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The Relationship Between Sports, Economy, Politics, and Religion: A Case Study of the Fifa World Cup in Qatar 2022

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Abstract

Key words:

The World Cup, Qatar, Soft Power, Freedom, Public Diplomacy.

Qatar successfully hosted the 2022 FIFA World Cup despite facing criticism for human rights violations and allegations of supporting terrorists. This study seeks to analyse the correlation between sport, economy, politics, and religion in the context of the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup. The intricate connection was also utilised to introduce the Islamic status of the country, which frequently implemented sharia law. As a result, two key questions emerged: (1) Why does Qatar use the momentum of sports to introduce Islamic values, and (2) How does the country carry out public diplomacy to counter negative opinions? A descriptive-qualitative method was employed to analyse the initiation of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. Pertinent data was gathered through in-depth interviews, news documentation, academic journal articles, textbooks, eBooks, and social media platforms like YouTube. In addition, the data collected underwent analysis using an interactive model that involved stages of information reduction, display, and verification, which incorporated triangulation. The findings indicated that Qatar has implemented a comprehensive set of laws and policies to address national policy criticisms and enhance its public soft power diplomacy. These measures include the establishment of an Islamic identity, the assertion of sovereignty, and the development of economic strength. The potential negative perceptions surrounding the hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup were effectively mitigated, allowing for a successful outcome.

Introduction

The intricate and multifaceted connection between sport, economy, politics, and religion warrants thorough examination, with a particular focus on the 2022 FIFA World Cup as an illustrative example. This aligns with multiple references that offer valuable insights into different aspects of the topic. Qatar's hosting of the competition allowed for an exploration of the intricate relationship. Meanwhile, sporting events like the World Cup are often seen as occasions to demonstrate political and economic influence on a global scale. Religion plays a significant role in Qatar's cultural fabric, impacting various aspects of the preparation and hosting of the football competition. For example, the Qatari government is responsible for incorporating Islamic values into the event, such as building a sustainable stadium and promoting environmentally friendly practices (Abdallah, 2020; Kucukvar et al., 2021). This proves that sporting events, including the FIFA World Cup, will economically, politically, and culturally provide great benefits for the organisers (Almarri, 2020). In addition, Qatar has the distinction of being the first Arab and Islamic nation to host the FIFA World Cup, a highly esteemed international sporting event. This country, despite its size, wields considerable global influence and places a strong emphasis on incorporating Islamic Sharia into its National Law when establishing behavioural norms. Islamic regulation holds a central position in Qatari law and serves as the primary foundation for legislative and juridical development (Abdullah, 2020).

Sport events serve as a platform to promote Islamic values globally, given Qatar's affluent status, political stability, and economic prowess. The introduction process is efficiently prioritised by relying on the global broadcast of events, which attracts a significant physical and digital audience ([Monroe, 2022](#)). During the opening ceremony, a disabled man recited verses from the Al-Quran, marking a historic moment. The provided passage serves as an introductory exploration of Islamic principles regarding human relationships, emphasising the importance of mutual understanding and the absence of hostility. All people ought to uphold these Islamic values, which are widely considered to be universal. However, a recent concern has arisen because of the prohibition on showcasing LGBT symbols in Qatar. Same-sex intimacy is deemed illegal and can result in imprisonment under Qatari law, which is based on Islamic values. Based on the description, liberal activists conveyed the regulation as a limitation on freedom through various forms of media. It is crucial to grasp the origins of the Islamic movement and disseminate precise public information in this scenario. Furthermore, religious teachings are often taken into account when striving for peace and prosperity across the universe ([Setiawati, 2016](#)).

Previous reports, such as the study conducted by [Toohey, Taylor, & Lee \(2003\)](#), analysed the effects of terrorism on sports tourists in the context of the 2002 FIFA World Cup. The analysis primarily focused on the potential security implications of major sporting events, regardless of its emphasis on a different tournament. The findings aligned with the evaluation of Qatar 2022, as the nation faced controversies and obstacles related to safety and security. A recent study by [Omari et al. \(2023\)](#) examined hand injuries that occurred during the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup. The study focused on the medical aspects of the event and conducted a retrospective epidemiological analysis of the health issues related to these injuries. Understanding the types and frequency of injuries has played a crucial role in enhancing safety measures and medical services at subsequent sporting events.

