were territories held by Qatar, the UAE and Oman, with Great Britain again having to intervene on behalf of the smaller Gulf states. Even as many of these smaller sheikhdoms began to gain international recognition and sovereignty in the 1970s, the threat of Saudi expansionism was ever present on the peninsula. In light of the continued perceived threat posed by the Saudis, Qatar began to seek to differentiate itself from the other GCC states. Qatar began to invest heavily in creating its own deep-water ports and LNG infrastructure, to reduce the country's reliance on other GCC states to participate in the global marketplace. The growth of Qatar's LNG industry and the creation of accessible deep-water ports allowed Qatar to form strong economic linkages with other states and gave these

[49] Kamrava, *Qatar: Small State Big Politics*.
[50] Kamrava.

foreign entities a vested interest in upholding and preserving Qatari security and territorial integrity.[51]

Another seismic shift in relations between Qatar and the other GCC states came in 1995 when Sheikh Hamid bin Khalifa al Thani took over control of Qatar from his father, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad al Thani. The questionable nature of the transfer of power slighted the Saudis and the Emiratis especially, culminating with their support for an unsuccessful coup attempt the following year. The hostile nature in which the new Sheikh was received from his regional neighbors forced him to turn to Western States such as the United States and Great Britain for support, which was provided in the form of a US air base at Al-Udeid and the eventual inclusion of Qatar in the US security umbrella. Fast forward to 2014, when relations between Qatar and its other neighbors on the peninsula took another nose-dive. Bahrain, the UAE and Saudi Arabia all announced that they were withdrawing their ambassadors from Doha, citing the need to "protect their security and stability."[52] These three states would go on to support a full economic and diplomatic blockade of Qatar three years later, which would last until 2021. Currently, relations between the other Gulf States have been slightly improving, with talks of potential tourism coordination efforts between the states during the upcoming World Cup beginning to take place.[53]

### Qatar, the West, and Iran

Given the oft contentious relations which exist between Qatar and the other GCC states in the peninsula, Qatar has needed to rely upon the United States for its security. For the most part

[51] Kamrava.
[52] Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Gulf Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).
[53] Simon Evans, "Gulf Deal Opens up New Possibilities for Qatar World Cup," *Reuters*, January 6, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-soccer-worldcup-qatar-idUKKBN29B2GW.

the US has proved a reliable ally, most notably building an airbase in Qatar, the largest of its kind in the Middle East. American leaders have also been continuous in their support for maintaining the status quo and protecting Qatar's sovereignty. However, the need for Qatar to turn to the United States for protection after Hamad al-Thani's rise to the throne in 1995 meant that the state was now forced to balance against another regional power, Iran.[54] While Qatar has normally had more favorable relations with Tehran than its other GCC neighbors (most notably Saudi Arabia) Qatar's embrace of US military presence within its borders, as well as its effort to modernize and develop, has meant that Qatar is now forced to play a delicate game of ensuring it does not "poke the bear" regarding the United States, but can also appease Tehran. Qatar, to its credit, seems to have struck a reasonable balance in this regard. Qatar has been a willing participant in past US and Western military actions in the region, most notably operation Desert Storm in the 1990s, has allowed the US to conduct operations based in Qatar during the 2003 war in Iraq as well as the ongoing war in Afghanistan, and the NATO-backed disposition of Libyan leader Moammar Qaddafi in 2011. Qatar has also distanced itself from Syrian president Bashar al-Assad when it became clear he had become a *persona non-grata* in Washington.[55]

Despite the strength of the Qatari-US relationship, Qatar has also ensured that it maintains cordial ties with Iran. The relationship with Iran was likely born out of necessity due to the two country's sharing of an LNG field, the world's largest in fact. Qatar's pursuit of at least a working relationship with Tehran is something that differentiated it from most other GCC states on the peninsula in the first place, but the fact that this relationship has continued into the era of relative Western alliance is incredibly noteworthy. For example, between 2008 and 2010

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[54] Kamrava, *Qatar: Small State Big Politics*.
[55] Rory Miller and Harry Verhoeven, "Overcoming Smallness: Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Strategic Realignment in the Gulf," *International Politics* 57, no. 1 (2020): 1–20, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-019-00180-0.

alone, Qatar and Tehran had some nine summits of varying official capacity, with continued "expressions of friendship" leading to agreed trade deals and even a defense pact.[56] Qatar, while relying heavily upon strong relations with the United States for its security has nonetheless been able to chart a relatively independent foreign policy of hedging, by balancing their security and close ties with the United States as well as maintaining a working relationship with Iran. Qatar's effective balancing in this nature is one success which has led to the state being able to look and think globally, without the existential security threat from sharing borders with two historic adversarial actors.

