Sports in the Desert:
How Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai are employing
sports to make economic, political, and international gains

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ABSTRACT

Sports in the Desert:
How Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai are employing sports to make economic, political, and international gains

A thesis presented to the Graduate Program in Global Studies

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This thesis discusses the role that sports play in government actions in Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai. These national and emirate governments utilize sport in economic, domestic, and international policies. Major sporting events are hosted for economic gain and international prestige. Sporting initiatives are typically more focused on the welfare of national society. The versatility of the sports industry allows for it to be used in many ways by each government, but it is too early to tell if these strategies will have successful long term outcomes.
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Introduction

In December 2010, Qatar became the first Middle Eastern country to win the right to host a FIFA World Cup, the highest profile sporting event to take place in the Middle East. Both FIFA and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) have recently branched out beyond the typical Western nations previously chosen to host. For instance, three consecutive Olympic Games between 2018 and 2022 will take place in Asia after they made a debut in Brazil 2016, the first Olympics to be held in South America. The FIFA World Cup was held in Africa for the first time in 2010 and will take place in Asia for the second time in 2022 when it is hosted by Qatar.

As international sporting events are moving to new geographies outside of the West more nations seem unwilling to host. Surprisingly, the 2022 Winter Olympic Games bidding process had only two final bids both of which came from Asian countries. The bidding process for the 2024 Summer Olympic Games similarly narrowed to only two bids with voting still four months. Speculation continues about the reasons why many nations avoid hosting the Olympics. Many democratic countries have withdrawn bids after holding referendums to determine whether public support is behind the bid.\(^1\) Many other nations have withdrawn bids after government officials declared the action as an irresponsible use of government funds.\(^2\) Indeed, international sporting events are exorbitantly expensive to organize and host. When costs for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi escalated to over $50 billion, many prospective hosts became disillusioned. Thus, after Norway dropped its bid to host the 2022 Winter Games, the

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\(^1\) Krakow, Poland and Munich, Germany both withdrew their 2022 Olympic bids and Hamburg, Germany withdrew its 2024 Olympic bid after referendums.

\(^2\) Oslo, Norway withdrew its bid for the 2022 Olympics and Rome, Italy; Boston, USA; and Budapest, Hungary withdrew their bids from the 2024 Olympics after declaring hosting fiscally irresponsible.
first Olympics to be awarded after 2014, the IOC was left with proposals from only Kazakhstan and China. This outcome guaranteed an Asian host for the next three Games as South Korea will host the 2018 Winter Olympics and Japan the 2020 Summer Olympics. The IOC ultimately awarded the 2022 Games to Beijing, China, making it the first city to host both a winter and summer Olympics. Yet, Norway’s withdrawal from the bidding process raised a red flag that suggested the IOC was bathed in negative light. The final two bids for the 2022 Games came from countries with poor human rights records and non-democratic governments. When FIFA awarded the 2018 World Cup to Russia and the 2022 World Cup to Qatar in 2010 popular protests occurred globally. Since these bids were awarded the IOC and FIFA, as well as China, Russia, and Qatar, have been the targets of human rights and labor rights protests. Despite objections to Qatar’s selection as World Cup host, the country continues to show interest in hosting other major sporting events. Much of this paper will address Qatar’s motivation to pursue these contracts when other nations visibly shy away from the costs of such endeavors.

Many sport event initiatives have occurred across the Gulf region. This thesis argues that the governments of Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, have utilized sport for economic, domestic, and international purposes. In fact, sport is used as a means to diversify Qatar and the UAE’s national economies by creating a sports industry and using sports to expand the tourism sector. Sports are also a pathway towards increasing the quality of life of citizens, lowering rates of obesity, and preventing diabetes. Sports have also been known to create more equality for women and increase a region’s global

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3 The Norwegian bid scored much better in each category than China and Kazakhstan during the IOC’s preliminary scoring round.
profile. Sport is mentioned in the national governing plans of Qatar and the UAE and sporting events and initiatives are found to be aligned with the priorities of these national ‘visions.’

This paper will examine how sport is employed by the governments of Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai to raise their national profiles and expand their economies. The thesis will focus on international sporting events, conferences, and national and emirate level sport initiatives. The paper is divided into chapters addressing the roles that sports play in the economic, domestic, and international sectors of Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai. More specifically, sports contribute to national economies by expanding the tourism industry through major sporting events and destination tourism. Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have both strategized in government planning documents that sport can bring capital into the economy throughout the year.

The role that sport plays in the domestic sector is thought to have a positive effect on the population’s health, as popular interest increases and elite national talent is developed for the future. Domestic initiatives in Qatar and the UAE demonstrate the wide versatility that sport has as a tool for government use. Some programs involving sport are promoted for health and social reasons, while other sports programs are intended to increase national talent to represent the country on an international stage.

In the international sector sport is used as a way to increase global profiles and directly compete on a global scale according to preset international rules. Qatar and the UAE have broadened their global profile and showcased themselves as leaders in the sporting world, an industry previously dominated by the West.

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4 Qatar National Vision 2030 and UAE Vision 2021
Ultimately, this paper finds that Qatar and the UAE employ sporting events for broader objectives unrelated to sport itself. This suggests that sport is a tool used to accomplish national goals. And the few primary sport goals, such as the UAE increasing the number of Olympic medals its athletes win, are being achieved to further other goals.\(^5\) This paper does not intend to measure whether the sports industry actually achieves national, economic, and health related goals. Instead it attempts to explain how the results of new sport-related initiatives in Qatar and the UAE might be measured and why outcomes from these current initiatives have not yet had time to manifest.

**Definitions**

For the purposes of this paper the term “**major sporting event**” refers to any event that occurs once over the course of a year and has competitors from around the world. This includes world championships, masters championships, legs of tennis and golf seasons, and other significant sporting events. Many of these events take place in the same location around the same time each year. This paper will label competitions, such as the Formula 1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix or the cycling Tour of Qatar, as “**recurring events**.” These recurring events often become mainstays on international sporting calendars and are the easiest type of event to track the growth of impacts it causes on the economy and population.

Other events change locations each year, giving the host city only one shot to host the event well. This paper will refer to these competitions as “**international events**.” Examples of multi-sport international events include Qatar’s hosting of the

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\(^5\) The UAE lists the number of Olympic medals won as a national performance indicator paired with the UAE Vision 2021.
2006 Asian Games and the 2011 Arab Games. International events are typically hosted by a city chosen through a competitive bidding process. Single-sport international events include the 2010 FINA Short Course World Swimming Championships in Dubai and the 2016 World Cycling Championships in Qatar.

The final type of event this paper addresses is the "mega-event," which draw more worldwide attention and enjoy greater worldwide viewership than other event types. Mega-events do not occur every year. For the purposes of this paper mega-events include the FIFA World Cup, the Olympic Games, and the World Expo which is a non-sporting event. Mega-events can only be hosted after each potential host city has gone through a long bidding process years prior to the competition. The Olympic Games have never been hosted in the Middle East. The 2022 FIFA World Cup will be hosted in Qatar and the 2020 World Expo will be held in Dubai.

This paper will also discuss “major sporting conferences” which are international conferences addressing the impact or future of sport. Major sporting conferences include the 9th World Conference on Sport and the Environment, an International Olympic Committee event, hosted by Qatar in 2011 and the annual Dubai International Sports Conference.

Legacy

The term “legacy” is broadly used to define the long-term impact of a mega-event on a city or nation after the event has taken place. Any repercussions of hosting the event - positive or negative - is considered to be part of the legacy. Organizing committees focus on the long and short-term legacies of upcoming mega-events. The
breadth of this term allows politicians and the organizing committee to strategically utilize the proposed mega-event as a catalyst for long-term municipal goals, claiming that sporting events will create deadlines for projects already in process. Common legacy goals are to increase housing, expand public transportation, and decrease the carbon footprint of the city. John Lauermann suggests that these goals can be met simply by bidding for a mega-event and winning the right to host. He argues further that 30.5% of land investment in Olympic bids between 2000 and 2020 were already planned regardless of the bidding outcome. Two good examples and Doha’s bids for the 2016 and 2020 Olympics in which their bids were largely budgeted through the Qatar National Vision 2030.

In their Agenda 2020 the International Olympic Committee announced that Olympic Games would now have to be more sustainable in nature. The Agenda says that the Olympics should cost less money than in the past and make a long lasting positive impact on the host city to make hosting the Games more beneficial. This initiative was started, in part, because of the negative light the Olympics were starting to attract due to the massive budget of the Sochi Games and the protests that occurred around the Rio de Janeiro Games.