In addition, the development of stadiums and infrastructure for the World Cup relied heavily on migrant workers, which has sparked concerns regarding their treatment and working conditions. Multiple reports have indicated that workers frequently faced exploitative working and living conditions. These included issues like insufficient wages, extended work hours, substandard housing, and inadequate safety measures. The prevailing circumstances prompted calls for the reformation of labour laws in Qatar and increased global supervision of the treatment of migrant workers ([O'Rourke & Theodoraki, 2022](#)). In a study conducted by [Dongfeng \(2013\)](#), the focus was on examining the influence of significant sporting events on the perception of a destination and the subsequent intention of international tourists. This reference is significant as it explores the potential advantages of hosting the World Cup, particularly in terms of tourism and the overall perception of the host nation.

Sustainability is a crucial consideration in major sporting events, particularly in relation to assessing the challenges, opportunities, and progress towards achieving the goals of the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup (Talavera, Al-Ghamdi, & Koç, 2019). This report focuses on the organisers' efforts to implement environmentally friendly technologies and urban development concepts. Religion also has an impact on the connection between sport and politics. Islamic views on physical and recreational activities centre around variations in religious interpretations and the involvement of Muslim women (Walseth & Fasting, 2003). The present study investigates the correlation between religious beliefs and the mental well-being of college football players, specifically within the context of the intersection of sports and religion. The religious dynamics surrounding sporting events are given significant importance and are well comprehended (Akgül & Karafil, 2022).

In addition, a previous study analysed the idea of corporate sociopolitical activism, focusing on the involvement of companies in political and social matters and the resulting effects on business value (Bhagwat et al., 2020). The participation process elicited negative responses from investors who viewed it as a deviation from profit-driven objectives in resource allocation. The corporate participatory process in the FIFA World Cup had an uncertain impact on important values in the political and social sphere. Furthermore, other reports have emphasised Qatar's strong belief in the effectiveness of sport, particularly football, in promoting healthy lifestyles and combating non-communicable diseases (Doraiswamy et al., 2022). The country's vision for the sporting tournament focused on prioritising the implementation of football strength to ensure a positive and healthy experience for participants and spectators.

The 2022 FIFA World Cup places great emphasis on sustainability, as highlighted by Qatar's proposal for a new spatially compact model aimed at achieving the first carbon-neutral sporting event (Talavera, Al-Ghamdi, & Koç, 2019). This statement highlights the importance of organisers in implementing environmentally friendly technologies and urban development concepts to ensure the sustainability of an event. The 2022 FIFA World Cup in the Middle East stirred up controversy due to the decision to host the tournament in Arab nations, which gave rise to social and environmental concerns. This highlighted the connection between sport, politics, and economics, as the event's triumph served as a blueprint and lasting influence for upcoming sporting and social endeavours.

Therefore, the significance of meticulously and thoroughly organising and executing the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar is given utmost priority, highlighting the requirement for strategic planning and careful consideration of long-term effects (Adelowo, 2022). The football tournament aligns with two public health emergencies of international concern (Al-Tawfiq, Gautret, & Schlagenhauf, 2022), highlighting the interconnectedness of sport, politics, and social welfare. In addition, hosting the World Cup in the Middle East presents a chance for FIFA to connect different cultures and showcase an authentic and lasting image of

the Arab world (Griffin, 2019). The focus here is on the tournament's potential influence on national identity and cultural perceptions. The present study holds great importance in its contribution to the organisation of international sporting events in a country, specifically in economic, political, and religious aspects. This contribution is both scientifically and practically supported (Yarahmadian et al., 2022)

The relationship between sport, economy, politics, and religion is intricate and diverse, with the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar specifically examining this connection. Several selected references were used to gain insight into different aspects of the topic, with a focus on developing a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship. Therefore, this study aimed to answer the following questions, (1) Why does Qatar capitalize on the FIFA World Cup event to introduce Islamic values to the world? (2) How does the international community react to democracy, human rights, and the treatment of minorities in the country? (3) How does public diplomacy respond to the reaction of the international community?

The article is organised and divided into the following sections: (1) Background of the study, (2) Review of relevant literature on soft power and foreign policy, (3) A qualitative approach method was employed to gather and analyse the data. (4) The findings and analysis of the sport-politic-religion relationship in the context of the 2022 FIFA World Cup reveal three significant themes: soft power, freedom, and diplomacy. (5) Concluding Remarks, Limitations, and Suggestions for Future Analysis.