## Qatari Power Projection

Qatar has several tools at its disposal as it pursues this relatively independent foreign policy, through which it can project power across the region. In addition to its sports investment strategy, which will be discussed in more detail later, Qatar has used its surplus of financial capital to promote a positive nation brand and self-image across the region. The main ways through which Qatar has attempted to promote its image and project power is through the state-owned news outlet Al Jazeera, the Qatari Investment Authority as well as through traditional diplomacy often acting as a mediator in several regional conflicts.

Al-Jazeera, since its inception in 1996, has become one of the most prominent Arab-language news sources throughout the Middle East. It enjoys significant viewership throughout the region and has become an internationally recognized media source. Critics of Al-Jazeera have noted that the coverage on the network has become increasingly aligned with the Doha's foreign policy goals, despite the networks claims of journalistic independence.[57] Crucially,

[56] Kamrava, *Qatar: Small State Big Politics*, 85–86.
[57] Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Gulf Crisis*.

during the 2011 uprisings known as the Arab Spring, the coverage of the events on Al Jazeera was heavily biased towards pro-Islamist groups across the region. Qatar has also in the past, allowed dissidents of rival regimes access to Al-Jazeera's platform to propagate their message, which, by happy coincidence, often serves to help Qatari interests.[58] Qatar's regional rivals, most notably Saudi Arabia, have since sought to counter any potential gains in influence which may result from Al Jazeera. Saudi Arabia even banned Al Jazeera from Saudi airwaves and hotels in 2017.[59] Through the growth and normalization of Al Jazeera as a news source throughout the region, Doha has an audience to which it can propagate a specific message, relatively unaltered. Despite the outcry from critics, Al Jazeera still remains closely tied to the Qatari ruling family and gives Qatar the ability to connect and counter any malign narratives which may exist, as well as potentially sway public opinion in the region. Al Jazeera has since grown and has offices in every major continent and news markets, giving the Qataris a platform through which they can comment on global current events as well. While other states may have similar capabilities and news outlets, Al Jazeera has grown enough and become normalized enough that dethroning it as the dominant media outlet in the region would take significant investment and infrastructure. Al-Jazeera was initially created to serve the larger Qatari initiative regarding branding the nation as a progressive one which encourages free press and open debate, and while it may have fallen short of this goal in some regards, it has nonetheless served to give Qatar a global microphone, which has undoubtedly helped brand the state in a more positive light, especially in the West.

A second lever through which Qatar seeks to project power in the world is through the Qatari Investment Authority (QIA) which funds infrastructure development projects and invests

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[58] Ulrichsen.
[59] Amanda Erickson, "Why Saudi Arabia Hates Al-Jazeera So Much," *The Washington Post*, June 23, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/06/23/why-saudi-arabia-hates-al-jazeera-so-much/.

in businesses across the region. Similarly to Al Jazeera, QIA is said to simply be a benign fund through which Qatar can serve to bring economic development to the Middle East, yet it also seems to choose to fund projects which align with the Sheikh's geopolitical ambitions, and Sheikh al-Thani even sits on the board of directors as chairman. For example, in 2011, soon after Qatar announced its financial and military support for the anti-Qaddafi revolution in Libya, QIA offered Libya's neighbor, Tunisia, a significant amount of investment ($10 billion) in the country should it formally recognize the National Transition Council as the government of Libya.[60] In addition to funding projects in many Middle Eastern states, the QIA also heavily invests in Europe, seeking to ensure that Qatar becomes heavily tied into the European marketplace, and that on the flip side of the coin, that Europe chooses to invest in Qatar as well. These efforts likely bore fruit when, after the enactment of the 2017 blockade, French president Emmanuel Macron visited Qatar and pledged his support for the state, even agreeing to sell arms to the Qatari Defense force.[61]

While most GCC states have sovereign wealth funds in the same design to the QIA, the QIA is directly tied into the country's politics and is a much more aggressive investor in the region than its counterparts in the GCC. By using the QIA and investing willingly in several regions of interest across the globe, Qatar is further able to differentiate itself as a regional power by branding itself not only as a proponent of economic development for the Middle East, but also as a favorable business partner for the more traditional developed world.

The final tenet of Qatari power projection which has been discussed in the traditional literature is that of Qatar as a diplomatic mediator. In much the same vein as Henry Kissinger

[60] Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Gulf Crisis*.
[61] Ulrichsen.

during the era of "shuttle diplomacy" Qatar is often quick to offer its services as a mediator in regional conflicts. Qatar in the past has served as a mediator for regional conflicts including Lebanon, Yemen and Sudan.[62] Even more notably, Doha has served as the sight of negotiations between the United States and the Afghani Taliban, as they discuss ending the over two-decade American war in Afghanistan. Qatar has allowed the Taliban to have an office in the country, also home to US Central Command (USCENTCOM), seeking to help facilitate a dialogue between the warring parties. Crucially, doing so gives Qatar the ever-important "seat at the table" which gives it a degree of influence in shaping outcomes. Engaging in mediation efforts also serves to send a strong message. By acting in this fashion, Qatar is able to propagate a message of stability and goodwill, especially in a region which is so marked by hostility and volatility.