Doha’s bid for the 2020 Summer Olympic Games heavily relies on the Qatar National Vision 2030 to argue its right to host the Olympics, framing the Games as a more sustainable endeavour. The bid says that the National Vision “is an approach that

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6 Legacy goals can be viewed on any Olympics website. The best examples of targeting these goals are the London 2012 Olympics, the Qatar 2022 World Cup, and both the Los Angeles and Paris bids for the 2024 Olympics.


8 International Olympic Committee, Olympic Agenda 2020
resonates with the philosophy of Olympism” and that the Olympics are the final step in the recognition that “sport is integral to the nation’s progress in terms of human, social, economic and environmental development.”  

As is stated in the bid and shown in Figure 1 the Olympics are the smallest of three steps to utilize sport in achieving national goals in Qatar. And the bid goes on to say that the permanent facilities proposed in the bid “already exist, are under construction, or are being planned as part of the city’s development.” The International Olympic Committee (IOC) notes that 90% of the building program cost for the competition venues for the Doha bid are for venues that were to be completed irrespective of whether or not the Olympics took place. Without ever producing a bid Dubai also publically announced their readiness to host a sustainable Olympics. In 2011 a feasibility study was done to decide whether or not to bid to host the 2020 Games and it was found by the UAE National Olympic Committee that “as much as 70 per cent of the

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9 Qatar Olympic Committee. Doha 2020 Application File, 5
10 Ibid.
11 International Olympic Committee. Games of the XXXII Olympiad 2020 Working Group Report, 60
‘hard’ infrastructure was already in place or planned.”\textsuperscript{12}

The legacy of the mega-event can offer a set of measures and projects that the city plans to achieve regardless of whether or not the event is hosted. The strategy of hosting a mega-event with existing and planned infrastructure attempts to limit the possibility of the event producing a negative legacy, such as the 2004 Olympics in Athens,\textsuperscript{13} and show that the event will catalyze already planned projects rather than create new ones.

The 2022 FIFA World Cup and the 2020 World Expo both have extensive legacy projects planned. This is the first time for both countries to be able to create a legacy through a mega-event. The proposed legacies for the events are aligned with the national visions but only time will tell if either event will be able to follow through on the proposed legacy or if the events will be viewed as net negatives once they come to completion.

**Sport Strategy**

In 2011 Qatar released a national sports sector strategy guide, written and published by their National Olympic Committee, an effort spearheaded by the current Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. This strategy guide details how sports will contribute to the four major pillars of the Qatar National Vision 2030: human development, social development, economic development, and environmental

\textsuperscript{12} Gulf News, *Dubai to bid for 2024 Olympics*

\textsuperscript{13} The legacy for the Athens 2004 Summer Olympic Games is an example of how poorly planned Olympics can result in much wasted public money. Most venues from the Games were not maintained properly and have wasted away, begging the question of why they were built.
development. The goals in each pillar are oriented toward improving Qatari society in order to stay in line with the national vision. While some goals focus on elite (sport) talent development the general theme is to improve health and create equality among all members of Qatari society, a nation with broad gender disparities. Sport is being instrumentalized by the Qatari government to reach strategic national goals. The sports sector strategy addresses the concrete goals of the national vision, such as community development and environmental awareness, and proposes how sport can be employed to achieve the goals. In this way, Qatar draws on sport to achieve non-sports goals, while also utilizing sport to develop Olympic athletes and grow a sector of their economy focused on sport.

The many ways in which Qatar strives to improve society through sport can be measured in part by steps such as the government creating a National Sports Day holiday in 2012 and creating the Qatar Women’s Sports Committee (QWSC) and opening several sporting facilities for women. President of the QWSC, Ahlam Salem Mubarak al Mana, was awarded the IOC’s World Trophy at the IOC Women and Sport Awards for her contribution to the development of women’s participation in sports and sports administration in 2013.

Winning international awards is also an accomplishment that a government can advertise internationally and domestically as a tangible feat and marker of excellence, whether or not the award proves such a claim. Olympic medals are a marker of success.

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16 Qatar Olympic Committee, *Qatar Celebrates National Sports Day*
that Qatar has outlined as a goal in their 2030 Vision.\textsuperscript{17} The United Arab Emirates has expressed similar interest in international awards. The number of Olympic medals won is a key performance indicator for “cohesive society and preserved identity” alongside other indicators such as happiness index and human development index rankings. Nearly 20 of the UAE’s key performance indicators are measures that are designed and studied by international organizations, with the World Bank and World Health Organization being the two most commonly recurring.\textsuperscript{18}

No official government group has released a sport sector strategy for the UAE but the Dubai and Abu Dhabi sports councils as well as the UAE Olympic Committee have released materials concerning the future of sport in the country.

\textbf{Methodology}

This paper’s main focus is on primary sources. Information has been taken from national and emirate level vision plans, sector strategy plans, bid books for mega-events, responses to the bids for mega-events, as well as from government websites. Some information has been gathered from newspaper articles, which have been particularly helpful in finding quotes from organizations and government leaders about programs and initiatives. Secondary sources have been used to supply some general sport theory as well as to supply information that this author was unable to research himself.

Primary sources are the main source of this paper so that the data being used would be the least interfered with. This author acknowledges that governments do not

\textsuperscript{17} General Secretariat for Development Planning, \textit{Qatar National Vision 2030}

\textsuperscript{18} National Performance Indicators, UAE Vision 2021
always supply authentic data, so a critical analysis of public information on national sports industry outcomes is necessary. By analyzing primary documents this paper will attempt to piece together public narratives about sports created to positively reflect the interests of national governments.

The agencies and reports that exist in each country also help to explain the importance of sport as a strategic tool. Qatar’s National Vision 2030 and the UAE Vision 2021 both mention sport as an area of public interest, but are about larger policy and governmental goals. The inclusion of sport in these reports indicates that sport may be engaged to help achieve national goals. Reports dedicated entirely to sport, such as the Qatar Sport Sector Strategy 2011-2016 exist to shape the future of sport in those nations and explain how the sports industry can help shape other sectors. Reports dedicated to sport and bids for major events typically cite the national plan in order to justify the path that the future of sport in their nation. Because the national plan is used as a type of justification for sports-related investments, national sport bodies claim to work toward broader national goals. Similar language is used in government reports, plans, and bids, thus, the primary texts are necessary sources for locating connections between public sources.

Outline

This thesis is organized into four chapters. The first chapter is the introduction which defines the necessary terms and lays out the argument that the paper is attempting to make. It explains why primary sources are being used and why it is important to analyze sports prevalence in the Gulf.
Chapter two will address the economic factors that sports play in Qatar and the UAE. Factors analyzed include destination and event tourism as well as utilizing sport in the real estate sector. Both Qatar and Dubai have extensive data concerning how the government intends to develop sport economically.

The third chapter is focused on sport-based domestic initiatives. Qatar and the UAE are both teaching sport in order to help improve health trends in their societies. Sport is also being used to increase national pride and, to some extent, helping women gain more equal footing in society. The government of Qatar realizes how important mothers are in creating family lifestyle and are pushing to increase women’s participation in sport in an effort to make the next generation of children accustomed to physical activity.

The fourth chapter analyzes the international impacts of sport. The governments of Qatar and the UAE are making it a priority to develop elite international athletes in order to increase the amount of Olympic and other medals won. This paper also argues that international sporting events are being used by these governments to gain international attention and standing. This chapter also discusses that sporting events taking place in Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai can only be hosted if awarded that right after playing by the West’s rules and what that means for these governments. There are also negative ramifications that come with hosting sporting mega-events and this chapter of the paper outlines some of these consequences.

The conclusions of the paper summarize the data this paper gathers and makes an argument for why the impact of sport on Qatar and the UAE can not yet be measured.
The Economics of Sport in Qatar and the UAE

The UAE Vision 2021 says that “We want the UAE to sustain its drive toward economic diversification, as this is the nation’s surest path to sustainable development in a future that is less reliant on oil.” The natural resources that have powered most Gulf economies will eventually run dry and in order to avoid economic stagnation or decline other industries in their economies will need to be expanded.

Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Doha are all situated around the Persian Gulf, creating a triangle of competitive economies. The area is experiencing rapid growth in economics, population, and infrastructure. The growth in the sporting industry, that the region as a whole is creating, is resulting in economies of agglomeration. This is happening as the sporting industry grows in the region and each city develops similar resources to sustain their growth. The resulting environment that encourages businesses and sporting events to come to the region because there is a strong regional infrastructure that can provide all necessary services is an agglomeration economy.

Agglomeration economies result when many firms from one industry form a geographic cluster. The result of the cluster is increasing returns to scale which means that output increases more than the total amount of inputs. In the sporting industry an example would be that the number of sporting events hosted increases by much more than the amount of event hosting consultants and construction companies that come into the region. This happens because the geographic proximity of the firms leads to a

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19 Vision 2021, United Arab Emirates, 17
higher level of efficiency from workers who are now available in the region and trained in all aspects of the industry. There is also more infrastructure for the industry already in place and a more stable market of consumers. The Qatar Olympic Committee stated that “Qatar has created a series of industry clusters that contain a complete, vertically integrated ecosystem of clients, vendors and customers” indicating that they are taking full advantage of each aspect of the sport industry.

A report conducted in the United Kingdom found that

... the existence of high quality facilities means that the cities concerned are able to attract other sports events. The impact however does not stop there. Many of the facilities are suitable for other uses such as conferences and concerts. In addition the favourable publicity which can follow from a successful event may increase the attractiveness of a city, raise its profile overseas, and enable it to attract an increasing number of tourists.

Qatar claims part of its success as a sport tourism destination is a result of the legacy that the 2006 Asian Games left with the country. Their view of legacy left by the Asian Games matches what was found in the British study, that hosting successful events will attract tourists and increase global profile.

Doha, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai are all positioned to continually expand their sporting industries with the increase of facilities and publicity as they host more events. This creates a reputation for the region as one capable of hosting sporting events. This reputation and a history of success are taken into account when bidding for major and

20 Qatar Olympic Committee, Qatar Sports Opportunities 2015, 22

21 Dobson, Nigel and Roslyn Simmons, “A Critical Analysis of the Organisation of Major Sports Events,” 38

22 Qatar Olympic Committee, Qatar Sports Opportunities 2015, 22
mega events and could lead to more bids won in the future.\textsuperscript{23} International governing bodies will see that the region has a successful past and a history of showing support for their neighbors in sporting endeavours\textsuperscript{24} and be more incentivised to award a bid to the region.

**Tourism**

Business and sport tourism have been singled out as important tourism sectors for each country’s tourism authority to develop. The business model for business and sport tourism necessitate fewer people coming into the country each year than many other tourism models because it accounts for a higher per person expenditure during the stay. The benefit to this type of tourism is that the attractions can be highly specialized without alienating much of the target visitor group. First rate golf courses, training centers, sport science facilities, and events will draw an affluent class of visitors. The average stay in Dubai by an international golf visitor is five nights\textsuperscript{25} while the average visitor stays less than four nights.\textsuperscript{26} Qatar is also aiming to shift away from business tourism and moving to leisure tourism.\textsuperscript{27} Leisure tourism can be increased through the draw of both sporting facilities and events.

\begin{flushleft} \textsuperscript{23} In their evaluation of Doha’s bid for the 2022 World Cup FIFA took into account Qatar’s history of hosting international sporting events as a means of proof that Qatar would be a capable host. In the IOC’s response to Doha’s bid for the 2020 Olympics they say that Qatar has good experience organizing a number of different types of international events although substantial expertise and support from outside Qatar would be required in the instance that they became host. \end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft} \textsuperscript{24} Qatar Olympic Committee, *Presidents of GCC Olympic Committees support Doha 2020 Olympic Bid* \end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft} \textsuperscript{25} Deloitte, *Economic Impact of Sport in Dubai*, 47 \end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft} \textsuperscript{26} Visit Dubai, *Dubai Tourism 2017: Performance Report* \end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft} \textsuperscript{27} Qatar Tourism Authority, *Qatar National Tourism Sector Strategy 2030*, 15 \end{flushleft}
Another boost to the tourism sector is that Doha, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi have major airports and each are the hub of their own airlines.\textsuperscript{28} A draw of being a hub in this region is that it is a layover destination on flights between Europe and Asia and Oceania. The desire for a person flying through the city to stay for a few nights as part of their layover can be increased by having attractions such as malls and golf courses. Events can also draw visitors both as overnight layover tourists and as destination tourists. The region has many large shopping events that draw international crowds. The Dubai shopping festival takes place in January of each year and draws tourists from the UAE, the GCC, and the world. Doha followed Dubai’s lead and in January of 2017 and launched its first major shopping festival. In an effort to draw visitors from both the local region and from the West attractions ranged from concerts by Arab singers to the broadway musical \textit{Cats}.\textsuperscript{29} The festival was expected to bring a 15\% increase in tourists compared to 2016.\textsuperscript{30} Qatar’s interest hosting this event can be partially explained as a method of training the country and its tourism industry to handle a large influx of people all at one time in the lead up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup and partially as a way to increase its tourism income with a type of event Dubai has proven can be successful.

Qatar’s national tourism sector strategy guide from 2014 explains that the country is pursuing tourism in order to both diversify the national economy with a non-exhaustive industry and to increase Qatar’s standing on the world stage. The strategy guide cites the increased global standing as something that Qataris will be able to be

\textsuperscript{28} Qatar Airways in Doha, Etihad in Abu Dhabi, and Emirates in Dubai

\textsuperscript{29} Khatri, Shabina S, \textit{Qatar’s first shopping festival to kick off Jan. 7}

\textsuperscript{30} Shahbandari, Shafaat, \textit{Qatar shopping festival begins}
proud of. Both business and sports tourism are listed among the types of tourism that
Qatar wants to increase and high profile sporting events and development have more
examples listed than any other tourist sector.\textsuperscript{31} This guide also cites the UN World
Tourism Organization’s secretary general to say that tourism is a sector that upholds all
three pillars of sustainable development: economic growth, social progress, and
environmental sustainability.\textsuperscript{32} By citing the secretary general of the UNWTO Qatar
demonstrates that it is aware of industry responsibly and best practices in regards to
defined international standards. This can further Qatar’s reputation on a global scale
and can help to show it as a leader in the tourism industry both regionally and globally
as it grows.

Their commitment to developing their sports tourism sector in particular is evident
from the fact that 80\% of the money currently going to projects in that sector is
government money, a higher percentage of government contribution than any other
tourism sector and one of only two sectors over 50\%.\textsuperscript{33} Much of the public money being
used for the sport tourism industry is going to the efforts of hosting the 2022 World Cup
where not only stadiums need to be built but also projects such as railways, broadcast
buildings, and housing for athletes.

\textbf{Mega-Events}

Investing money for a mega-event can be a risky venture and many countries

\textsuperscript{31} Qatar Tourism Authority, \textit{Qatar National Tourism Sector Strategy 2030}, 4-9
\textsuperscript{32} Qatar Tourism Authority, \textit{Qatar National Tourism Sector Strategy 2030}, 5
\textsuperscript{33} Qatar Tourism Authority, \textit{Qatar National Tourism Sector Strategy 2030}, 23
have famously lost money and let buildings degrade after the event is done.\textsuperscript{34} However, many preparations for World Cup are supporting or enhancing Qatar’s tourism sector. The upgraded public transportation system and road network and increased number of hotel rooms needed to handle the influx of visitors a World Cup brings will be built by 2022 and will significantly increase the ability of Qatar to handle large numbers of visitors or a vastly increased population. In their failed bids to host the 2016 and 2020 Summer Olympic Games “90.9% and 85.5% [of the total bid cost] (respectively) was budgeted through national transportation expansion programmes.”\textsuperscript{35} Transportation upgrades are essential for any growing population center and are a major part of the Qatar 2030 Vision plan. The increased transportation can also lead to development of other tourism industries, especially those focused on bedouin culture and tradition that are from the desert and not the coast where most of Qatar’s population lives. It would also lead to the possibility of other large attractions to attract mass tourism to be built away from Doha where land is plentiful.

**Sport Cities**

Another example of growing industry through sport is Dubai Sports City which has the ability to house 70,000 people,\textsuperscript{36} is headquarters to the International Cricket Council, is home to two world class stadiums and a world class golf course, in addition

\textsuperscript{34} After the 2004 Olympic Games Athens let most of their sports venues degrade and they became empty. Most mega-events have lost money after hosting, including Sydney 2000, Athens 2004, and Rio 2016.


