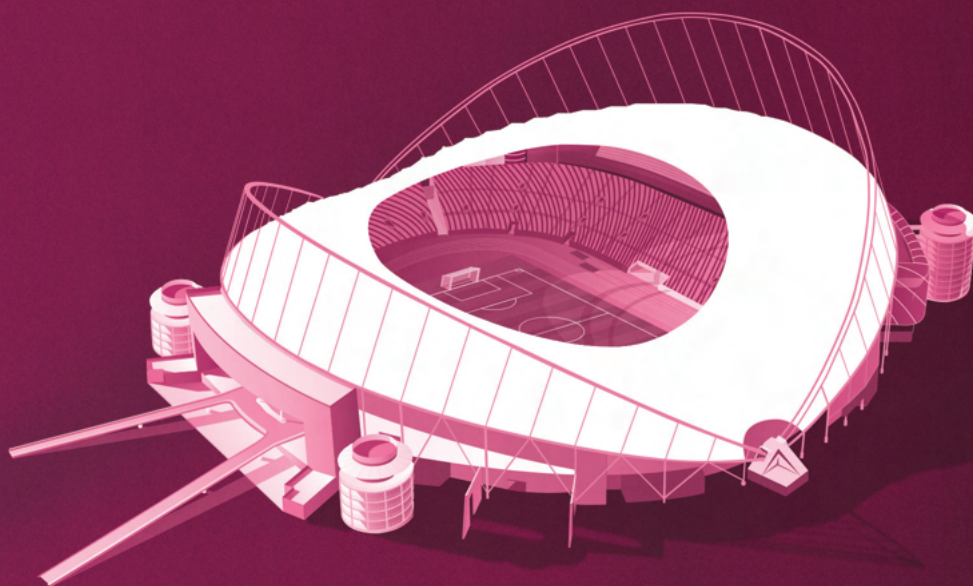


# Qatar

## GEOPOLITICS AND THE WORLD CUP



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“

*“The World Cup is the ideal opportunity to broaden geopolitical horizons especially in the context of Qatar, the cradle of “sportswashing”. An extremely professional report that shows how the ball has become a tool in the hands of the sheikhs”.*

**Tomasz Ćwiąkała**

reporter for Canal+ Sport

“

*“Soft power, human rights, corruption, international relations, geopolitics, ecology and ... football? Yes, indeed! Many books have already been written telling us that “football explains the world” and “the match is just an excuse”. But after you read them, you can only think that, till now, there has never been another event in sports history that better highlights the most serious issues in our world today - not just how strong the Brazilian team is and how many goals Messi will score. I very much hope the Institute of New Europe’s compendium on the World Cup in Qatar will help fans and commentators see connections far more important than that of Zieliński and Lewandowski, and while enjoying the match, they should keep their eyes open for what only seemingly has nothing to do with it”.*

**Michał Okoński**

reporter for Tygodnik Powszechny  
weekly

“

*“Just when I thought I knew everything about the World Cup in Qatar - I have read and written about this particular World Cup for years, watched documentaries, listened to lots of podcasts, and now have edited and published a magazine about the tournament - I read this report and once again realised that there is no such a thing as finite knowledge. In this guide, I found issues that were completely new to me and fresh insights into topics that were almost considered cliché. The authors have created a “dependency map”, showing that politics and sports have always gone hand in hand, but in the case of the first Middle Eastern World Cup, the boundaries have been pushed back like never before. Anyone who is interested in football and in the world around us should update themselves with this compendium of knowledge”.*

**Piotr Żelazny**

sports journalist,  
creator of Kopalnia Magazine

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*Qatar*

GEOPOLITICS  
AND THE WORLD CUP

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# MIDDLE EAST

## MAP



# INTRODUCTION

Qatar is the first Muslim and Middle Eastern country to host the World Cup. It is estimated that, during the event, between 1.2 million and 1.5 million fans will visit the country which, itself, only has a population of 2 million. By mid-August 2022, 2.45 million tickets had been sold for tournament matches. When FIFA announced the awarding of the World Cup to Qatar on 2 December 2010, many people had no idea where the energy giant was even located. Now, after more than a decade of extensive marketing and PR, the eyes of the world are turning to the Middle East, and more and more people are beginning to realise how strong an international position Qatar has developed, and how much politics and sports have in common.

The effectiveness of the lobbying there is evidenced by more than just winning the right to host the World Cup. The Qataris were able to convince FIFA activists to reduce by one-third the number of stadiums where tournament matches could be held, and also to move the event to the winter months. This was an unprecedented move that brought about changes to the fixture lists of national and international games around the world.

Nearly 4,000 kilometres away from Warsaw in 2022, Doha became the centre of political, energy, military and sports interests. Rivalry for influence with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, support for radical Islamist groups, the purchase of arms from France, installation of an American military base and, finally, suspicions of the corruption of FIFA officials and highest-ever spending to host any sporting event are just some of the issues that characterise Qatar's activities and its potential to build a strong international standing. The accumulated and still multiplying financial resources and authoritarian regime allow Qatar to pursue independent policies. The way to do this is to make weaker and poorer countries dependent and to offer lucrative contracts to the superpowers.

The invasion of Ukraine has made Qatar, the world's largest exporter of natural gas, one of Russia's most desirable economic partners. The country's positive image, built with the help of sport, has made it easier to establish such relationships despite numerous allegations against its authorities, accusations of corruption, violations of human rights and persecutions of religious and sexual minorities.

The aim of this report is to familiarise readers with Qatar's international position by analysing its foreign policy and the use of sport for its own needs. The authors have tried to

answer a number of questions posed not only by sports fans, but also by politicians and others interested in geopolitics. How did it happen that a country 27 times smaller than Poland is to host one of the largest sporting events in the world? Why did the Qataris care so much about hosting the World Cup? Does the hugely controversial decision taken by FIFA have any way to justify itself in sporting terms? Will it be possible to create the right conditions to ensure the safety of those arriving? How big is the terrorist threat in the region? Are energy resources the only form of leverage and pressure? Can this World Cup host surprise us not only athletically, but also politically?