Literature Review

According to Joseph Nye's theory, power is defined as the capacity of a state or individual to sway others towards shared ideas or behaviours. Two patterns of influence were given priority in this case: (1) Hard Power, which involves the use of military force or violence to suppress, and (2) Soft Power, which focuses on implementing culture, values, norms, or moral authority. According to Nye, *a country "soft power" depended on three resources, namely (1) culture, which was attractive to others, (2) political values, consistently considered domestically and internationally, and (3) foreign policies were legitimate and morally authoritative by others. Soft power also operated through cooperation than coercion to attain desired outcomes (Feiler & Zeev, 2017)*. The perception of FIFA's decision regarding Qatar's supremacy as a microstate with limited football history and an exceptionally hot climate has been met with scepticism. The FIFA World Cup presented numerous opportunities, but the 2022 tournament proved to be a demanding and impactful event for the host country.

The focus on technological advancements in Qatar's modern culture has contributed to the enhancement of national soft power. This phenomenon occurred because of the strong correlation between power and the notion of national branding. Countries strategically build, assess, and control their reputation to shape international public opinion and influence external societal perspectives. Qatar also utilised the method to enhance global

awareness of its distinct characteristics as well as variations in perception and acceptance. Due to the significant international attention given to mega tournaments, the host was recommended to enhance its soft power to bolster its economic standing. Nevertheless, the developmental efforts led to a susceptibility to soft disempowerment issues, particularly when a country was ill-equipped to handle the intense scrutiny and criticism surrounding inappropriate events and values ([Rookwood, 2019](#)).

[Paché \(2020\)](#) conducted a study on the challenges of sustainability in professional football, which included an examination of the negative effects caused by spectators. According to [Sharman et al. \(2023\)](#), the widespread appeal of significant global events is to blame for this phenomenon. Qatar employed covert tactics to undermine competing bids for the World Cup, which has raised concerns regarding the fairness and credibility of the bidding process. This highlights the political and manipulative nature of hosting major sporting events, where the concept of soft power can lead to significant disempowerment. In this instance, foreign nations were able to detect and eradicate the sway and stake within a country ([Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2015](#)).

The process also incorporated modern progress and sustainable construction practices, particularly in the environmental sector, where the adoption of environmentally friendly strategies was necessary. This strategic implementation focused on safeguarding the environment while also addressing human needs and ensuring future sustainability. Hence, Qatar must consider the implementation of building regulations and the adoption of material recycling practices in preparation for the upcoming 2022 FIFA World Cup. These factors encompassed the utilisation of cutting-edge technology to conserve energy and materials, minimise carbon dioxide emissions, and alleviate financial and societal impacts ([Al-Hamrani et al., 2021](#)).

Qatar fulfilled its commitment by constructing environmentally friendly facilities, focusing on achieving a balance between comfort and sustainability. These efforts included implementing carbon neutrality techniques ([Sofotasiou, Hughes, & Calautit, 2015](#)). In addition, the health sector prepared for the sporting event by conducting simulation-based exercises. These exercises involved testing the entire process of evacuating patients from the FIFA stadium to the main trauma centre ([Gangaram et al., 2023](#)). This highlights the significance of being well-prepared and having the necessary resources in place when hosting large-scale recreational tournaments. One of the main responsibilities of the Qatari government was to create an environment that supports human rights and addresses ongoing violations ([Ganji, 2016](#)). Despite the country's impressive infrastructure, facilities, and accommodation, some of its policies diverged from Western democratic ideals. It is evident that the sport and tourism sectors are closely intertwined with political, socio-cultural, and environmental factors, giving rise to both challenges and opportunities for hosts ([Henderson, 2014](#)).

Method

The study utilised a descriptive-qualitative approach to analyse and interpret the subjective data collected (Creswell, 2013). This encompassed the initial gathering of pertinent data regarding Qatar's political landscape, economic situation, and religious doctrines, along with the progressive principles employed to scrutinise the nation. The secondary data used in this study includes official statistics, administrative records, and relevant archive materials, which were obtained from earlier scholars. In addition, data were collected through (1) interviews with individuals knowledgeable about Qatar's culture and politics, (2) documentation including books, journals, print and electronic media news, and (3) social media platforms, particularly YouTube. The information was subsequently processed through reduction, display, and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Regular checks and comparisons were conducted to verify data accuracy and minimise unjustified subjectivity.