Qatar's ability to invest in power projection capabilities like the ones outlined above largely stem from two sources, the massive cash reserves which have come from the growth of their carbon fuel economy, as well as the centralized nature of the Qatari government. The autocratic nature of the Qatari regime also gives it a high amount of flexibility when it comes to implementing their desired foreign policy outcomes. They are not burdened by domestic politics dominating discussions about how governments funds should be used, or which foreign policy initiatives should be pursued by the government to the degree which other, more liberal states are.[63] Again, while some may claim that Qatar's branding efforts are often undone by its unwillingness to embrace concrete political reforms at home, it is nonetheless worth noting the extreme relative success of Qatari state branding as a form of power projection in the Middle

[62] Mehran Kamrava, "Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal* 65, no. 4 (2016): 539–56.
[63] Kamrava, *Qatar: Small State Big Politics*, 105–40.

East and the globe writ large, especially considering the inability of many other regional powers to achieve similar outcomes with similar resources at their disposal.

## Sports and Subtle Power

The earlier sections have outlined the relationship which exists between sport, international relations and a nation's power capabilities, as well as Qatar's recent rise and geopolitical ambitions. I will now demonstrate how Qatar has used sports as a means through which it can accumulate and project subtle power, or "the ability to exert influence from behind the scenes" to align with its larger geopolitical power accumulation strategy, uniting the two concepts outlined previously. Given that subtle power relies upon four tenets through which it can be projected, (physical and military protection, marketing and branding efforts, diplomacy and international relations and global purchases and investments) I will demonstrate how Qatar's previously outlined strategy involving sports investments fits into each of these tenets.[64]

### Physical and Military Protection

This first tenet of subtle power is the ability for a state to be safe and secure from external military threats, which relies on physical and military projection. In the case of Qatar, this is supplied through an outside government, the United States. As outlined earlier, Qatar's relations with other states in the region, often with greater military capabilities and larger armies at their disposal, is precarious at best. However, Qatar has also been masterful in its ability to secure military protection from first Great Britain and later the United States by using diplomacy. Since the establishment of relations between the US and Qatar in 1972, Qatar has welcomed Western

[64] Kamrava, 60.

investment into the state, helping to develop Qatar's LNG-based economy.[65] In return for these investments, Qatar has since been a reliable trading partner of the United States, which gave Washington a vested interest in protecting this business relationship. Furthermore, as the Middle East increased as a region of strategic importance for the United States through the latter twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Qatar continued to prove a willing American partner, exemplified through the US opening of Al-Udeid Airbase, home of USCENTCOM in Qatar in 1996. Qatar is also home to a Turkish airbase, home to some 5,000 troops which have provided Qatar with another NATO-member ally. Turkey has also recently sanctioned a series of arms sales to Qatar, prompted by the genesis of the Saudi blockade in 2017 and a need to ensure valid deterrence against Riyadh.[66]

While the US-Qatari security relationship cannot be quantified as part of Qatar's sport power strategy, the security guarantees afforded to Doha allows the state to dedicate more of its resources to power projection through sport, as opposed to traditional military means. The average GCC country spends 5.5 percent of their annual GDP on defense, while Qatar is afforded the luxury of being able to divert those funds elsewhere, likely into public diplomacy and nation branding campaigns of which sport is an important component.[67] It is also worth

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[65] US Embassy Qatar, "Policy and History," accessed March 19, 2021, https://qa.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/.
[66] Al-Jazeera, "Erdogan: Turkey-Qatar Military Base Serves Regional 'stability," *Al-Jazeera*, November 2019, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/25/erdogan-turkey-qatar-military-base-serves-regional-stability.
[67] Haena Jo, "Can the UAE Emerge as a Leading Global Defense Supplier?," *Defense News*, February 15, 2021, https://www.defensenews.com/digital-show-dailies/idex/2021/02/15/can-the-uae-emerge-as-a-leading-global-defense-supplier/#:~:text=The UAE is estimated to,the region's second-largest spender.; Dominic Dudley, "Defence Spending By Middle East Countries Is $44 Billion Less Than Previously Thought," *Forbes*, December 20, 2020, https://www.forbes.com/sites/dominicdudley/2020/12/02/defence-spending-by-middle-east-countries-is-44-billion-less-than-previously-thought/?sh=1e0051666251.

noting that Qatari defense spending figures are not public since 2010, but as of 2010, the state was only spending about 1.5% of its GDP on defense. [68]

### Marketing and Branding Efforts

Given that Qatari security is ensured through the country's strong ties with the United States, it is thus able to invest a greater percentage of its wealth into other forms of power projection. Relating to sport, Qatar has greatly invested in marketing and branding the state, both through the sponsorship campaigns of state-run enterprise, hosting and branding of various sporting events on Qatari soil, as well as using their purchase of PSG to show off Qatar as a potential tourist destination, but also as a modern, progressive state.