Qatar's actions are a prime example of what "sports diplomacy" is – the instrumental use of sport and all aspects of it (infrastructure, fans, etc.) by political actors for the benefit of individual or state interests. In Qatar as a whole, sport and geopolitics are two issues that are well worth looking at in the fields of research and analysis. With this in mind, the authors have tried to fill the gap and provide a compendium of knowledge on not only political and sport issues. This report is a map of relationships demonstrating that politics and sports have always gone hand in hand. This time, however, the connection is exceptionally strong and will continue to be so for decades to come.

This report does not address every possible issue related to the Qatar World Cup. Only the most important topics have been highlighted, which the authors believe deserve special attention. All issues presented in the report are based on information available up to the end of August 2022.



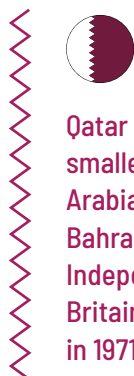
# 01

*Qatar*  
GEOPOLITICS  
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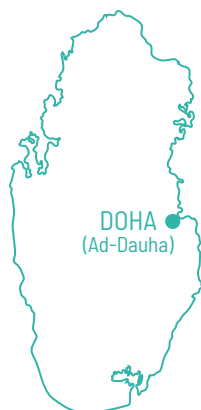
THE IMPACT OF THE WORLD CUP  
ON GEOPOLITICAL RELATIONS  
IN THE REGION AND QATAR'S  
POSITION IN THE WORLD

# 01.1

## QATAR'S PATH TO POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE



**Qatar is the second smallest country in the Arabian Peninsula after Bahrain. Independence from Britain was achieved in 1971.**



For years, it was considered a *de facto* vassal of Saudi Arabia. The country's position has been changed by the exploitation of natural gas deposits - estimated to be the third largest in the world.

Fossil fuel extraction and exports (**Qatar is one of the top 20 exporters of oil and one of the top three of natural gas**) gained momentum under the rule of Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. He took power in the mid-1990s after a bloodless palace coup, and began building a wealthy, modern and internationally independent state. In addition to his raw materials policy, the Emir has focused on soft power, reflected in the creation of Al-Jazeera television, among other things, to present Qatar's point of view to the world. Television in a short time became a powerful tool of influence not only in this region, but globally. This met with disapproval from Qatar's neighbours, especially Saudi Arabia.

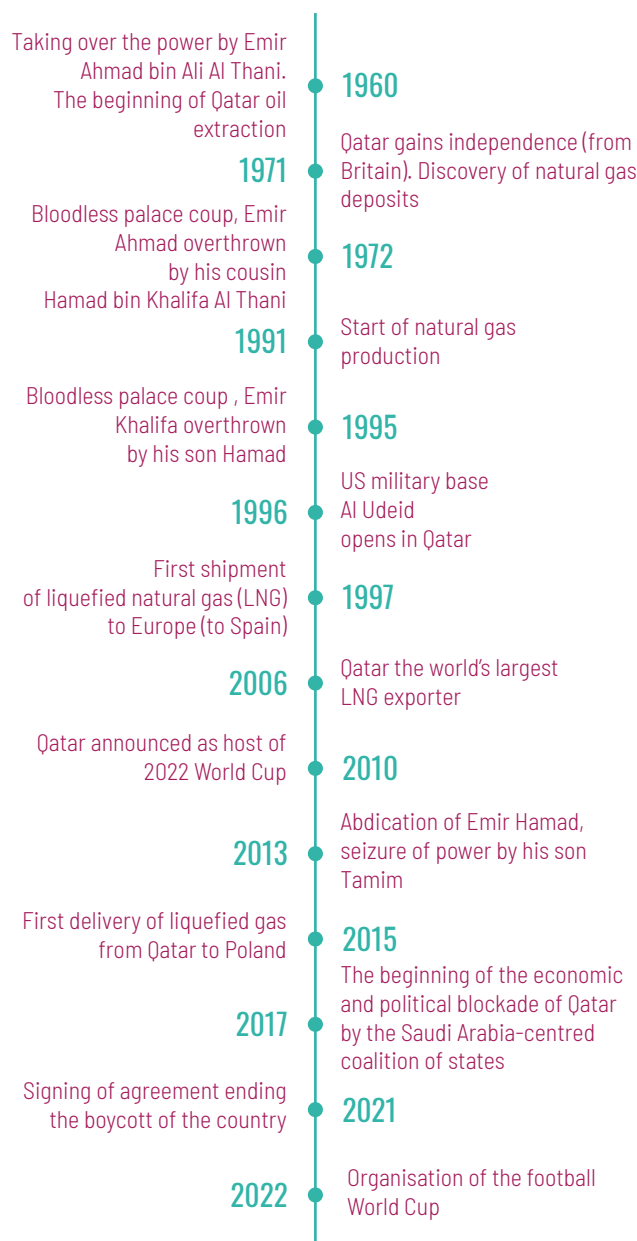
Building on its gas contracts, Qatar began to pursue a multi-vector foreign policy, strengthening relations with France and the United States, among others. Qatar built its influence in the region through political and financial support for oppositionists and revolutionaries in other Arab states, such as during the Arab Spring in 2011 (more on this in Part 3 of this report). This was met with accusations that the country supported terrorists, and this was primarily led by Saudi Arabia that was also unhappy about Qatar's good relations with its traditional enemies, Iran and Turkey.

Deteriorating Qatari-Saudi relations led to the formation of a Saudi-led anti-Qatar coalition in 2017. It was joined by the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Bahrain, the Maldives and others. The goal was to economically isolate Qatar, which only has a land border with Saudi Arabia.

Qatar did not make any concessions. The multipolarity

of previous policies and support from Turkey and Iran led to a rapid reorientation of trade and the implementation of new policies. This blockade of the country by its neighbours proved ineffective. With the support of United States diplomacy and Kuwait, the boycott of Qatar ended in 2021.