The primary areas of data gathering in this study are centred on three core themes: 1. The importance of oil and gas in Qatar's economy; 2. The emirate's public diplomatic initiatives; and 3. The integration of Islamic principles in the planning of the 2022 World Cup. Neutrality was deemed crucial considering the prioritisation of sociopolitical matters, as stated in the explanation. In addition, Henderson (2014) conducted a comparable qualitative study to assess the opportunities and obstacles faced by the government in producing sporting events for the tourism sector, specifically in organising the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup. The football tournament was implemented to analyse diplomacy, soft power, and security. Moreover, Brannagan & Giulianotti (2015, 2018) and Rookwood (2019) used a different strategy. As a result, there was an improvement in the use of qualitative analysis to study social phenomena, particularly those connected to the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Result and Discussion

Theme 1 Soft Power

Qatar strategically employed its soft power politics to promote Islamic principles during the 2022 World Cup. This was evident in the event's opening and closing ceremonies, which included the recitation and citation of Hujurat verse 13, a universally recognised letter. However, issues arose because of the exclusion of LGBT individuals from exhibiting pertinent symbols and engaging in same-sex relationships. The prohibition elicited vehement responses from the global liberal society, which viewed it as a violation of freedom and liberty (Al Thani, 2021). A study by Matt Hooper titled "An Ugly Scene for the Beautiful Game" appeared in the November issue of Freedom House (Hooper, 2022). This magazine showed disdain for the event organisers, presenting the following assertions:

"The lack of fundamental freedoms is cause for concern among visiting soccer fans, specifically those that are LGBT. Same-sex sexual activity is also a criminal offense in Qatar and is punishable by imprisonment."

According to the publication, the German football squad expressed their intention to boycott the competition or expressed support for wearing LGBT symbols while participating in it. The Qatari authorities responded briefly, asserting that their country's position was immutable. Another public response raised the question of why individuals criticised Qatar's prohibition on LGBT rights for infringing upon freedom and human rights but did not comment on the French government's limitation on Muslim religious symbols, such as the headscarf (Aguilar et al., 2020).

The following three books offer valuable insights and perspectives that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of Arab countries, Islamic principles, Qatar football events, and the diverse international community reactions, both favourable and negative. The first book, authored by Gil Feiler and Hayim Zeev, is titled "The Limits of the Nouveau Riche Diplomacy Report." (Feiler & Zeev, 2017). Secondly, the work "Study of Conflict in the Constituent Assembly: Islam and State Problems" by Syafii Maarif was published in 1985 (Maarif, 1985). Thirdly, there is a book authored by Miriam R. Lowi titled "Justice, Charity, and the Common Good" (Lowi, 2017).

Firstly, the book authored by Feiler & Zeev (2017) mostly focuses on Qatar's diplomatic endeavours to promote Islam and politics, with the economy being a component of its soft power initiatives. This demonstrated the country's utilisation of Soft Power to exert influence on other nations (Khalifa, 2020), stemming from its sense of authority as a sovereign state. Qatar's investment in broadcasting, particularly Al Jazeera, and conflict mediation has received significant attention, rather than focusing on the construction of impressive buildings like the Burj al Khalifa or Zam Zam Tower, which are associated with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, respectively. In this context, Al Jazeera was utilised to present the nation as a sovereign and autonomous entity, offering an alternative viewpoint on a matter predominantly influenced by Western mainstream media outlets such as CNN and BBC, etc (Antwi-Boateng, 2013).

Secondly, the study conducted by Maarif (1985) was used to examine the execution of the FIFA World Cup momentum in Qatar with regards to the worldwide dissemination of Islam. In this instance, the crux of Islamic teachings pertained to the political aspects of governing the nation and controlling society. The political ideology in question was inherently intertwined with Islam, which placed utmost importance on the regulations or principles enforced within a nation. Islam emphasises that Qatar places utmost importance on ensuring security, maintaining integrity, sustaining law and order, and advancing the nation for the goal of prosperity and fully realising the potential of its people (Maarif, 1985). The Emir now has the authority to establish and enforce laws to protect and guarantee the proper application of religious teachings in a country under Islamic law. The implementation assurance was universally prioritised, regardless of the religious affiliation of all attendees during the event. From a traditional political standpoint, the Arab states later achieved a state of sovereignty, free from any external interference.