As noted earlier, Qatari state-owned businesses are a regular investor into elite European professional soccer, as well as many other professional leagues around the world. Qatar began its foray into soccer sponsorship in 2011 (the same year that QSI purchased a controlling stake in PSG) when the Qatar Foundation became the main shirt sponsor of FC Barcelona. This sponsorship turned into Qatar Airways in 2013, with the airline paying FC Barcelona some €93 million for the privilege. In this agreement, Qatar Airways not only got a spot as FC Barcelona's shirt sponsor, but also a sign on the façade of their iconic stadium, the Camp Nou, as well as an exhibit in the team's museum.[69] The €93 million sum was justified come the 2015 season in which Barcelona won the treble (Copa Del Rey, La Liga and the UEFA Champions League). Indeed, any FC Barcelona fan (or football fan in general, for that manner) remembers the sight of international mega-stars like Lionel Messi, Neymar (who QSI-owned PSG would later break the

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[68] Pieter D. Wezeman and Alexandra Kuimova, "Military Spending and Arms Imports By Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, 2019, jstor.com/stabe/resrep20076.

[69] Danyel Reiche, "Investing in Sporting Success as a Domestic and Foreign Policy Tool: The Case of Qatar," *International Journal of Sport Policy* 7, no. 4 (2015): 489–504, https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2014.966135.

global transfer record to sign for €222 million), Xavi or Gerard Pique covered in confetti, celebrating victory with "Qatar Airways" displayed prominently across their chests on three separate occasions.[70] Qatar Airways remained associated with FC Barcelona until the end of the treble season, before then club-President Josep Maria Bartomeu chose to change the shirt sponsorship to Japanese online retail company Rakuten, citing the poor conditions and alleged human rights abuses of Qatari migrant workers made possible under the *kafala* system.[71] In addition its contributing to the failure of Qatari state-owned business to secure a second contract with FC Barcelona, the *kafala* system has also seriously increased scrutiny on Qatar in the run up to the 2022 World Cup. After the initial calls from Tromsø IL for Norway to boycott the World Cup, both Norway and Germany's men's national soccer teams engaged in protests against the situation in Qatar, wearing shirts that said "human rights" in their qualifying games for the World Cup, played in late March 2021.[72]

Qatar Airways is also the official airline sponsorship of the German footballing giant Bayern Munich, which recently won the treble in its own right in 2020. While the airline did not take the coveted place as the "main" shirt sponsor, the airline was featured as a sleeve sponsor, and will remain so until 2023. Qatar has since purchased shirt sponsorships of two other European clubs, AS Roma (Italy) and K.A.S Eupen (Belgium), and while these clubs are

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[70] FC Barcelona, "FC Barcelona to Present All Five Titles Won in 2015 to the Fans Prior to Kick off against Betis," fcbarcelona.com, 2015, https://www.fcbarcelona.com/en/news/1074211/fc-barcelona-to-present-all-five-titles-won-in-2015-to-the-fans-prior-to-kick-off-against-betis.
[71] Matt Jones, "Barcelona Fail to Agree Qatar Airways Shirt Sponsor, Reportedly Eye Record Deal," *Bleacher Report*, October 23, 2015, https://bleacherreport.com/articles/2581926-barcelona-fail-to-agree-qatar-airways-shirt-sponsor-reportedly-eye-record-deal.
[72] Håvard Melnæs, "Could a Norway Boycott of the Qatar World Cup Change the Future of Football?," *The Guardian*, March 30, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/30/norway-boycott-qatar-world-cup-football?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other; Goal.com, "Why Are Teams Protesting Qatar in World Cup 2022 Qualifiers?," Goal.com, 2021, https://www.goal.com/en-us/news/why-are-teams-protesting-qatar-in-world-cup-2022-qualifiers/17lztfmdd553j1ge17m6iszhw1.

unlikely to reach the heights of either FC Barcelona or Bayern Munich in the near future, it nonetheless will give Qatar comparable benefits from any success which the two teams do have. Slightly ironically, Roma announced the shirt sponsorship agreement with Qatar Airways (the club previously did not have a shirt sponsor) after one of the most memorable nights in the club's history when Roma overcame a 4-1 deficit to knock FC Barcelona out of the 2018 Champions League. One has to wonder if this result against a club which had so unceremoniously ended its partnership with Qatar factored into the decision-making process of Qatar in courting AS Roma for a sponsorship deal.

In addition to Qatar's shirt sponsorships, their sponsorships of Paris St-Germain go a step further. Since the takeover of PSG in 2011, QSI has poured money into the club, which has taken PSG from irrelevancy to the ranks of Europe's elite in a mere decade, affording them a global platform akin to both FC Barcelona and Bayern Munich. In addition to traditional shirt sponsorships, Qatar has ensured that PSG takes highly publicized visits to the country, showing off Doha's attractiveness as a tourist destination, as well as had PSG participate in several friendly matches on Qatari soil. Indeed, one such trip in 2018 saw PSG's social media account post several videos of its players playing pickup games against the backdrop of Doha's skyline, racing go-karts across sand dunes and going on camel rides. This content was picked up and disseminated by international media outlets such as ESPN and Bleacher Report, reaching an audience of millions.