\textsuperscript{36} Sahoo, Sananda. *Dubai Sports City to house 20,000 people within a year.*
to commercial and retail space. This 4.6 km$^2$ space serves the dual function of both a residential neighborhood and commercial and retail strip, all with a heavy focus on sport. The unique theme draws golf tourists, spectators of events hosted in one of the stadiums, and permanent residents creating three different sources of income on a regular basis. The real estate industry in Dubai is a large economic industry in the emirate and using sport as a way to draw in potential investors and homeowners is a creative way of developing the non-coastal part of Dubai where the coastline, although growing as more man-made islands are built, is extremely crowded and land is more expensive.

The majority of the land in Dubai Sports City is dedicated to residential developments. The sports infrastructure in the area is an attraction that this real estate development uses in an attempt to attract residents and its facilities and events are what is used to attract other business. The use of a themed area to draw tourists or investors is common in many major cities with theater districts, art districts, business districts, and others being common. Dubai is one of the first cities in the world to use sport as a theme for a planned district to draw visitors instead of building up sports sites and then finding that they are all in similar areas due to land use patterns. The new trend of developing sports themed areas is largely seen in the Middle East and are seen in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Doha. Dubai Sports City stands out from its counterparts in Doha and Abu Dhabi - the Aspire Zone and the Zayed Sports City respectively - because of its large focus on developing the area as a neighborhood, not just a sports zone. Zayed Sports City developed around the Zayed Sports City Stadium that opened

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37 Smith, Andrew. *The Development of Sports City Zones*, 386
in 1980 and was not initially planned to be its own urban sector as were Dubai Sports City and the Aspire Zone. The Aspire Zone differs from Dubai Sports City as it was designed as a destination for elite sport facilities, not as a place to live and does not contain a residential area. The three different sports zones offers an example of how the region has thus far avoided saturation of the sports market by keeping each new development unique.

**Autosport**

Abu Dhabi's largest sport event is the Abu Dhabi Formula 1 Grand Prix, one of only two in the Middle East - with the other in Bahrain - and the only Grand Prix on the global circuit that starts during the day and finishes after dusk. Between its inaugural race in 2009 and 2017 the Grand Prix has been the final leg of the F1 World Championship 6 of 10 times and is still the only F1 race to ever be held as day turns to night. The Yas Marina Circuit is host to the race and is set up right along the water and produces stunning pictures similar to iconic Monaco Grand Prix shots. The circuit also passes underneath the Yas Viceroy Abu Dhabi Hotel in much the same way that the Monaco Grand Prix famously goes underneath the Fairmount Hotel. By replicating
many of the famed bits of the Monaco Grand Prix the Yas Marina Circuit can bring memories or allusions to people watching the race and give them some feeling of familiarity.

The part of Abu Dhabi that is home to Yas Marina Circuit, a bit removed from the center of the city, is also host to Ferrari World, the world’s largest indoor theme park which boasts the world’s fastest roller coaster. It was named the "Middle East's Leading Tourist Attraction" at the World Travel Awards 2015. The draw of Ferrari World and Yas Marina Circuit creates a second area in Abu Dhabi, besides Zayed Sports City, that holds a sports theme, although this one is specific to motorsport. Motorsport is one of the oldest Western sporting traditions in the Middle East with the Automobile & Touring Club of the United Arab Emirates having been founded in 1965, six years before the UAE became a country, giving this area a domestic, regional, and international consumer base. By creating a name for itself in a sport that is famous for being a sport for the rich Abu Dhabi is able to expand its tourism industry into a direction that involves a lower number of visitors than mass tourism but with a much higher per visitor spending rate.

**Economic Gain**

Tracking the economic impact that sport has on an economy can be difficult. Events and conferences draw visitors and then those visitors spend money both at the event and in the city. Expenditure goes towards event tickets and concessions which

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38 World Travel Awards, Middle East 2015
are relatively easy to track but they also go towards hotel rooms, restaurants, transportation, and other goods and services. It is hard to determine how much of the spending in the latter category is directly related to the sporting industry and how much would have occurred without the sporting industry.

Falcon and Associates, a strategic advisory company that works on behalf of the Dubai government, commissioned a report to learn the total economic impact of the sporting industry on the emirate. The report found that while Dubai hosted approximately 335 events in 2015, that 7 “major” events accounted for 57% of total expenditure and 90% of foreign expenditure. The other events that Dubai hosts are local events that are aimed at the local population and smaller international events, both recurring and one time events. Even with the majority of expenditure the total number of people visiting the emirate for the “major” events does not outnumber the people visiting for other international events. This displays that mega and major events often attract the type of high spending visitor that is the target of sports tourism.

Tourism can be boosted through advertising as well and sport offers a unique opportunity to advertise an area as a destination. It was estimated that TV coverage of major sporting events in Dubai “generates up to $0.5 billion of gross advertising media value per event.” The MENA Golf Tour is another platform through which Dubai advertises itself as a sports tourism destination. It is owned and operated by ‘golf in DUBAI’ which was “[c]reated in 2005 to promote Dubai as one of the world's leading

\[39\] The 7 events were the Omega Dubai Desert Classic, the Standard Chartered Dubai Marathon, the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships, the Dubai Tour, the Dubai World Cup, the DP World Tour Championship, and the Emirates Airline Dubai Rugby Sevens

\[40\] Deloitte. Economic Impact of Sport in Dubai, 14

\[41\] Deloitte. Economic Impact of Sport in Dubai, 17
golfing destinations and to underline Dubai’s other international attractions to a worldwide audience.”

Tourism is an extremely important and fast growing sector in the GCC region. Doha, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai are all diversifying their economies, attempting to create a more sustainable future than what energy exports alone can produce. Sport is being paired with tourism to expand many of these growing sectors including business and real estate. The model used in this region is one that prioritizes a few high spending individuals over many lower spending visitors and relies heavily on the use of its major airports in order to more business through flight layovers. The governments of each city have made it clear that tourism will be a priority in the immediate future.

42 Golf in DUBAi
Domestic Programs and Initiatives

Sport plays a key role in the domestic politics of Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai. Its importance is partially expressed through who is put in charge of sporting committees and how it is talked about on the national stage. Qatar and the United Arab Emirates both reference sports in their Vision plans for 2030 and 2021 respectively.

The current Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, is a member of the International Olympic Committee, headed Qatar’s bid for the 2020 Summer Olympic Games as chairman of the Qatar Olympic Committee, and was chair of the 2006 Asian Games Organizing Committee. He also established Qatar Sports Investments in 2005, a company that now owns the French football club Paris Saint-Germain. Each of these tasks was undertaken after he was named heir apparent in 2003. The direct involvement in Qatar’s major sporting bodies by the future Emir demonstrates the importance that the ruling family and current emir give to sport.

In the UAE there are also direct ties between sport and the ruling families. The most successful Olympic athlete in the UAE is his Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Hasher Al Maktoum, a member of Dubai’s ruling family. He won the UAE’s first, and to date only, Olympic gold medal in 2004 in double trap shooting. The head of the Dubai Sports Council is Crown Prince of Dubai Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum and the head of the UAE Olympic Committee is

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43 BBC News, *Profile: Qatar Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani*

44 Deloitte, *Economic Impact of Sport in Dubai, 30*

45 Dubai Sports Council, *About Dubai Sports Council*
Deputy Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.\textsuperscript{46}

\textbf{Initiatives}

In their 2011-2016 Sport Sector Strategy Qatar’s National Olympic Committee lists the three key outcomes the sport sector plans to accomplish as

\begin{itemize}
  \item “Greater community participation in sports and physical activity
  \item Improved and integrated planning for community and elite sports facilities
  \item Increased and improved sports talent development, management and performance.”\textsuperscript{47}
\end{itemize}

The first goal is aimed to increase education about healthy and active lifestyles and encourage Qataris to live in a healthy way. The second goal is focused on increasing the number of public places available in Qatar for activity and sport including parks, fields, and dedicated sporting facilities, allowing for increased participation among the population. And the third goal is to improve the international sporting event performances of Qatar by developing athletes and coaches.