### A SELECTION OF HIGHLIGHTS IN THE QATAR'S HISTORY



# 01.2

## SPORT AS THE QATAR SOFT POWER

One of the strategies for strengthening Qatar's global position has become the building of the country's national recognition. Sport was supposed to be the best way to achieve this aim, and specifically the organisation of international sports events including successful athletes competing under the Qatari flag (often non-Qatari nationals), and sports sponsorship.

### MAJOR SPORTING EVENTS HOSTED BY QATAR IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

2004	Asian Championships	handball
2004	World Championships	table tennis
2005	World Championships	weightlifting
2005	Asian Championships	basketball
2006	Asian Championships	sailing
2006	Asian Games	Asian Games
2008	Asian Championships	athletics
2009	Asian Championships	fencing
2009–2012	Club World Championships	volleyball
2009	Gymnastics Games	gymnastics
2010	World Championships	athletics
2010	Asian Championships	football
2012	Asian Championships	shooting
2014	World Championships	swimming
2015	World Championships	handball
2015	World Championships	boxing
2016	World Championships	cycling
2018	World Championships	artistic gymnastics
2019	World Championships	athletics
2019–2020	Club World Championships	football
2022	World Championships	football
2023	World Championships	judo
2023	World Championships	swimming

The first truly global media event was the 1995 Under-20 World Cup Football tournament. The Qataris had three weeks to prepare for the event because, at the last moment, it had to be moved away from Nigeria due to an outbreak of meningitis in that country.

The boom in sporting events began in Qatar in the first decade of the 21st century. In 2005, the country hosted the World Weightlifting Championships. One year later they organised the Asian Games. In 2007, Qatar put forward Doha's candidacy to host the 2016 Summer Olympics.

Qatar's bid failed to gain recognition in the eyes of International Olympic Committee officials, and dropped out of the competition at the first stage right after the bids had been evaluated. However, the very fact of expressing their readiness to host the world's largest sports event (in terms of the number of participants, disciplines and required facilities) showed how far Qatari decision-makers' ambitions had gone. In 2008, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani – then chairman of the Qatar Olympic Committee and now the Emir of Qatar – announced that Doha would bid to host the 2020 Olympics. On that occasion, they also failed to make it to be one of the final three candidate cities.

Also, during this time, the Qataris successfully applied to host championship events in individual disciplines. It started with the 2010 World Indoor Athletics Championships. Then, there were global championships in swimming (2014), handball (2015), boxing (2015), cycling (2016), and once again in athletics – this time in an open stadium (2019).

Qataris also host periodic events. Since 1993, it has been the Qatar Tennis Open (won by Boris Becker, Stefan Edberg, Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal or Novak Djokovic – in the last of these, the prize money pool exceeded one million dollars). In the years since 2001, the Qatar Ladies Open has also been held (in 2022 Iga Świątek triumphed there). For 15 years, the Tour of Qatar has featured the world's best cyclists. Golfers and equestrians compete in prestigious tournaments in Doha. Qatar has hosted the Club World Championships in volleyball and handball. Furthermore, the athletics Diamond League competition is hosted in Qatar. The 2021 Formula One Grand Prix calendar included a race in Qatar for the first time. After a one-year break in 2022, it will return to the event for at least another 10 years.

Obtaining the rights to host all these events is the evidence of Qatar's effective lobbying in the world of sports, which has become an important tool for conducting the country's foreign policy. So, Qatar is also building its reputation as a patron of sports through sports sponsorship. Qatar-based clothing manufacturer, Burrda, has created sports kits for the Tunisian and Belgian national teams, and for French club OGC Nice.

Since 2013, the country's recognition has been taken care of by Qatar Airways, whose logo has since appeared on the shirts of FC Barcelona, Bayern Munich, AS Roma, Boca Juniors, and PSG. Since 2011, PSG has been owned by the state fund Qatar Sports Investments.

But the Qataris wanted not only to organise and finance the competitions of the world's best athletes, but to participate themselves and compete for honours. Qatar's small population and lack of sporting traditions (stemming in part from its short-lived statehood) and, as Mathias Krug points out, its residents' "low interest in playing sport", have meant that Qatar has had limited opportunities for sporting success. The solution for such issues has turned out to be the enlistment of foreign trainers and, to maximise the chances of winning medals at major events, the athletes themselves. The high salaries offered to represent Qatar have tempted several hundred athletes so far. It is worth noting that they are exempt from the regulations that specify that Qatari citizenship can be granted to a maximum of 50 people per year.

**Only two of Qatar's seven Olympic medallists were actually born in Qatar**, i.e. high jumper Mutaz Essa Barshim, coached by a Polish coach Stanisław Szczyrba, and sports shooter (former rally driver) Nasser Al-Attiyah. At the Tokyo Olympics, Egyptian-born weightlifter Fares Ibrahim and Gambian-Senegalese-born beach volleyball pair Ahmed Tijan - Cherif Younousse stood on the podium under the Qatari flag. A bizarre situation occurred at the 2015 World Handball Championships hosted by Qatar. The 17-member home team included only two Qatar-born players, but despite that, this cosmopolitan team won the silver medal.

The possibilities of poaching athletes are limited by the rules of each federation, which regulate the rules under which athletes can change the colours of the country they represent. It was such regulations that stood in the way of the internationalisation of the Qatar national football team. The Qataris took their first steps in this direction in 2004. In order to strengthen their national team, they tried to follow in the footsteps of the Togolese national team and issue passports to and call up three Brazilians into the national team. This manoeuvre was thwarted by FIFA which, because of the actions of these two teams, tightened the regulations on the national team.