In addition to its contributions to professional football, Qatar Airways and tourism authorities (both state-run entities) are also major sponsors of sports including the World Tennis Association, hosting more than one WTA tournament in Doha each year. Qatar also holds an annual Formula One race in Doha, an equestrian tournament as well as the Handball Super Globe

tournaments.[73] While these events and tournaments do not bring in the international prestige and media coverage of say, the World Cup, they are nonetheless emblematic of a concerted effort by Doha to bring in multinational sporting events, which can be used as a way to show off the country to the world.

In addition to state-run professional sports sponsorship, there are other government-sponsored initiatives which Qatar has adopted in its quest to brand itself a sporting hub. For starters, every year Qatar has a government-mandated "national day of sport" in which its citizens are allowed to take the day off of work and engage in sporting activities. This day is normally widely publicized and met with a high amount of media coverage, through which Qatar is able to show off its sporting investments and world-class facilities which are enjoyed by the country's citizens. The day is also used as a medium to promote exercise and healthy living among Qatari citizens, again seeking to brand the country as one that values physical and mental health.[74]

Qatar, for its part, hopes to attain two goals through these marketing and branding efforts. The first goal is that Qatar is able to brand itself as a progressive and modern regional power, and possibly seek to detract or "green wash" away the alleged ties to terrorism or the *kafala* system.[75] The second goal is to contribute to the larger Qatari efforts to diversify its economy to reduce the reliance on LNG exports, as outlined in Qatar Vision 2030.[76] One economic sector identified for growth in this plan is the travel and tourism sector. It is no surprise then, that much

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[73] Reiche, "Investing in Sporting Success as a Domestic and Foreign Policy Tool: The Case of Qatar."
[74] "Qatar Celebrates 10th Edition of National Sports Day," *The Peninsula*, February 9, 2021, https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/09/02/2021/Qatar-celebrates-10th-Edition-of-National-Sport-Day.
[75] Rabassó, Briars, and Rabassó, "Royal Family Business in Qatar and the Emirates through Sports Club Management: 'Green Washing' or a Sustainable Model? The Cases of FC Barcelona and Manchester City"; Reiche, "Investing in Sporting Success as a Domestic and Foreign Policy Tool: The Case of Qatar."
[76] Government Communications Office, "Qatar National Vision 2030," Qatar National Vision 2030, 2008.

of the sponsorship campaigns by Qatari state-run companies are tourism and/or focused, such as Qatar Airways. Again, if we associate corporate success with power, then it is reasonable to assume that any change or economic benefit to Qatari corporations will also see the state's power capabilities increase.

These sponsorships and branding efforts have provided tangible benefits to Qatar in the form of business for both Qatar Airways as well as tourism revenue. Since the agreements with FC Barcelona and the takeover of PSG, the annual revenues of Qatar Airways have more than doubled while Qatar's tourism revenue has more than tripled.[77] These statistics show the success which Qatar's sports investments have had in effectively building a nation brand of Qatar not only as a hub for sporting, but as a tourist destination. Furthermore, given the relationship between corporate success and nation brand, it is reasonable to infer that the corporate success brought to Qatar Airways has led to an effective increase in Qatar's overall power capabilities.[78]

### Diplomacy and International Relations

Qatari subtle power projection can also be seen through the country's use of diplomatic power in securing the FIFA World Cup in 2022. As stated earlier, the power potential for any nation which can successfully be awarded and successfully execute a mega-event such as the World Cup are enormous. In understanding of this dynamic, the government of Qatar had to exercise a great amount of its diplomatic power in securing the tournament.

The role of non-state sporting institutions tasked with the governance of sport and awarding of the games, is that similar to a kingmaker.[79] These entities can essentially bestow

[77] Qatar Airways, "Annual Report Fiscal 2020," 2020; The World Bank, "International Tourism, Receipts (Current US$) - Qatar," 2019, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.RCPT.CD?locations=QA.
[78] Krzyzaniak, "The Soft Power Strategy of Soccer Sponsorships."
[79] Cha, "Role of Sport in International Relations: National Rebirth and Renewal."

upon any willing state a higher international pedigree, as well as a subsequent amount of influence. Given the amount of power capabilities present in the hosting of a mega-event, the ability to have one awarded to any given state requires a high amount of diplomatic and bargaining expertise. One key point, however, remains in the nature of these organizations in so far that they are not held to the same ethical standards as political non-state international organizations. As outlined earlier, there was an extreme amount of controversy which surrounded the awarding of World Cup to Qatar, eventually leading to the resignation of the then-president Sepp Blatter. A *New York Times* investigation has since revealed that a bribe was accepted by many top FIFA officials in the bidding process to award both the 2018 tournament to Russia, as well as the 2022 World Cup to Qatar.[80]