Qatar has taken many approaches to reach their first key outcome of “Greater community participation in sports and physical activity.” One initiative to increase physical activity and promote healthy lifestyles is the creation of National Sports Day. Starting in 2012, the second Tuesday in February marks National Sports day in Qatar. According to the Qatar Olympic Committee, government bodies encourage “their employees to engage enthusiastically in the sports activities” and that celebrating the event “reveals the importance of sport as a significant factor to help domestic institutions achieving their goals by creating a healthy community at both physical and

\textsuperscript{46} UAE National Olympic Committee, \textit{NOC Board Members}

\textsuperscript{47} Qatar Olympic Committee, \textit{Sports Sector Strategy (2011-2016)}, 5
psychological levels.” The Qatar 2022 Supreme Committee has taken a vested interest in the event as well, hosting many events at the Aspire Academy during the inaugural day. The Qatar 2022 Supreme Committee Secretary General Hassan Al Thawadi said,

The decision to create a day dedicated to sport in Qatar is a symbol of the strong commitment of our nation toward developing sporting participation across the population. Increased participation in sport has the potential to bring our communities together, encourage a better quality of life and shape a healthier future for generations to come.

Al Thawadi’s statement is similar to the Sports Sector Strategy plan’s justification for why greater community participation in sports and physical activity is needed and demonstrates the unified face that the government displays to the public regarding sport. Qatari sports bodies typically justify their actions by claiming that they are in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030 as is also demonstrated in this statement. The Qatar National Vision 2030 calls for fostering “a strong sense of belonging and citizenship,” providing “an increasingly healthy and lengthy life for all of its citizens,” and supporting “future generations to provide an increasingly healthy and lengthy life.”

Al Thawadi reframed some of the goals from the National Vision and put them into a sports focus giving a larger meaning to this new holiday. National Sports Day can then be counted as an action taken to achieve the goals of the National Vision as their shared goals are brought to light.

48 Qatar Olympic Committee, Qatar Celebrates National Sports Day
49 FIFA, Qatar celebrates National Sports Day
50 General Secretariat for Development Planning, Qatar National Vision 2030, 8
51 General Secretariat for Development Planning, Qatar National Vision 2030, 7
Qatar has also made progress towards the Sport Sector Strategy’s second goal of “improved and integrated planning for community and elite sports facilities.” In the period between 2010 and 2015 the Qatar Department of Public Parks completed nearly 40 parks throughout the country with 12 more planned to be completed in 2016. Two new parks were opened on Qatar National Day in 2016 as well. Some of these parks have been outfitted with equipment to encourage the population to participate in sport; in 2015 table tennis tables were installed in five parks and fitness equipment has been installed in other parks and labelled with instructions for proper use in Arabic and English. Many of the parks also have amenities such as wifi, prayer rooms, basketball courts, and covered play areas. The Qatari government is installing many types of equipment in order to make parks attractive to different types of people and encourage more of the community to be active.

Qatar has advanced on the second part of their second goal as well. Since the start of the strategic plan in 2011 many world class sports facilities have been opened or accredited in the country. In 2013 Aspetar, a specialised orthopaedic and sports medicine hospital, became the first sports medicine reference center in a Gulf

52 Ministry of Municipality and Environment, Implementation of 40 Parks During the Past Five Years
53 Ministry of Municipality and Environment, Doha Municipality director opens Two new park on the occasion of the Qatar National Day
54 Ministry of Municipality and Environment, Tennis Tables in Public Parks and Corniche to Encourage the General Public for Practicing Sport Activities
55 Ministry of Municipality and Environment, Public Fitness Equipment installed in the Green Carpet location
56 Ministry of Municipality and Environment, Four (4) Novel Parks .. Gift of the Ministry of Municipality & Urban Planning to the General Public in the National Day
Cooperation Council country. In 2015 Qatar’s anti-doping lab “achieved the full WADA accreditation” making it one of only 33 labs in the world to reach that mark. And in 2014, “the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) signed an agreement with the QOA to enable the Academy to provide academic and technical training sessions for coaches, referees, specialists and technicians from across Asia.” Much of how Qatar is measuring their progress towards creating elite sporting facilities is by having them approved or accredited by international bodies. Once this recognition is received Qatar is able to use it as a measuring stick against the rest of the region and the rest of the world.

The third goal of “increased and improved sports talent development, management and performance” is making progress but it is more difficult to measure this goal with successes in the short term. Improved sports talent development can not be proven until the talent has time to develop and the next generation proves itself better than the previous. Similarly, it will take time for global performances to improve as training is a long process that can not be sped up exponentially by money or influence. The Qatar Olympic Committee recognizes this fact, saying that their “sporting journey is still in its infancy” Still, Qatar is home to the 25 year old Asian record holder in the high jump, Mutaz Essa Barshim. He is also the bronze medalist at the 2012 London

57 Aspetar, About Aspetar
58 ADLQ, About ADLQ
59 Qatar Olympic Committee, Qatar Sports Opportunities 2015, 25
60 Ibid.
61 Qatar Olympic Committee, Qatar Sports Opportunities 2015, 32
Olympics and the silver medalist at the 2016 Rio Olympics. The Qatar government is attempting to train young athletes in order to produce success similar to Barshim’s in the coming years.

The Dubai Sports Council has a similar set of outputs set in its Strategic Plan 2011-2015 designed to align with the Dubai Government Strategic Plan (2015). As seen in figure 2 above, sport is being used to work towards goals in four separate sectors. Dubai has some goals in common with Qatar, such as promoting the benefits of sports and physical activity for health and well-being and increasing sports expansion in schools. Notably, the Dubai Sports Council makes it a goal to grow the influence that sport has in Dubai’s economy. The economic section of this paper details how Dubai is using sport to develop its economy and what new infrastructure is being

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62 Spikes, Barshim’s Back Story

63 Rio 2016, Men’s High Jump Final Ranking
built for that sector.

Initiatives to increase physical activity within the populations of both Qatar and the UAE are occurring both in schools and with adult populations. One reason for the interest in increasing physical activity is that both countries are suffering from extremely high diabetes rates. In 2015 Qatar had the sixth highest adult diabetes rate in the world and the UAE had the ninth highest at 20% and 19.3% respectively.\[^{64}\] In their Sports Sector Strategy the Qatar Olympic Committee says that

> Chronic diseases are a major cause of death, accounting for 47 per cent of classified deaths in 2008. The primary drivers for the chronic disease burden are inactivity and sedentary lifestyles, which pose an increasingly serious health risk for individuals and family. Appropriate modification of lifestyles must therefore be seen as a key pathway to improving the health of the Qatari population.\[^{65}\]

The UAE has also expressed concern about the health of its citizens. In the UAE Vision 2021 it says that “the UAE will intensify its fight against lifestyle diseases, where early intervention to change habits can dramatically improve citizens’ prospects for quality of life”\[^{66}\] and national performance indicators for UAE Vision 2021 include the prevalence of diabetes and prevalence of obesity among children.\[^{67}\]

Creating a healthier and more active society can benefit both countries. The healthier lifestyles can lead to greater quality of life which helps to improve general happiness.\[^{68}\] Better health among the population will lessen the strain on the health care

\[^{64}\] World Bank, *Diabetes prevalence (% of population ages 20 to 79)*


\[^{66}\] Vision 2021, United Arab Emirates, 22

\[^{67}\] National Performance Indicators, *UAE Vision 2021*

\[^{68}\] The UN Happiness Index is another metric that the UAE is using as a key performance indicator.
systems that heavily rely on expatriate workers as well.\textsuperscript{69}

Part of the attempt to change lifestyles has been through the school systems in both countries. The UAE Olympic Committee runs a School Olympics Programme that has been delivered to nearly 20,000 children in Dubai alone. This program both promotes an active lifestyle and identifies talent among young children to identify future potential Olympians.\textsuperscript{70} The Qatar Olympic Committee also runs a Schools Olympic Programme. Two of the listed objectives of Qatar’s program are to “establish a sports culture calling for the practice of sport for Health and Life” and “increase the interest of Qatari community in practicing sport and physical activities.”\textsuperscript{71} The program has grown “from 7,099 participants in its inaugural season to 26,454 students from 461 schools” in 2015.\textsuperscript{72} Having sport be part of the school curriculum is a good way to get kids interested in sport and physical activity and make them more likely to use the public sport and park facilities that exist in each country.