Thirdly, [Lowi \(2017\)](#) elucidated the impact of Islam on the allocation of wealth derived from oil. It is evident that Islam had a significant impact on the management of oil revenues in Gulf countries, such as Qatar. This influence was accompanied by the distribution of oil and gas income to the general population. The religion also emphasised the building of prosperity and the removal of inequity. Moreover, Islam places significant emphasis on fairness and benevolence, ensuring that the allocation of welfare aligns with Islamic principles. It has been demonstrated that Gulf countries effectively utilise zakat and shodaqoh to manage welfare programmes using their oil and gas revenues, aligning with religious values.

Qatar and other countries have effectively managed the distribution of wealth through zakat, focusing on oil and gas and natural products. Based on the given information, a zakat of 2.5% was levied on the company's income or potential profits, in accordance with Islamic law. Additionally, shodaqoh was offered to individuals, regardless of their location or reason. By implementing this principle, citizens were able to benefit from various government subsidies aimed at promoting the welfare of the people. This included free healthcare and education from the elementary to the university level. Lowi provided the following statements:

“Citizens of all four countries have enjoyed important transfers in the form of free or heavily subsidized goods and services, including free public education and health care, as well as a plot of land. Until recently, public sector employment was easily secured; in Qatar it was guaranteed to high school and university graduates. Transportation , gasoline, water, and electricity are heavily subsidized ([Lowi, 2017](#)).

Ultimately, Qatar leveraged the 2022 World Cup as a platform to promote Islamic values, emphasising its dedication as a Muslim nation to upholding religious teachings. This situation exemplified the adoption of a groundbreaking approach that intertwined sports with religion and politics. While the international public generally accepted the incorporation of Islamic values into religious practices, there were still strong protests from certain groups regarding issues of freedom, particularly the restrictions on same-sex practices and the use of LGBT symbols. The protest had little impact and did not disrupt the ongoing negotiations. Qatar's successful public diplomacy efforts helped gain acceptance for those who opposed the country's policies on the LGBT ban.

Theme 2 Freedom

According to the Webster Dictionary, freedom was *the quality or state of being free, prioritizing the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action*. Based on several restrictive regulations, it was assumed that Qatar lacked independence. During the World Cup, the government implemented strict regulations, including the prohibition of LGBT attributes, same-sex relations, public alcohol consumption, and the consumption of non-Islamic food, like pork. In addition, the country in question is situated in the Arabian Gulf region, with a land area of only

12,000 square miles and a population of 2.3 million. The population of native Qataris was 250,000, accounting for only 10% of the total population. The remaining 90% consisted of non-Qataris, making it the highest proportion of migrant workers in the world.

According to estimates from February 2016, the total population of the country was around 2.3 million, with Saudi Arabia being the only neighbouring country. The border conditions highlighted Qatar's vulnerability to potential annexation or threats from larger neighbouring countries like Saudi Arabia, underscoring its fragility. In 2017, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Egypt imposed an economic embargo, severed diplomatic ties, and disrupted trade with a small country. This trend came to a halt when Qatar demonstrated considerable leverage in negotiations with Saudi Arabia. Qatar firmly rejected demands to dismantle Al Jazeera Broadcasting and distance itself from Iran. The country's rights were upheld as a free and independent entity, with a focus on effectively managing foreign policy objectives, particularly in mediating conflicts in the Middle East.

Qatar demonstrated remarkable political and economic stability when compared to its Arab counterparts. Although most of the population is Sunni, there were no conflicts with Iran, which is predominantly Shia. When faced with an embargo from Saudi Arabia and its allies, Iran offered an alternative route to mitigate the economic impact on Qatar. In addition, the nation with a Sunni majority did not have a political movement focused on gaining power within an Islamic framework. The nation was economically prosperous, being the world's leading petrol producer and a major oil manufacturer in the Gulf. This success can be attributed to its adherence to Islamic values in managing oil revenue.

Theme 3 Public Diplomacy

Qatar strategically used the 2022 World Cup to showcase a glimpse of the Islamic world in the Middle East. This indicates that the national public diplomacy strategy achieved success in garnering international attention due to the interconnectedness of sports with politics and religion. The success can be attributed to Qatar's impressive and opulent presentation, emphasis on economic prowess, rigorous security measures, and commitment to meeting public demands while adhering to Islamic principles. Additionally, the nation faced allegations of human rights violations, particularly concerning migrant workers involved in infrastructure construction for the upcoming matches (Babar & Vora, 2022). The Olympics and World Cup, organised by the IOC and FIFA, also served as international organisations that failed to adequately address human rights concerns during their respective events. Qatar, China, and Russia have recently faced human rights issues in relation to the Olympics and World Cup. These countries were found to have committed human rights violations according to international law, which prompted an examination of appropriate forms of punishment. FIFA and the IOC were deemed unreliable problem solvers due to the challenges faced in holding Qatar, China, and Russia accountable under international law (Carney, 2021).