While these underhand tactics certainly contributed to Qatar's ability to secure the necessary votes for the awarding of the tournament, there are other aspects of more traditional Qatari diplomacy surrounding sport which contributed as well. For starters, Qatar served as a willing financial benefactor for the Confederation of African Football (CAF) helping steer the organization through financially insecure times in early 2010. In return for this, Qatar was able to court the CAF's representatives to FIFA, even presenting Qatar's bid to the CAF independently, before doing so to FIFA as a whole. Secondly, Qatar also had a past history with Sepp Blatter, even helping him ascend to the role as FIFA president. Qatari national, Mohammed bin Hammam, ex-president of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) was lining up a run for FIFA president, before stepping down and choosing to endorse Blatter instead. It was later revealed that bin Hamad was undergoing an ethics investigation from FIFA, with it eventually coming out

[80] Tariq Panja and Kevin Draper, "U.S. Says FIFA Officials Were Bribed to Award World Cups to Russia and Qatar," *The New York Times*, April 6, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/sports/soccer/qatar-and-russia-bribery-world-cup-fifa.html.

that he had bribed some 25 Caribbean Football Union officials for their support for hosting the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.[81] Finally, Qatar was also willingly to openly lobby for its bid, while many of its main rivals chose against it. All of these tactics, in addition to the vast number of financial resources (both legitimate and illegitimate) which Qatar put towards its bid ensured that, by the end of the voting, Qatar won the bid in a landslide.[82] All in all, the techniques employed by Qatar to gain influence in FIFA can be seen as akin to other political and diplomatic efforts which states use to gain influence in other multinational organizations.

In addition to the skillful bargaining and diplomacy which was used by Qatar in securing the World Cup, the World Cup itself can provide tangible power accumulation potential. Given that international sporting events can serve as a platform through which substantive diplomacy can take place, it is likely to assume that the possibility for similar diplomatic exchanges to occur in Doha come 2022.[83] By being the site of potential high-level meetings from the heads of state of the participating nations, Qatar's role as an international mediator will be expanded as a result. Again, there is no guarantee that any concrete policy changes will come from these meetings, but the opportunity for government officials to enjoy a sporting event together is an effective way to build goodwill or set the stage for more official summits or exchanges. By being the site of the tournament, the subtle power benefits through mediation which Qatar has worked very hard to cultivate play directly into their bid to host the 2022 World Cup.

The World Cup will also provide access to a good amount of high-quality football, which can also work as a mechanism through which geopolitical outcomes may be achieved. For

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[81] The Guardian, "Rise and Fall of Mohamed Bin Hammam – Timeline," *The Guardian*, September 1, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/football/2014/jun/01/mohamed-bin-hammam-timeline.
[82] Jerrad Peters, "How Qatar Won the Right to Host the 2022 FIFA World Cup," *Bleacher Report*, September 30, 2013, https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1793593-how-qatar-won-the-right-to-host-the-2022-fifa-world-cup.
[83] Cha, "Role of Sport in International Relations: National Rebirth and Renewal."

example, there is the likelihood of intercultural exchanges between fans of the game. These fans are (for better or worse) representing their respective nations and their values to others.[84] It will not be simply an opportunity for official diplomats to get together, but for fans on a less official and individual level as well. These exchanges can serve to build goodwill among persons of different nations, which will have the potential for potential policy alterations, should they reach a critical mass.[85] In a similar vein, the athletes who compete on the field will serve as de-facto representatives of their country. Success in the tournament, not only as a host but also as a competitor, will also allow for significant power potential for Qatar.

### Purchases and Global Investments

Qatar's international purchases and investments into sport have been significant, both at home and abroad. In addition to their purchases of Paris St. Germain football club, which has been discussed at length throughout the paper, Qatar has also invested significantly into the global sporting media landscape. In a way similar to the Qatari establishment of Al Jazeera to serve as a mouthpiece for its global geopolitical ambitions, they have created a similar media empire in BeIN Sports. Originally, named Al-Jazeera Sports, BeIN Sports has grown from its inception in 2003 to be a globally recognized sports media brand, on par with FOX (US) or Sky Sports (UK). Just as Al Jazeera was created to help Doha reach Arab audiences and promote a message, BeIN was seen as a significant way to build an audience in the region, especially considering that over half of the Arab population at the time of its creation was under 25 years old.[86] It has since grown to have a foothold in the sports media market in nearly every continent,

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[84] Heather L. Dichter, "The Diplomatic Turn: The New Relationship between Sport and Politics," *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2021.1894135.
[85] Kenneth Adler and Davis Bobrow, "Interest and Influence in Foreign Affairs," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1956): 89–101, jstor.org/stable/2746555.
[86] Reiche, "Investing in Sporting Success as a Domestic and Foreign Policy Tool: The Case of Qatar."

especially in Europe and the West and has exclusive rights to many coveted events and professional leagues in these markets.[87] BeIN broadcasts many widely watched sporting events and tournaments including the Spanish La Liga, French Ligue Un, UEFA Champions League and the FIFA World Cup, and that is just in football.