Qatar and the UAE may also want to increase their populations’ interest in sport to create a domestic consumer market for the events they host. One major issue with events that this region hosts is the high percentage of foreign spectators. The IOC notes that for Qatar’s 2020 Olympic bid “the ability of Doha and Qatar to ensure full stadia in order to create the necessary Games atmosphere for a positive athlete and spectator experience, are also factors to be considered.”\textsuperscript{73} The IOC also notes in their response

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{69} Moursched, Mona, Viktor Hediger, and Tony Lambert, \textit{Gulf Cooperation Council Health Care: Challenges and Opportunities}
\bibitem{70} Deloitte, \textit{Economic Impact of Sport in Dubai}, 25
\bibitem{71} Qatar Olympic Committee, \textit{Schools Olympic Program}
\bibitem{72} Qatar Olympic Committee, \textit{Qatar Sports Opportunities 2015}, 36
\bibitem{73} International Olympic Committee, \textit{Games of the XXXII Olympiad 2020 Working Group Report}, 74
\end{thebibliography}
that the bidding committee’s expected ticket sales to locals, both nationals and expatriate workers, were “ambitious.”\textsuperscript{74} Because Qatar and the UAE both have small populations compared to most mega-event host countries it is necessary for a higher percentage of their population to attend the events in order to achieve a comparable percentage of the domestic population attending the event. The average population for the host countries of World Cups and Summer Olympic Games since 2008 is just under 375 million; Qatar’s population is 2.169 million; the UAE’s population is 9.346 million. Qatar’s population is small enough that the organizing committee anticipated that it would need to sell 4 tickets to each Qatari national, in addition to foreign ticket sales, in order to fill stadiums at the proposed 2020 Olympics.\textsuperscript{75} After the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro were held with many empty stadiums it would be hard to convince the IOC that Qatari nationals would buy tickets at such a rate and fill stadiums. Increasing the interest in sport and filling stadiums for international and recurring events could help Qatar or the UAE convince the IOC or another governing body that the public would follow through.

\textbf{National Pride}

The UAE has a National Identity Index the the government uses as a national key performance indicator. It is described as an indicator that measures the sense of belonging in the UAE.\textsuperscript{76} In a study conducted in 2010, national pride was found to be the number one driving factor behind volunteerism at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in 2010

\textsuperscript{74} International Olympic Committee, \textit{Games of the XXXII Olympiad 2020 Working Group Report}, 60

\textsuperscript{75} International Olympic Committee, \textit{Games of the XXXII Olympiad 2020 Working Group Report}, 61

\textsuperscript{76} National Performance Indicators, \textit{UAE Vision 2021}
among Emirati citizens. The same study found that expat volunteers in Abu Dhabi volunteered due to their love of Formula 1. The citizens of the UAE volunteered to make the event as successful as possible in an attempt to showcase Abu Dhabi and the UAE to the world.\textsuperscript{77}

Qatar lists increasing national pride as a reason for developing world class athletes to compete in the Olympics and other mega-events. The Qatar Olympic Committee said that “Sports excellence is integral for generating interest in sports and building national pride,”\textsuperscript{78} when talking about the need to develop elite athletes. And that “[a]t the international level, sports events and athletes help raise Qatar’s regional and global profile, and result in enhanced national pride.”\textsuperscript{79} The high visibility that comes with major sport events and results has the ability to put Qatar in the international news which could lead to the increased pride that the government is aiming for.

Women in Sport

Both Qatar and the UAE have also utilized sport to empower women and work toward gender equality. “The Qatar Women’s Sport Committee (QWSC) was established in 2000 to lead, support and promote greater Qatari women’s participation in sport”\textsuperscript{80} and its work has since been grouped into three “focus areas:” development, progress, and support.\textsuperscript{81} These priority areas are designed to develop women’s sporting

\textsuperscript{77} Strigas, Ethan, “The Management and Retention of Sport Volunteers: lessons for the Middle East

\textsuperscript{78} Qatar Olympic Committee, \textit{Sports Sector Strategy (2011-2016)}, 8

\textsuperscript{79} Qatar Olympic Committee, \textit{Sports Sector Strategy (2011-2016)}, 6

\textsuperscript{80} Qatar Olympic Committee, \textit{Sports Sector Strategy (2011-2016)}, 19

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
talent in Qatar. As part of the Olympic Committee’s “Athlete Development Pathway Model,” a program designed to improve sporting talent among Qataris, it is acknowledged as a risk that not all members of society will welcome women’s participation in sport. The proposed strategy to mitigate these risks is to educate on the health and family benefits of women practicing sport. In part, the Olympic Committee has stated that increasing women’s participation in sport is another method of influencing family lifestyles and children’s behavior. In order to improve women’s participation in sport the Qatar Olympic Committee conducted a study in 2009 to determine how many women were participating in sport and what factors inhibited women from participating. Some of the major factors inhibiting Qatari women from participating in sport were found to be socio-cultural constraints and access.

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constraints.\textsuperscript{83} Both of these types of constraints have been areas that the Qatar Olympic Committee has been trying to improve through educating the population on the benefits of practicing sport, to lessen socio-cultural constraints, and building more facilities, to lessen access constraints. The Doha 2020 Olympic Bid also stated that the Olympics would leave a legacy of women’s “empowerment and equality”\textsuperscript{84} and argued that the legacy would extend to the greater region.\textsuperscript{85}

In 2006 the Dubai Sports Council formed the Women’s Sports Committee with the aim of promoting “the culture of sport and practice of physical activity among women in Dubai.”\textsuperscript{86} The objectives of this committee are mostly focused on developing a sporting culture for women in Dubai in order to create healthier lifestyles and create a competitive stage for women.

In 2012 three Emirati women founded a women’s only football league in Abu Dhabi.\textsuperscript{87} The league is the first in the UAE that is for women and takes place behind closed doors so that the women will not be competing in a place with male spectators. Mariam Al Omaira, one of the founders, said that “there are some girls that don’t mind playing in front of men, but there is a huge percentage of Emirati women who can’t play in front of men because of cultural reasons.”\textsuperscript{88} The formation of the league by three Emirati women signals that there is a genuine interest among women in the UAE to

\textsuperscript{83} Qatar Olympic Committee, \textit{Sports Sector Strategy (2011-2016)}, 18-19
\textsuperscript{84} Qatar Olympic Committee, \textit{Doha 2020 Application File}, ii
\textsuperscript{85} Qatar Olympic Committee, \textit{Doha 2020 Application File}, 4
\textsuperscript{86} Dubai Sports Council, \textit{Women’s Sport Committee}
\textsuperscript{87} Harnan, Eugene, \textit{Soccer league launched by Emirati women}
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
participate in sport if their cultural conditions are met.

The UAE national women’s football team was formed in 2008 as an initiative of the Abu Dhabi sports council. In 2011 the team toured the United States on a trip that was organized by the UAE embassy in Washington DC in order to help the development of the team. The team are two time champions of the West Asian Football Federation women’s championship and competed in their first AFC Women’s Asian Cup qualifying tournament in April 2017 where they netted two wins and one draw in five games.

The creation of a competitive international team for women is a step towards higher social equality. The UAE is being represented on the international stage by a team of women, both at tournaments and on goodwill trips. The national team and the formation of the all-women’s league in Abu Dhabi both go a long way to help create a sporting culture for women and girls in the UAE.

Sport as a tool to progress domestic initiatives is apparent in Qatar and the UAE. Encouraging the population to practice sport is a much more widely used strategy to achieve domestic social goals than hosting events, although hosting events can be used to encourage and inspire people to practice sport. Both countries are struggling with high rates of obesity and diseases that can be prevented through healthy lifestyles which gives cause for sport to be at the forefront of public health education. However, there are still sporting goals incorporated in domestic sports policy. Both national Olympic committees want to develop elite athletes and improve their international sport

89 Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, UAE Embassy in Washington, DC organises US tour for UAE women’s soccer team

90 FIFA, UAE women’s team living the dream

91 Asian Football Confederation, Schedule and Results
standing in order to increase national pride and global profile. Sport is extremely versatile when it is being used in these domestic initiatives because the range of goals is so large. The results of these initiatives are not yet clear due to the time that it takes for elite athletes to develop and health patterns to change, but both countries have invested time and money into promoting sport to improve society.
International Role of Sport

International considerations are also taken into account in the expansion of the sports industry in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Many economic factors are international in nature as much of the focus in the economic sector is to bring international tourists and their money into the domestic economy. There are other, more political and reputational international factors to be considered, however.