In subsequent years, FIFA regulations were modified several more times. However, numerous foreign-born players regularly play for the Qatari national team. They are primarily from the Aspire Academy - a network of Qatar-funded football schools scattered around the world. In 2014, Qatar's under-19 national team, made up exclusively of Aspire Academy players, claimed the continental championship. The controversy surrounding the academy is two-fold - firstly, the attempts to take over talented

## SELECTED NATURALISED QATARI REPRESENTATIVES

	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	DISCIPLINE
Said Saif Asaad (formerly Angel Popov)	Bulgaria	weightlifting
Fares El-Bakh	Egypt	weightlifting
Ahmed Tijan	Gambia	beach volleyball
Cherif Younousse	Senegal	beach volleyball
Jefferson Pereira	Brazil	beach volleyball
Femi Ogunode	Nigeria	sprinting races
Abubaker Haydar Abdalla	Sudan	800-metre run
Mohammed Suleiman	Somalia	1500-metre and 500-metre run
Daham Najim Bashi (formerly David Nyaga)	Kenya	1500-metre run
Onèsphore Nkuzimana	Burundi	5000-metre run
Abderrahman Samba	Saudi Arabia	hurdle races
Žarko Marković	Montenegro	handball
Marko Bagarić	Croatia	handball
Bertrand Roiné	France	handball
Rafael Capote	Cuba	handball
Borja Vidal	Spain	handball
Ameen Zakkar	Syria	handball
Youssef Benali	Tunisia	handball
Eldar Memišević	Bosnia and Herzegovina	handball
Li Ping	China	table tennis
Sebastián Soria	Uruguay	football
Mohammed Kasola	Ghana	football

players born in other countries, and secondly, the alleged corruption in the funding of training programmes in countries that FIFA officials involved in the awarding of the 2022 World Cup, came from.

All of these activities, i.e. the organisation of major sporting events, sports sponsorship and naturalising athletes to achieve success in sports, can be considered at three levels: building the country's recognition, competing with neighbours that use similar practices (the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia

also finance European sports and host major events), and sportwashing which involves boosting the country's image.<sup>1</sup>

## 01.3

### THE FIRST WORLD CUP OF THIS KIND

Qatar's efforts to host the 2022 World Cup finals formally began in May 2009. During the final of the Emir Cup in Doha, Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani announced that Qatar would bid to host the World Cup. The preparation of the Qatari bid, a *de facto* vision of how the Qataris wanted to organise the tournament, continued for another year. The country lacked sports infrastructure (stadiums, training bases) and hotels. Because of average temperatures over 40 °C (104 °F) during the summer months, there were concerns about the health of players and guests. This proposal was highlighted by human rights activists.

All these shortcomings and risks were recognised and picked up by a visiting FIFA delegation to Qatar 18 months later. Its visit was followed by a 40-page report assessing Qatar's candidacy. It also listed the advantages of holding the world's largest football event in Qatar.

Among them were **the promotion of football in Arab countries** (none had ever hosted a tournament of this stature before), **the locations of all venues in a small area** (12 stadiums located within sixty kilometres), **and the organisers' declaration of the tournament's carbon neutrality.**

As it was later, in their decision-making, FIFA delegates were guided also by motives not exactly pertaining to the subject matter (more in Part 4 of this report).

On 2 December 2010, everything became clear – the smallest ever bidder to host the World Cup became the smallest country to host the tournament. It took them 12 years, which is an unprecedentedly long period of time. However, such a long period of preparation did not save the event from organisational embarrassment. Three months before the scheduled start of the tournament on 21 November, the Qataris and FIFA moved the opening of the tournament to one day earlier, 20 November. Hotels, airline tickets, marketing campaigns and television broadcast plans around the world – all of these, to some extent, had to be re-planned from the start.

There is a lot of controversy surrounding the awarding of the rights to host the World Cup to Qatar (more in Part 4 of this report). The fact that serious modifications were made to the event's programme as soon as the host was announced can be added to the long list which includes the following: reducing the number of stadiums from 12 to eight (decided in 2014) and moving the start of the tournament from June to November (2018). Never in history has the World Cup been held outside the May-August period. The precedent has to do with the weather conditions and concerns that preparations for the summer tournament could be disrupted by the preceding Ramadan.

## 01.4

### A POLITICAL WORLD CUP

During the period of the blockade of Qatar (2017 – 2021), its neighbours joined a campaign to discredit the Qatari World Cup. The United States-based pro-Saudi group SAPRAC published a report bearing a significant title, "Qatar Hosting Sport Under The Banner of Terrorism". There were allegations of organisational issues (lack of adequate infrastructure, unfavourable weather conditions) and political issues (accusations of terrorist financing and corruption).

At the time, FIFA was discussing the expansion of the number of World Cup participants from 32 to 48 teams. FIFA President Gianni Infantino considered making this change as early as the 2022 World Cup. For Qatar, it would have been too much of an organisational burden (more participants means more matches, more players, and more fans) – a fact immediately picked up by the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt who all pointed out Qatar's organisational impotence and expressed their own willingness to co-host the event. In the end, it was decided that 48 teams would play for the first time at the next World Cup, in 2026.

The local TV station beIN Sports, which is the *de facto* sports offshoot of Al-Jazeera, also fell victim to the Qatar blockade. The TV station has quickly become one of the most important players in the market for television rights to show the most important and prestigious sports events not only in the region, but also the world. In 2017, a pirate station called beoutQ was established in Saudi Arabia, stealing beIN's signal and making it available to viewers online. Settling the pirate channel issue was one of the conditions set by the English Premier League authorities on the way to the Saudi acquisition of Newcastle United club, which took place in October 2021.

<sup>1</sup>The glaring examples of this practice were the hosting of the Olympic Games by China, which is accused of human rights violations and persecution of ethnic minorities, and Russia, which started a war with Ukraine shortly after the Sochi Games.

In April 2022, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution in which it welcomed Qatar's hosting of the World Cup. **The resolution pointed out that the tournament would be an opportunity to promote peace and development, respect human rights, gender equality, and support women's emancipation.**

## 01.5

### A FOOTBALL DESERT

The World Cup in Qatar will be the debut for the host football team at a tournament of this stature. It has only happened twice before – in 1930 and 1934, very early in the history of the World Cup.