In much a similar manner to the role of Al-Jazeera, Qatar's regional rivals have sought to limit the potential for BeIN's impact to reach their audiences, with many regional states blocking the channel's signal in 2017 to coincide with the Qatari blockade.[88] BeIN's financial investments into securing broadcasting rights also significantly expanded following the 2010 awarding of the World Cup to Qatar, showing that Qatar intends to use the games a springboard to solidify itself as a sporting center.

A second relevant lever of investment is that of the physical sporting infrastructure in Qatar. The FIFA World Cup has provided Qatar with the necessity to build the stadiums, hotels and transportation infrastructure needed to accommodate the number of visitors which will be present in the country. Noting the role of the controversial *kafala* system which has been the principal driver for many of these projects, these infrastructure investments will likely continue to pay dividends long after the World Cup ends in 2022. These construction projects will ensure that Qatar is able to make similar bids for international sporting events well into the future and given that Qatar's vast financial and political influence is not likely to change anytime soon, these bids will be even more competitive than the one which was accepted in 2010. It is possible that Qatar understood this dynamic, and this could explain why Qatar has been slow to respond to the international outcry against the *kafala* system, which some have compared to modern day

[87] Reiche.
[88] Tariq Panja, "For Qatari Network BeIN Sports, Political Feud Spills into Stadiums," *The New York Times*, September 11, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/11/sports/soccer/saudi-arabia-qatar-bein-sports.html.

slavery, with any significant policy reforms.[89] Doha is likely calculating that the short-term soft power loss through the revelation of the system to the world will be made up for by the ability to continue to submit effective bids for future events, without the high amount of investment needed to host the first tournament.

These domestic investments are coupled by other investments into global sport. Qatar currently has heavily invested in sporting facilities in the developing world, a more traditional way to build a positive nation brand. Furthermore, Qatar has recently established the Aspire Academy, a global youth scouting agency, aiming to identify talent in remote parts of the world and bring them to Qatar to develop their talent.[90] This global strategy ties closely into the Qatari program through which those who excel in sport are granted citizenship and allowed to compete for Qatar on the international stage, regardless of the nation of their birth.[91] Doha hopes investments such as these will pay dividends in the form of success in international competition in major sporting events, which can also serve as a way to bolster a nation's power capabilities.[92]

### Other Examples, Conclusions and Implications

There is also an emerging trend of other nation's seeking to follow the Qatari model of "sports-washing" or using sports as a means to build and cultivate, their international image. For example, China has recently been a heavy investor into European professional soccer, in much the same way as Qatar has been, with Chinese nationals purchasing stakes in some prominent European clubs. The most notable case is Italy's Internazionale Milan (hereafter Inter Milan or

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[89] Ganji, "Leveraging the World Cup: Mega Sporting Events, Human Rights Risk, and Worker Welfare Reform in Qatar."
[90] Reiche, "Investing in Sporting Success as a Domestic and Foreign Policy Tool: The Case of Qatar."
[91] Tom Finn, "Qatar's Recruited Athletes Stir Debate on Citizenship," *Reuters*, August 25, 2016, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-qatar-olympics-nationality/qatars-recruited-athletes-stir-debate-on-citizenship-idUSKCN11015P.
[92] Cha, "Role of Sport in International Relations: National Rebirth and Renewal."

Inter), which is currently on course to win the Italian Serie A for the first time in over a decade, likely to unseat eight-time repeating champion Juventus in the process.[93] Inter has followed the model of PSG and signed many prominent players in a short amount of time, seeking to rapidly make up ground from a middling club to league Champion in the space of little over eighteen months. China has also thrown vast sums of cash at prominent European players to leave the prestige of European football and instead come and play in the Chinese Super League. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic hardships have threatened these initiatives in recent years. Inter Milan, especially, is facing significant financial hardships, and will likely have to downsize and sell many prominent players (many of whom were bought on credit) to make up for the pandemic-induced financial losses. Additionally, some players who joined the Chinese Super League have reported that they are not receiving the salaries which were agreed upon, and likely prompted their decision to switch. The similarities to Qatar are readily available to see, both in terms of purchasing a club and flushing it with cash to make it successful, but also in attempting to boost the status of China's domestic league as well. There has also been a similar attempt by China to nationalize foreign talent and build football infrastructure to refine and hone youth talent, just as Qatar has done. These initiatives come from the top of the Chinese leadership, with Chinese President Xi Jinping, an avid soccer fan in his own right, spearheading many initiatives. Xi has also sought to bolster China's performances in international football (they have not qualified for a men's World Cup tournament since 2002)

[93] The British Broadcasting Corporation, "Inter Milan Edged Closer to Their First Scudetto since 2010 with a 1-1 Draw at Spezia That Took Them 10 Points Clear at the Top of Serie A.," *Bbc.Com*, April 22, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/56837162.