Bidding to host international events necessarily require that the bidding city make itself attractive to the organization that controls the event. The Qatar Olympic Committee already believes Qatar is attractive to sport governing bodies saying that it has “become a true global sports hub thanks to its state-of-the-art sports facilities, its experience of hosting a multitude of world-class sports event, its commitment to international sports development and its central location at the heart of the Arabian Gulf, just a 4 hour flight from 2 billion people.”\(^2\) While Qatar, and the UAE, have spent much time and money on creating state-of-the-art facilities and hosting world-class sporting events, this alone is not enough to become a good candidate for mega events and other large international and recurring events.

World Cup

Certain international standards need to be achieved in order to even be considered for mega-events and some other large events. In their bid to host the 2020 Olympics Doha were required to showcase their ability to provide appropriate

\(^{2}\) Qatar Olympic Committee, *Qatar Sports Opportunities 2015*, 10
accommodation, transportation, medical services, anti-doping technology, environmental sustainability, and security in their bid. Each of these categories, as well as other categories more concerned directly with sport, were then compared to all of the other cities bidding to host and a winner was chosen based on who would provide the best Olympics as outlined through these categories. Doha’s bid for the 2022 FIFA World Cup required Doha to highlight how they would use their right to host to create sustainable social and human development in addition to all of the categories required by the IOC. The organizing committee highlighted both their future plans for sustainable social and human development in Qatar and other Asian countries and also what Qatar has already done to advance this agenda. It is necessary for countries bidding to host mega-events to showcase how they promoted the governing body’s agenda in the past and how they will promote it in the future whether or not the country agrees with that agenda.

Qatar’s frequent bids for mega-events has shown that the organizing committees, frequently headed by current emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, are comfortable playing by the rules set by the International Olympic Committee and FIFA. Both of these organizations have predominantly western missions that focus largely on human rights, women’s rights, and environmental sustainability. In 2015 Saudi Arabia suggested hosting a joint Olympics with Bahrain where men would compete in Saudi Arabia and women in Bahrain. The IOC quickly refused this proposal⁹³ and Saudi Arabia will need to adapt to a more western viewpoint if it ever wants to be seriously considered as a host for the Olympic Games. Qatar nor the UAE have been caught out

⁹³ AlJazeera, IOC dismisses Saudi-Bahrain joint Olympics bid hopes
by this major a cultural difference when bidding for major events, and have stuck to the basic values outlined by governing bodies.

Playing by the governing body’s rules can be worth it however. The honor of hosting a mega-event is a task that few countries outside of Europe have been able to complete. Winning the bid is itself a difficult task, Qatar surpassed Australia, Japan, South Korea, and the United States to win the right to host the 2022 World Cup. Qatar and Australia were the only two countries of this group to have never hosted a World Cup before. The reputation Qatar had created for itself through the hosting of international events did play a role in securing their right to host and Qatar also has the oldest running football league of these group.94. FIFA noted that Qatar had experience hosting international sporting events and highlighted the 1995 FIFA U-20 World Cup, the 2006 Asian Games, and the 2011 AFC Asian Cup as prime examples.95 Qatar won the bid, which requires a majority of the 22 votes, after four rounds of elimination voting in which it had the most votes each round and 11 votes in the first round96 signalling that Qatar had the full support of at least half of the electorate.

World Expo

The drive to excel on the world stage is a contributing factor to both Qatar and the UAE in their pursuit of hosting sporting events. The UAE 2021 vision says,

However great its achievements, the UAE will not slow the pace of its drive for improvement. In the economic and government sphere, our

94 Qatar Stars League founded 1963, Qatar; K League founded 1983, South Korea; J1 League founded 1992, Japan; Major League Soccer founded 1993, USA; A-League founded 2004, Australia

95 FIFA, 2022 FIFA World Cup Bid Evaluation Report: Qatar, 4

96 Jackson, Jamie, Qatar wins 2022 World Cup bid
nation will build on sectors of excellence to export its model abroad, while consistently evolving to create new competitive advantages. At an individual level, we will promote national champions in every domain, from sports to science and culture: every Emirati should aspire to become a champion in his field.97

The future vision for the UAE is one of a world leader that can export best practices to other countries and excels in all fields. As hosts of the 2020 World Expo, Dubai is creating the chance to demonstrate the UAE’s excellence to the world. Expo 2020 Dubai, while not a sporting event, is creating a legacy in much the same way that the Olympics and World Cup do. The organizers say that they want to build a legacy that is “sustainable and long lasting, extending its impact and benefits beyond the UAE to the wider region and the rest of the world.”98 Expo 2020’s planned legacy has four pillars, economic, physical, social, and reputational. The final pillar is concerned with creating a global reputation for Dubai. Expo 2020 Dubai is the first World Expo to take place in the Middle East and the organizers believe that this event will show the world how the UAE can facilitate global cooperation and be “living proof for the world in how diversity is embraced in the UAE and the region.”99 Expo 2020 Dubai is looking to define a new reputation for Dubai, the UAE, and the Middle East by hosting a successful event and can use it to help the UAE attract business and tourists.

The nature of the World Expo also gives the UAE a chance to showcase its excellence in many fields. The overall theme of the Expo is “Connecting Minds, Creating the Future.” The three sub-themes are opportunity, mobility, and sustainability. Through these themes Expo 2020 Dubai will showcase innovative solutions to current world

97 Vision 2021, United Arab Emirates, 12
98 Expo 2020 Dubai UAE, Legacy
99 Ibid.
issues and what the future may look like. There will be public and private partnerships that create the innovations with the organizers in Dubai in charge of all coordination and thematic solutions.

**Global Prestige**

Hosting many international and mega-events has gained the region an international reputation and there are many positive impacts hosting mega and international events can have on a country or region. As discussed in the economic section hosting these events can increase tourism both during and after the event. The international profile boost that causes the increase in tourism can create some amount of soft power for the host country.\textsuperscript{100} After Beijing hosted the 2008 Olympic Games China was gave itself an organizational legacy after it boosted a dwindling Olympic television audience and brought together the largest volunteer and Olympic education programmes in the history of the Olympics.\textsuperscript{101} China also highlighted their own culture to the world and put on display the power of Chinese money and engineering through the building and upgrading of both Olympic venues and transportation hubs.\textsuperscript{102}

Qatar is positioning itself to be able to replicate some of these feats while hosting the 2022 World Cup. It is building nine new stadiums and upgrading three, as well as building the New Doha International Airport.\textsuperscript{103} Qatar also bid with the

\textsuperscript{100} Soft power being defined as the ability to influence international politics without the use of military or economic force.

\textsuperscript{101} Cornelissen, Scarlett. *The Geopolitics of Global Aspiration: Sport Mega-events and Emerging Powers*, 3015

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{103} The building of the New Doha International Airport was planned to occur regardless of the 2022 World Cup.
promise of “hi-tech, carbon-neutral cooling systems” to be used in stadiums, training sites, and fan zones.\textsuperscript{104} All of these projects have the potential to become centerpieces of the World Cup and to set an international standard. In particular carbon-neutral cooling systems that could work in a climate like Qatar’s could be extremely important in the international fight against climate change. Qatar, as a major oil and natural gas exporter, could have the opportunity to greatly contribute to this international cause and showcase itself as an innovative leader.

A successful World Cup, particularly in creating cooling systems would ease some of the concern that the IOC expressed about hosting a summer event in Qatar. The move of the World Cup to the winter will not help the Qatar case for the Summer Olympics as the IOC has made clear that the Summer Olympics are to be held in July or August.\textsuperscript{105} If the 2022 World Cup is successful, and the media take a similar approach to covering Qatar as it did China, Qatar might gain some international clout, in addition to a possible boost within the eyes of the IOC, as more people learn about Qatar and are impressed by it.

**The Negative side of Sport**

Qatar has already suffered some of the negative occurrences that come with hosting a mega-event as well. News outlets and NGOs have both highlighted Qatar’s terrible history with worker safety, human rights abuses, and brought to question Qatar’s right to host the World Cup due to its role in the FIFA corruption scandal. Human Rights Watch, the International Trade Union Confederation, and Amnesty International have all

\textsuperscript{104} FIFA, 2022 FIFA World Cup Bid Evaluation Report: Qatar, 8

\textsuperscript{105} International Olympic Committee. Games of the XXXII Olympiad 2020 Working Group Report, 73
expressed deep concern with worker conditions in Qatar. The kafala system which requires workers to be sponsored by an employer in order to remain in the country has led to allegations of slave labor by these organizations. The 2022 Supreme Committee said in a statement in 2013:

> Our commitment is to change working conditions in order to ensure a lasting legacy of improved worker welfare. We are aware this cannot be done overnight. But the 2022 FIFA World Cup is acting as a catalyst for improvements in this regard.\(^\text{106}\)

FIFA also stated their belief that football could act as a positive catalyst in the region as a whole:

> World Cup in the Middle East offers a great opportunity for the region to discover football’s power as a platform for positive social change. FIFA upholds the respect for human rights and the application of international norms of behavior as a principle and part of all our activities.\(^\text{107}\)

Yet in 2015 the BBC ran the headline “Have 1,200 World Cup workers really died in Qatar?” and the conclusion of the article was that this was almost certainly a conservative estimate and that more than 1,200 worker deaths could be attributed to Qatar’s World Cup.