There is no football tradition in Qatar, although Matthias Krug points out that it was in Qatar that the region's first football stadium with a grass surface was built. Krug recalls that the 1973 match between Brazil's Santos – with Pele in the line-up – and the oldest local club, Al Ahli, took place there. The match was a showcase, contradicting the widespread belief that Qatari sheikhs' interest in football had a history not much longer than the country's World Cup bid.

Qatari football has made its mark on the sports map of the world several times. In 1981, the country's youth national team finished 4<sup>th</sup> at the World Under-20 Championships. On its way to the semi-finals, it defeated teams such as Brazil and Poland (the Polish squad included many players to go on to play in the national team, including Dariusz Dziekanowski, Dariusz Wdowczyk, Józef Wandzik, and Ryszard Tarasiewicz). The magnitude of the success of this result is evidenced by the fact that the entire team became the ambassadors of the 2022 tournament at the bidding stage for hosting the event.

In 1991, the success of their older colleagues was repeated by Qatar's under-17 national team. Among the successes, the team's appearances at the 1984 and 1992 Olympic Games (in Barcelona, the Qataris advanced to the quarter-finals, where they lost to Poland after goals by Wojciech Kowalczyk and Marcin Jałocha) are also worthy of note. Furthermore, on the Asian continent, the Qataris were not so successful, though they have won the Persian Gulf Cup three times. The biggest and most prestigious triumph was winning the 2019 Asian Cup. It also had a political dimension as the tournament was played in the United Arab Emirates, which was boycotting Qatar at that time<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> In the semi-finals, Qatar beat the UAE 4-0. Earlier, in the group stage, they won 2-0 against the Saudi Arabian team.

Qatari clubs do not have much of a record in international competition, but the Al-Sadd team has won the Asian Champions League twice (in 1989 and 2011). Al-Arabi played in the 1995 finals. However, the expectations were much higher.

## 01.6

### SPORT – STILL A TOOL OF POLITICS

**Following the normalisation of Qatar-Saudi Arabia relations, the first initiatives at the interface between sports and business emerged, which could herald joint projects in the organisation of sports events.** There is growing talk of a joint candidacy between the two countries to host the Olympic Games in 2036 or 2040.

For both countries, politically and financially betting on a sportswashing strategy, this would be the ultimate achievement of that policy. The strength of a joint bid would open an unlimited budget for the event while many countries are dropping out of bids to host the World Cup or Olympics due to the huge costs and accompanying public discontent. There is also the narrative of the conciliatory role of sports, which brings together rival and even warring countries. Allegations of human rights violations and discrimination against minorities in both countries may again be a weakness, but preparations for this year's championship have shown that discussion of these issues has no real bearing on the choice of the tournament organiser.

# 02

*Qatar*  
GEOPOLITICS  
AND THE WORLD CUP

INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS  
IN THE REGION

# 02.1

## ALLIANCES AND CONFLICTS

In the Middle East, the map of alliances and conflicts often does not align in a logical manner. For example, Qatar maintains good relations with Iran, unlike the UAE (but recently there have been reports of possible normalisation), Bahrain or Saudi Arabia. Syria, on the other hand, is a close ally of Iran, but it is the UAE and Bahrain that have normalised relations with it, while Qatar excludes it. The UAE and Bahrain have also stabilised relations with Israel, which is hostile to Syria, while Qatar excludes such stabilisation, although it has maintained informal relations with Israel in the past. Qatar, however, supports the radical Palestinian group Hamas, while Saudi Arabia carried out mass arrests of members of the organisation in 2021.

Qatar also has a very close relationship with Turkey, with which it shares, most notably, a relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood and Turkey's military assistance in 2017, which saved Qatar from Saudi-Emirati intervention. Qatar's relations with the United States, on the other hand, are determined by the fact that Qatar is home to the largest American air base in the region (Al-Udeid), as well as Qatar's "diplomatic favours". The idea is to broker talks between the United States enemies with whom Qatar has good relations. For example, in early July 2022, there were indirect American-Iranian negotiations on the reactivation of the JCPOA (the agreement on Iran's nuclear programme), and in February 2020, the United States reached an agreement with the Taliban in Doha, paving the way for them to take over Afghanistan.

At the same time, **there is a constant possibility of a crisis in Qatar's relations with the UAE and Egypt.** By contrast, the risk of a crisis in the relations with Saudi Arabia and Bahrain is not so great. Problems in the mutual relations between these countries have not been resolved, and all of the above-mentioned countries have quite different foreign policies especially towards countries in Europe and Asia (for example, Saudi Arabia is working strongly with Greece, which has very bad relations with Turkey).

The situation in the Middle East is very dynamic. The multiplicity of relationships between countries, organisations and groups makes us reflect not only on the sporting aspect of the event itself, but also on its political, security and social terms.

The complexity of relations between various states and non-state actors in the Middle East is due to a multitude of factors that impact them. In particular, there is the Sunni and non-Sunni rivalry, the classic rivalry for power, the Palestinian problem and

### QATAR'S RELATIONS WITH NON-STATE ENTITIES



- Good relations:** Turkey, Palestinian Authority, Hamas, Muslim Brotherhood, Taliban, other jihadist groups
- Fair relations:** Kuwait, Iran, Oman, Jordan, Lebanon
- Fair relations but with high potential for conflict:** Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates
- Bad or no relations:** Yemen, Syria, Israel



attitudes towards Israel, the Kurdish problem, the activity of cross-border Islamist organisations (in particular, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic State, and Al Qaeda), and the raw materials factor (this includes not only oil, but also water).

Although Qatar does not have the military or demographic/geographic potential to claim the role of a regional power. It is now trying to play such a role.

⚡ **Qatar may be a gas powerhouse, but its total GDP is only USD 180 billion** – much less than many other countries in the region like Iran (1,426 billion), Saudi Arabia (833 billion), Israel (481 billion), United Arab Emirates (409 billion) and Iraq (209 billion).