Sport has long been regarded as a reflection of life, encompassing various activities that emphasise physicality, emotion, politics, money, and morality. It was demonstrated that sports had the ability to elucidate social, cultural, political, and historical contexts. The recreational phenomenon was also connected to various aspects such as health, modernity, nationalism, the state, globalisation, gender, and sexuality (Besnier, Brownell, & Carter, 2018). In addition, Qatar was an Arab nation that held significant global recognition and pursued an ambitious foreign policy, particularly during the Arab Spring. This country was known for its role as a political mediator and significant provider of foreign aid. Its international policy and public diplomacy reflected a potential lack of a coherent exotic strategy. Qatar's extensive network of political partners has resulted in potential volatility, a loss of credibility in diplomatic information, and international scepticism of its foreign policy motives (Khatib, 2013). Hal itu diperkuat dengan salah satu statemen dari informan

“Qatar has played an important role in the international world, especially as a mediator and mediator in various international conflicts. Qatar has succeeded in carrying out strong diplomacy through its economic capability”.

The Arab country has emerged as a prominent mediator in various international Middle East conflicts, earning a reputation as a neutral peacemaker. This country was recognised for its ability to mediate and resolve conflicts, displaying impartiality among disputing parties. It possessed substantial financial resources to host mediation talks and offer incentives for peace. Additionally, the personal dedication of its top leaders played a crucial role in this process (Kamrava, 2011). The development of Qatar's relationship with Israel was a significant aspect of its intricate and daring foreign policy. Based on the description, Qatar's regional policy initiatives and ability to adapt to changing national and international circumstances were focused on developing a sophisticated foreign policy agenda. The country's expression of differences from larger and influential neighbouring nations led to the acquisition of regional primacy (Rabi, 2009).

After analysing the data collected prior to and following the blockade of Qatar, it became evident that there was a significant gap in the existing explanations for the unexpected resilience observed in 2017. The absence of this element was anticipated to evaluate the significant influence on citizen orientation and domestic politics, with a focus on upholding the political status quo by the mobilised Qatari nationals (Gengler & Al-Khelaifi, 2019). In 2017, the diplomatic and economic blockade of the country also prompted inquiries into the dependability of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as political and security allies of the USA. The situation has important implications for socio-political stability and regional security in the Gulf region. The leadership transitions between generations and the need for more decisive policy-making are key factors to consider (Ulrichsen, 2018).

Qatar later provided support to the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliated groups during the Arab Spring, while the UAE took on an opposing stance. Although both countries share similarities, their unique political structures have shaped their individual experiences with Islamic politics in power. Foreign regulations served as a guide for the political policies, which reflected a position of authoritative leadership. These policies emphasised security-focused oversight and prioritised the establishment of meaningful relationships (Roberts, 2017). During this time of significant political upheaval, the situation became more complex and gave rise to resistance movements, significant changes in socio-cultural norms, and transformations in the economic and diplomatic spheres. Observations were made regarding the complex nature of demographic transformations, including mortality, fertility, and migration, in relation to socio-political transitions. The transformations aligned with the development of economic and social modernization as well as democratization (political modernization) (Haghighat, 2018).

Discussion

The FIFA World Cup served as a platform for countries to showcase their political, economic, and cultural prowess on the global stage. Political and economic factors, however, had a significant impact on the decision to choose Qatar as the host of the football tournament. The country's bid to host the tournament was met with scepticism and criticism, primarily due to concerns about its human rights record. Specifically, there were concerns about the treatment of migrant workers and the status of women. The selection of Qatar to host the 2022 World Cup sparked controversy and prompted discussions about the complex relationship between sport, politics, and religion. This study seeks to analyse the intricate relationship between sport, politics, and religion through a focused examination of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. Religion played a significant role in the connection between sport and politics in the Islamic country. Hosting a global sporting event had multiple implications, with a focus on the relationship between sport and spirituality. In keeping with the description, sport has frequently been utilised as a means of exerting soft power and fostering national unity. Governments have strategically employed major sporting events to bolster their international standing and foster a sense of national pride. Qatar's hosting of the World Cup has sparked extensive debate and discussion surrounding labour conditions, workers' rights, and human rights violations.