There have been protests for sponsors to drop FIFA including a campaign that redesigned the sponsors logos to highlight the labor abuses occurring in Qatar. No sponsor has dropped FIFA since these protests, but five major sponsors, including the Dubai based Emirates Airline, have chosen to not renew their contracts since the start of the human rights and corruption scandals.\(^\text{108}\)

\(^{106}\) [source]

\(^{107}\) [source]

\(^{108}\) [source]
Mohammed bin Hammam, the former head of the Asian Football Confederation and a Qatari national, was reportedly instrumental in securing Qatar the right to host the 2022 World Cup. He then ran for the FIFA presidency in 2011 and dropped out days before the election under accusations of corruption. He was ultimately banned from football for life after he allegedly handed out $5 million to officials in return for their support of Qatar’s World Cup bid although the Qatar bidding committee denied any knowledge of his actions.

Both of these instances have shown a negative light on Qatar that attracted the world’s attention because it is hosting the World Cup. China faced similar scrutiny in 2008 as did Brazil in 2014 and 2016 for its World Cup and Olympic Games. China put on a spectacular Olympics that made much of the world remember that rather than the protests that preceded them. Brazil, however, has faced much more scrutiny as their World Cup and Olympics did not do enough to distract the world’s gaze.

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109 Fontevecchia, Agustino, *Qatar's 2022 World Cup Bid Marked The Beginning Of The End For FIFA's Sepp Blatter*

110 Bond, David, *Qatar World Cup: ‘£3m payments to officials’ corruption claim*
collapse that killed two people a week before a semi-final match at World Cup\textsuperscript{111} and crime committed against many Olympic and Paralympic athletes as well as spectators during the Olympics\textsuperscript{112} left a negative reputation on the global stage for Brazil. Qatar will have a similar challenge of hosting a successful World Cup in order to turn its time in the global spotlight into a favorable international reputation.

\textsuperscript{111} BBC News, Flyover collapses in Brazil World Cup host city

\textsuperscript{112} Gomez, Alan, Muggings, violence during Olympics highlight Brazil's tourism woes
Conclusions

Sport can be observed in many aspects of life in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Many government agencies and private sector companies in each nation are invested in sport, either to promote an idea or for financial gain. These two nations demonstrate different strategies within their sport industries. While Qatar is set to host the Middle East’s first World Cup and has largely relied on this privilege to shape its sports sector, the UAE is more focused on the economic impact of sport. Meanwhile, Dubai and Abu Dhabi each demonstrate individual behaviors stemming from the Emirate-level rather than the national-level. While each of these governments has different sporting priorities, the sports sector is prominently featured in national plans for each nation.

Qatar

Qatar views sport as a pathway to global leadership in this industry. Sports-related events have boosted tourism in Qatar. In fact, Qatar’s Tourism Authority expressed its interest in increasing business and sport tourism. In order to become a regional and global leader in sport tourism Qatar is gaining a reputation as a host for more major sporting events. These major events serve the dual purpose of bringing tourism to Qatar and giving Qatar a reputation as a capable host for these events in the eyes of sport-related governing bodies. With this burgeoning reputation, Qatar can capitalize on tourism created by its hosting of events. Becoming a leader in event
hosting requires a positive international reputation as an event host, which Qatar is quickly gaining. FIFA awarded the World Cup to Qatar on the basis that it had previously hosted successful major events, including two major football tournaments and a major multi-sport event. The IOC, however, refused to award Qatar with an Olympics in part because it did not believe that Qatar had demonstrated an ability to successfully host an event as complex and large as the Olympics. By hosting a successful World Cup, with positive or negative press about the country itself, Qatar can solidify a spot among the elite sport event hosts. A demonstration of the capacity to plan, build, and implement such a large event can also give Qatar a boost in future Olympic bids as it will be the largest event it has ever hosted, and the only event in the world besides the Olympics that is commonly thought of as a sport mega-event.

Successfully hosting the World Cup, coupled with the successful events that Qatar has hosted in the past will make it a global leader in the sport world. As the number of non-western countries hosting mega-events grow and western countries shy away from hosting these events there is space for a newcomer such as Qatar to break into the field and produce a major spectacle that remains the event all others get measured against for many years. China demonstrated an ability to do this when it hosted the 2008 Olympics and has been awarded with another Olympic Games since then. Qatar, if it were to succeed in its goal of hosting the Olympics, would become just the 14th country to ever host the World Cup and Olympics if no other country reaches that mark first.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{113} South Korea and then Russia will both achieve this mark in 2018 to become the 12th and 13th countries, respectively, to host both events. South Korea will host the Winter Olympics in February and Russia will host the World Cup in June and July.
United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates utilizes sport mainly for economic gain. Economic diversification is the largest goal of Dubai using sport as a tool. The tourism and real estate sectors are being expanded through sport as a creative outlet. Dubai has also not expanded sport the same way it has other industries to create superlatives. Many of Dubai’s construction are designed to be the largest or tallest or first in the world, such as the Burj Khalifa, the world’s tallest building, the Jebel Ali port, the world’s biggest man-made harbour and largest port in the Middle East, and plans to make Al Maktoum airport the largest in the world. In sport, however, Dubai does not build superlatives. Dubai hosts relatively fewer events per year than Qatar and will quickly fall behind in quantity of international level sport infrastructure as Qatar builds the necessary facilities to host World Cup. The Dubai International Cricket Stadium, Dubai’s largest stadium, is not even the largest stadium in the UAE. The lack of grandiose building projects indicates that sport is not the most important sector in Dubai and is being used, instead, as a tool to expand its economy.

Sport is less prevalent in Abu Dhabi than in Dubai and Qatar. Abu Dhabi is home to a Formula 1 Grand Prix and a Ferrari themed amusement park, but many of the national sport governing bodies are run by members of the Dubai ruling family and start in Dubai. Abu Dhabi is home to the UAE’s largest stadium and the UAE’s women’s football league. Even though Abu Dhabi has not led the sporting industry in the Gulf it is still a clear member of it.
Shared Outcomes

Both Qatar and the UAE are utilizing sport for domestic goals. Initiatives to improve public health are being run through sport, both in schools and in adult populations. The increase in public sporting infrastructure has increased in recent years and is giving a larger portion of the population the opportunity to practice sport and stay active. As more of the populations become active both countries are also developing their elite sport talent development programs in an effort to develop more world-class athletes. Both countries highly value Olympic medals but have combined to win only seven including one gold through the 2016 Olympics. The expansion of sport in the economic and international sectors will increase the amount of sport that the domestic populations are exposed to and can enhance domestic initiatives.

Is sport making a difference?

This paper has not focused on the results of the sport initiatives or event hosting or economic development, but rather on how sport appearing in Qatar and the UAE and why it might be. It is difficult to determine if sport is making a positive difference in these countries, largely because this paper focuses on developments that have occurred in the last seven years. Long term results such as athlete development, population health trends, and international reputation change have not had enough time to come to fruition. The domestic initiatives that both countries have regarding developing elite athletes and solving lifestyle health problems are largely focused on children. When this generation reaches adulthood they will be the greatest proof of whether or not the initiatives worked.
The largest projects that Qatar and the UAE have that may change their global reputation through sport are their mega-events. Winning the right to host these events is proof that the organizers of the events believe that both countries have the capacity to host the events. However, it is not until the events are over and they have been run smoothly and spectacularly that the rest of the world notices. Only after 2020 and 2022 will it manifest whether or not these events affected change in world opinion.

The overall measure of success in the future for the various uses of sport in these countries may be the rate at which future programs continue to exist and expand. The amount of time and money poured into initiatives and programs surrounding sport will eventually need to yield a positive return in the eyes of those who run them in order to continue. If these countries continue to host major events and champion sport to their population then the programs will be worth it.
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