In doing so, Qatar is trying to delicately balance its foreign policy, especially with regard to the superpowers. This means that it is capable of both opposing other states in the Arabian Peninsula and engaging in open cooperation with Western powers. Its stance is interesting in that it is quite soft in nature and implies that Qatar is open to the easing of relations at the expense of benefits.

## 02.2

### ISSUES OF RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

An important factor shaping the relations in the region is the issue of religion. The Arab and non-Arab relationship is of key importance. In doing so, the Middle East is usually associated with Muslims and Arabs, but this perception is a far-reaching oversimplification. Even excluding Turkey and Iran, the Middle East still remains ethnically and religiously diverse. Ethnically, it is primarily Kurds and Jews; nevertheless, other groups also live there. There are significant differences between Arabs from different countries in the region, and they have never been able to unite. In the religious context, it is particularly about divisions within Islam, although other religious minorities, including Christians, also live here. The main division among Muslims is between Sunnis and Shiites, a dispute over formal leadership after Muhammad's death. Currently, Iran is the country most associated with Shiites.

## 02.3

### QATAR'S RELATIONS WITH NON-STATE ACTORS

The key to understanding Qatar's position is its relationship with non-state entities such as the Muslim Brotherhood. This organisation is a radical Islamist organisation present under different names in almost all Arab countries and considered terrorist in many of them (especially Egypt and the United Arab Emirates).

⚡ **Meanwhile, Qatar shelters many of its leaders and provides financial support to various other jihadist organisations, which includes those accused of terrorism and operating throughout the Islamic world (e.g. Hamas or Jabhatan-Nusra in Syria), allowing it to exploit them in regional rivalries.**

Furthermore, since 2013, there has been an official representative office of the Afghan Taliban in Qatar, while previously Qatar supported Chechen separatists and particularly jihadists.

Qatar has the most effective soft power instrument in the region – the previously mentioned Al Jazeera TV. As a result, Qatar has effectively competed with Saudi Arabia and the UAE for influence since the beginning of the Arab Spring. It also was a party to the proxy war in Libya, supporting forces fighting groups backed by Egypt and the UAE. This led to a diplomatic crisis in 2017 and a blockade of Qatar by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, introduced at the initiative of the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. However, this blockade proved ineffective and Qatar was saved from armed intervention from its neighbours by Turkey, which sent troops there. Nor has the United States supported the confrontational policy of Saudi Arabia and the UAE towards its small neighbour, despite the intense efforts of the Saudi heir to the throne Mohammed bin Salman.

## 02.4

### QATAR'S MULTILATERAL POLICY

In 2021, Qatar's relations with the other GCC states stabilised, and the final communiqué of the Saudi Jeddah summit – attended by the leaders of nine Middle Eastern Arab states (including Egypt, but excluding Yemen, Syria and Lebanon) and the American President Joe Biden – included a provision to support Qatar in connection with its preparations for the World Cup. The summit itself, as well as Joe Biden's earlier visit to Israel and the Palestinian Authority, failed to produce a breakthrough on any key regional issue. However, they were necessary to emphasise that the United States had not lost interest in the region and still intended to play a key role in it. This was especially important given the criticism of Saudi heir to the throne Mohammed bin Salman by Biden and many other American politicians, and, in response, the Saudi-Russian and even Saudi-Chinese rapprochement. It was also Biden's first visit to the region since becoming president with only a handful of Middle Eastern leaders, i.e. the leaders of Israel, Iraq, Jordan, and just Qatar, also visiting Washington at the time.

It is worth mentioning that Qatar's relations with Russia are low due in part to the fact that the two countries are rivals in the gas market. In addition, Qatar has supported Chechen separatists, and in 2004 Russian forces assassinated one of Chechen leaders Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev in Doha. In 2007, however, there was a visit by Vladimir Putin to Qatar, and relations between the two countries improved, although the war in Syria again led to tension. Russia backed the Assad regime, while Qatar has supported the opposition, especially the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, from the beginning.

## 02.5

### ONGOING WARS IN THE REGION

Two wars are currently ongoing in the Middle East – in Syria and Yemen. They have involved different countries in the region to varying degrees. The war in Syria is the most complex as there are more than two sides in the conflict. Internally, these include government forces, the Kurds, pro-Turkish jihadists, Al Qaeda, and the Islamic State. In contrast, the external forces with a military presence in Syria include Russia (supporting government forces), Turkey (occupying part of the country, supporting jihadists and fighting the Kurds), the United States (supporting the Kurds against the Islamic State and Al Qaeda), Iran (supporting government forces), and Israel (bombing Iranian positions with Russia's acquiescence). At the same time, a number of other countries support the various parties politically and financially. This includes Qatar, which supports jihadists who are fighting against government forces. Syria, although it fell into isolation at the beginning of the civil war, has now normalised relations with most countries in the region. Currently, only with Qatar, Turkey, Israel and Saudi Arabia does it not have diplomatic relations. However, in the case of Saudi Arabia, it is significant that in June 2022 Syria resumed relations with Bahrain (which is in a state of de facto dependence on Saudi Arabia, so this could not have happened without its consent). Currently, the biggest threat of a renewed escalation of the conflict in Syria involves the threat of another Turkish invasion. This would be to Recep Erdogan's advantage – using Russia's approval – ahead of next year's presidential elections in Turkey.

It is important to note that the United States spearheaded a coalition of 83 countries (including Canada, Australia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan) in the fight against the Islamic State and its agencies, and began cooperating with the Syrian Democratic Forces. Since the beginning of the war, more than 606,000 people have been killed and more than 2.1 million injured. A major consequence of the war in Syria is mass displacement.

**The number of Syrian refugees is more than 6.8 million** (the registered number) of which about 3.6 million are in Turkey and about 6.9 million are internally displaced. The number of Syrian refugees in Europe is estimated to be more than a million.