and set the country up for future success in international competition as well as rival the West's monopoly on hosting many of the most widely followed sports leagues worldwide.[94]

Saudi Arabia has also begun some "sports-washing" campaigns to rival Doha's. Under the Saudi "Vision 2030", aimed at reducing the dependence of the Saudi economy on oil exports, there was a large section included on hosting sports events, as well as investing in European football leagues.[95] Saudi Arabia has recently penned a multi-year deal with the Spanish football association to sponsor the league, is in talks with Spanish footballing giants Real Madrid for a sponsorship deal worth some $180 million. Riyadh also had a $400 million bid rejected to take over English Premier League club Newcastle United. In addition to these investments, Saudi Arabia is also planning to host a myriad of sporting events, headlined by several Formula One races and a boxing match between Anthony Joshua and Andy Ruiz Jr. dubbed the "Clash on the Dunes." Saudi Arabia is also slated to host a fight between Joshua and heavyweight champion of the world, Tyson Fury, later in 2021.[96] Again, the similarities with Qatar are apparent. Riyadh has had its international image dented after the revelation of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's role in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, and the Kingdom's ongoing intervention in Yemen which has led to civilian deaths in the tens of thousands yet is seeking to heavily invest in sporting events and clubs as a form of positive public relations and to show off their country to the world.

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[94] Kendall Baker and Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, "1 Big Thing: China's Soccer Dream," *Axios*, March 30, 2021, https://www.axios.com/newsletters/axios-china-38a223d7-2964-4c75-89ff-df761de6e428.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axiossports&stream=top.
[95] Ruth Michaelson, "Saudi Arabia Has Spent at Least $1.5bn on 'Sportswashing', Report Reveals," *The Guardian*, March 28, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/28/saudi-arabia-has-spent-at-least-15bn-on-sportswashing-report-reveals.
[96] Michaelson.

These two examples serve to lend validity to the argument advanced in this thesis that sport can serve as an effective medium for a nation (especially rising, authoritarian nations in the western-democratic international system) to bolster its national image, and power capabilities as a by-product. They also demonstrate the continued need for study of these investment campaigns, to demonstrate perhaps, to what extent a negative image can be "sports-washed" away. For example, are Qatar's blemishes in the form on the *kafala* system and alleged state sponsorship of extremism, seen by the international community as less egregious than the Saudi involvement in Yemen and murder of a journalist, or China's actions against the Uighurs in Xinjiang which the United States has labeled a genocide?

In conclusion, As Kamarava argues, the traditional hard and soft power divide can no longer adequately explain how states interact and the multiple dynamics which come into play in accruing power. By taking into account aspects of power that are neither military (hard) or purely cultural (soft), e.g. financial, and diplomatic, we are able to gain a fuller understanding not only of how Qatar has grown into the regional power which it is today, but can also draw a direct connection between its increase in power capabilities and potential and its sports investment strategy. Being neither military nor (purely) cultural, to draw these conclusions, a more dynamic understanding of power was necessary. Kamrava has provided one such definition, but there remains the potential for scholars to continue to analyze the concept of power both theoretically as well as practically, to understand the evolving nature of power projection and accumulation tools that actors will have at their disposal moving into the future. Sport is just one of these levers, but there remains the opportunity to analyze other states and their potentially unique geopolitical strategies, both to further the understanding of power as a concept, but also to understand other nontraditional means through which power can grow. Ultimately, this paper

hoped to provide a conceptualization of what processes and which levers of power have grown over the last decade and since Qatar has become an active investor into global sport. Many scholars who study Qatar have noted the change in Qatar's geopolitical fortunes or noted the concerted effort to invest in sport to build a positive national brand, but this paper provides a timely conceptualization of the phenomenon, to show exactly how the power has grown, as well as sports investments have created potential for other areas of growth as well.

This paper aims to serve as a bridge between the theoretical and the literal when examining the power potential which can be achieved through investments in sport on a national level. This paper was not meant to paint a causal relationship between Qatari forays into international sport, but simply to place the sport investment strategy into Qatar's more longstanding strategy of regional and global power projection. By employing Kamrava's conceptualization of "subtle power" I demonstrate the concrete potential for power accumulation which Qatar hopes to gain through its investments in international sport. This paper serves to fill a gap in the literature on sports diplomacy, and Qatari sports investment by providing a conceptualization of exactly *how* a nation's, in this case Qatar's power capabilities will be altered through their investments, as opposed to simply noting the *potential* for power growth. There remains a need to continue to analyze the Qatari case (and the other two proposed) as it evolves, especially after the World Cup in 2022, to determine if the potential for power growth which has been noted in this paper ends up granting Qatar additional influence or power on a larger, global scale, or if Qatar's rise has simply allowed it to invest in sport and bolster its international image, but with limited tangible impact on Doha's geopolitical fortunes.

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