The hosting of the World Cup brought attention to the human rights record and treatment of women in the country. Critics argued that the country's strict gender segregation policies and restrictions on female privileges were not in line with the values of inclusivity and equality that were being promoted. It is evident that the impact of religion on the interplay between sport and politics in Qatar cannot be overlooked. The hosting of the World Cup in an Islamic country also raised important considerations regarding the convergence of sport and religion.

In addition, the study examined the influence of religion on sports by analysing Islamic values and traditions. The Qatari sporting activities frequently highlighted important religious principles such as decency, justice, and unity. These principles served as a guide for the country's recreational activity practice and regulation patterns. The guidelines placed priority on appropriate dress codes to uphold modesty and respect for Islamic values. The 2022 FIFA World Cup showcased the intricate dynamics that arise when sport, politics, and religion intersect. Furthermore, the intricate connections and potential conflicts within the sport-politics-religion relationship were evident, particularly regarding the treatment of migrant workers, which emerged as a significant concern.

The Qatari government possessed multiple public diplomacy strategies, as indicated by the results. Firstly, the preparations for the competition involve the construction of high-quality infrastructure, including hotels, roads, tourist attractions, stadiums, and communication networks. Secondly, the positive aspects of Islamic teachings can be promoted through the following methods: (1) organising vibrant opening and closing events. (2) displaying quotes from the holy Quran in prominent locations throughout the city, including at the beginning and end of matches; and (3) establishing an information centre dedicated to educating people about Islamic teachings. Thirdly, substantiating the advancements in the infringement of human rights, particularly about migrant labourers.

The absence of any incidents during the event serves as proof that Qatar's public diplomacy efforts, both domestically and abroad, were successful. This demonstrated the use of public diplomacy to elucidate official policy for both the world and domestic society. It was also a part of soft power strategies that countries used to achieve their foreign policy goals, with the likelihood of success being comparable to overall diplomatic achievements. Several other factors were considered in this instance, including the country's economic and political stability, the leader's political legitimacy, and the pattern of diplomatic performance. Hence, the efficacy of Qatar's public diplomacy during World Cup activities can be attributed to the advancement of its economic development. Furthermore, political stability was maintained using a diplomatic approach that employed tactful language while avoiding direct confrontations with Qatar ([Zhou, 2022](#)).

The government's vision for 2030 encompassed a comprehensive country development plan that encompassed numerous sectors, such as the economy and humanitarian efforts ([Al-Tamimi, Amin, & Zarrinabadi, 2023](#)). The FIFA World Cup in Qatar showcased the country's ability to construct suitable infrastructure for hosting football teams and fans. In addition, the country's economic might has bolstered its capacity to construct impressive sports infrastructure. Additionally, it possessed the third-greatest global reserves of natural gas and held the title of the world's foremost gas exporter ([Abulibdeh, 2022](#)). The economic stability was subsequently evidenced by the greatest GDP in the world. According to the above description, Qatar's GDP per capita in 2022 was \$82,887, and it saw a growth rate of 8.7% compared to the previous year ([Mustafa, 2022](#)). This

revenue allowed the nation to construct sufficient infrastructure to accommodate football teams and their followers. Due to its commendable economic stability, the country gained recognition for being a prominent tourist destination and for its strong ties with Western nations. A harmonious relationship was also noted with Islamic and developing nations, regardless of their economic and political ties with Western states.

Conclusion

Finally, Qatar was granted the authority to enact legislation within its borders, reflecting its status as an Islamic, independent, and financially robust nation. This was accompanied by using economic influence to suppress dissenting views on national policy during the event. In this instance, a successful use of public soft power diplomacy was employed to avert the disruption of hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup by divergent perspectives. Finally, Qatar was granted the authority to enact legislation within its borders, reflecting its status as an Islamic, independent, and financially robust nation. Along with this, it used economic clout to stifle opposing viewpoints on national policy during the occasion. In this instance, a successful use of public soft power diplomacy was employed to avert the disruption of hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup from divergent perspectives.

Due to the identification of several constraints, it was suggested that host countries for future international sporting events should consider adopting soft diplomacy as a means of engagement. To enhance future studies, it is imperative to conduct additional data gathering procedures with pertinent informants, such as government officials and decision-makers from international sports organisations.

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