<sup>3</sup> Criticism of Mohammed bin Salman in the United States was prompted by, on the one hand, the brutal murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who worked for the Washington Post, among others, which took place in October 2018 at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, and, on the other hand, the civilian casualties of Saudi airstrikes in Yemen. As a result, in April 2019, Congress halted support for Saudi Arabia in the war in Yemen, and in 2020, during the election campaign, Joe Biden announced he would make the country a pariah. Meanwhile, Mohammed bin Salman began to work increasingly closely with Russia within the OPEC+ format, and in 2021, there were reports of Saudi-Chinese cooperation in ballistic missile production.

Although Assad practically won the war, one can assume that Syrian citizens and rebels will not surrender their country to the regime and will continue the uneven fight against all odds, especially when Assad violates human and civil rights. Despite a multinational coalition of countries (including many World Cup 2022 participants), the situation in Syria is still unresolved.

The war in Yemen has been going on since 2014, and the country's formal authorities, considered to be entirely dependent on Saudi Arabia, control only part of the south of the country and the sparsely populated eastern areas, which also have a strong Al Qaeda activity. Most of Yemen's populated areas, including the capital Sanaa, are controlled by a government set up by the Zaydi (Shiite) Houthis rebels, recognised only by Iran and Syria. The former capital of South Yemen, Aden, is controlled by South Yemeni separatists backed by the United Arab Emirates, which has also practically taken control of the island of Socotra, installing its military base there. In theory, the UAE and Saudi Arabia jointly support government forces against the Houthis, but in fact their interests in the country have long been at odds, especially since the formal government is based on the Muslim Brotherhood-linked Islah (Al-Islah) party, and the organisation is considered a key terrorist threat by the UAE. A truce has been in effect since April 2022, but all attempts to date to find a peaceful solution to the conflict have failed.

## 02.6

### THE ISSUE OF ISRAEL

The Palestinian issue and attitudes towards Israel is another divisive issue among the countries of the region. In 2020, the so-called Abraham Accords were concluded, leading to the normalisation of relations and rapidly deepening cooperation between Israel and the United Arab Emirates. Some other Arab states have also normalised relations, and currently, among the countries in the region, diplomatic relations with Israel are maintained by Egypt, Turkey, the UAE, Bahrain, and Jordan. Qatar, on the other hand, had limited relations with Israel between 1996 and 2009. Israel's informal contacts with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain, however, have a much longer history. Further informal rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Israel took place during President Joe Biden's recent visit, but the problem for the formal normalisation is Saudi Arabia's role in the Islamic world (it is home to Mecca, the most important site for Muslims and a destination for their pilgrimage) and fear of a negative reaction from Arab public opinion. Qatar, in contrast, has decided to use the situation to strengthen its influence among radical groups opposed to normalising relations with Israel. Turkey, conversely, despite being the first

Muslim country to establish diplomatic relations with Israel back in 1949, has had strained relations with Israel since 2010, i.e. the Mavi Marmara ship incident. Among the states hostile to Israel, Iran and its regional allies, i.e. Syria and Hezbollah (and thus indirectly Lebanon), as well as Iraq, play a key role.

In terms of security, it is Israel, among others, that is concerned about the travel of its citizens to Qatar. Concerns remain about the possibility of Israelis being hurt and attacked during the World Cup. Israel cannot make any security arrangements because it does not have diplomatic relations with Qatar. Nearly 15,000 Israelis have bought tickets for the World Cup, and it is estimated that between 25,000 and 30,000 could go there. The question of a possible trip is still to be analysed, but there may be recommendations not to go to Qatar.

Israel requested from the organisers and FIFA an official temporary diplomatic office to support Israeli fans for the duration of the World Cup, but Qatar rejected such a proposal. So, even during the World Cup, there is little chance of any improvement in diplomatic relations between Qatar and Israel. The only leverage Qatar has is with FIFA, but FIFA does not seem to want to destabilise its own relationship with the Qataris.



# 03

*Qatar*  
GEOPOLITICS  
AND THE WORLD CUP

THREATS  
TO SECURITY  
IN THE REGION AND COOPERATION  
WITH NATO

# 03.1

## TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS IN THE REGION

The Middle East is at threat from dozens of major terrorist organisations and several hundred affiliate groups. The concentration of extremists in the region is strongly linked to the ongoing armed conflicts, the involvement of troops from NATO countries, the unstable situation in failed states and the competition of terrorist groups for land and money (including that from the arms and drugs trade). Terrorism is one of the greatest threats to international security, given the repeated terrorist attacks, both at civilian and critical infrastructure level. The activities of terrorist and insurgent militia groups in the Middle East, which fight at the same time against coalitions of Western countries and the interests of individual countries/groups in the region (whether in favour of Iran or the Taliban), is one of the greatest security challenges of modern times.

In recent years in the Middle East, one of the most active terrorist organisations has been Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (formerly Al-Nusra Front or Jabhat Al-Nusra). This group operates mainly in central and north-western Syria and Lebanon with several thousand terrorists fighting in its name.

Al-Qaeda, which operates globally, is heavily involved in the region. Its agencies operate in Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Islamic State (ISIS) also has fighters all over the world, and in the region is primarily active in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan. Hezbollah is active in Lebanon in attacking Israeli territory, and also conducts armed operations in Syria on the government side. Another organisation is the Iranian-backed Kata'ib Hezbollah, which operates inside Iraq and also supports government forces in Syria. The Taliban is a group that, by regaining power in Afghanistan, has, so to speak, shattered the United States and coalition policy in the context of security in the region by sympathising with the Islamist movement project.

Given Turkey's international activity and the situation in the region, one must point to the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which is currently active in Turkey and Iraq. Furthermore, the activity of the Muslim Brotherhood, which receives support from Qatar, despite its designation as a terrorist organisation by, among others, Egypt, is not without significance.

### STABILITY OF MIDDLE EASTERN STATES



- Countries at war**
- Countries with serious problems and instability in parts of the territory (most of the territory is safe for tourists)**
- Stable countries**

## 03.2

### NATO AND POLISH SECURITY ENGAGEMENT IN QATAR

The real exception is NATO's commitment to support security during the World Cup.

➤ **In early 2022, Qatar became a "major non-NATO ally",** which facilitates the maintenance of an ongoing dialogue between the Alliance and the Arabian Peninsula state.

As part of close cooperation on the occasion of the upcoming World Cup, NATO will provide support which includes training for chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats. The training will be conducted by Slovakia and NATO's CBRN Defense Centre of Excellence. In addition, Romanian representatives will provide training on the protection of key personnel and the countering of explosive threats. The first training sessions were conducted as early as May 2022.

The United States has declared it will support Qatar on security issues. Initially, they will help identify airline passengers involved in international criminal, terrorist, and human trafficking activities. In addition, the US Department of Homeland Security has signed a bilateral agreement with Qatar's Interior Ministry for continued security cooperation. It was stressed that the two sides agreed to cooperate to counter threats from unmanned aerial systems in the field of cyber security, as well as in the support of transport control and travellers who will be arriving in Qatar. The support of the US Secret Service, which will train Qatari personnel to maintain security at the sporting event, is also significant. Other NATO countries will also be involved in assisting Qataris, including the UK, which will send its air force and navy to provide anti-terrorism protection (including 24 EurofighterTyphoon jets). France will also provide warning and control systems (including early warning aircraft, AWACS) and anti-drone systems. Turkey will deploy more than 3,000 security personnel for the competition and armed forces for CBRN defense. At the same time, non-NATO countries will be involved. For example, Morocco will send a team of cyber security experts and South Korea will send police officers. It is to be expected that the number of NATO countries and its allies involved will grow.

➤ **Poland will also engage in cooperation to ensure safety during the World Cup.** On 3 July 2022, an agreement was signed to strengthen the competence of Qatar's security forces to carry out counterterrorism operations.

The Polish side, which has greatly developed its counter-terrorism capabilities in recent years and hosted the 2012 UEFA European Football Championships, will pass on good practices and techniques, and share lessons learned by counter-terrorism units and the Polish Armed Forces. In addition, in May, Polish representatives signed the Declaration on Information Exchange between the State of Qatar and World Cup Participating Countries.

## 03.3

### QATAR'S MILITARY AND SPORTS COOPERATION WITH FRANCE

One should not forget the close military cooperation between Qatar and the Republic of France (the current world football champions). Support for FIFA's awarding of the 2022 World Cup was of key importance. The final emergence of an Arab country – for the first time in history – then deepened France's political, economic and, above all, military cooperation with Qatar. The solid bilateral relations launched a series of initiatives and investments in both the public and private sectors, and marked the beginning of cooperation between Qatari and French arms concerns.

It should be stressed that Qatar was not awarded the hosting of the 2022 World Cup without accusations of corrupt FIFA officials facing charges and, additionally, there was the involvement of French politicians and businessmen. Crucial to the whole affair was an unofficial meeting at the Elysée Palace on 23 November 2010 which, importantly, preceded FIFA's decision on the selection of the World Cup host issued just nine days later, on 2 December 2010. At that time, the meeting was attended by Nicolas Sarkozy (President of France), Michel Platini (President of UEFA), Sebastien Bazin (PSG club representative) and Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani (heir to the throne of Qatar).

Documents prepared by an international group of investigators show that the then French president obtained information from the future Emir of Qatar about investing in the PSG football club and French television (the Qataris were to invest in the French television market and the sports channel beIN Sports, a competitor to Canal+, which Nicolas Sarkozy resented<sup>4</sup>). During the meeting, Michel Platini announced that he would

vote for the country from the Arabian Peninsula to receive the right to host the World Cup. Moreover, Nicolas Sarkozy's main goal in organising the meeting was to convince the UEFA president to support the Arab candidacy as the Qataris were expected to make investments in France and undertake military cooperation. In 2015, Qatar purchased 24 Rafale fighter jets built by Dassault Aviation for EUR 6.3 billion. Twelve more were added to the original order and Qatar retained the option to purchase 36 more. The contract then also included MBDA MICA missiles and training of 36 Qatari pilots and 100 technicians by the French army. In addition, 28 more NH90 helicopters were acquired. The Qatari decision to make these purchases was due to the increasingly unstable situation in the region and Iran's aggressive policies. Tensions in the Middle East have also been linked to conflicts in Yemen, Syria, and Libya.

During Nicolas Sarkozy's presidency, France focused heavily on developing relations with Arab countries. At that time, actions were initiated in the Middle East, taking into account military, political, and economic aspects. The then president was creating a sphere of influence (which Emmanuel Macron later exploited), strengthening France's position in the Middle East. This also manifested itself in private market cooperation and multi-million dollar bilateral investments. In addition to Qatar, similar activities are ongoing, with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. For the French, the most important thing is to maintain a leadership role in dealing with the Arab countries ahead of the United States, China and Russia, and also to strengthen the presence of a political-military nature in the region. It is crucial for Qatar to have support from an international power. Thus, **once again, investment in sports has coincided with a closer political relationship, bringing Doha and Paris closer together.**

## 03.4

### THE ENERGY SUPERPOWER

Qatar, after Russia and Iran, has the world's third-largest natural gas reserves and is now the world's largest supplier. The main part of the revenue for the state is the export of LNG, oil and its derivatives. Qatar's key oil terminals are located on Halul Island (located about 80 kilometres northeast of the city of Doha), at Mesaieed Port (about 40 kilometres south of the capital), and there are gas terminals at Ras Laffan Port (in the middle of the Arabian Gulf). More than 75% of Qatar's gas exports go to Asian countries, such as India, Japan, China, Pakistan, and South Korea, but the United States and most European countries, including Poland, are also customers. Qatar's plans are bigger, however, as it is in the midst of further investment in infrastructure as part of the Project North Field East project (at a cost of USD 30 billion). Qatar's natural gas production will increase from the current 77 million tons per year to 110 million by 2024 and 126 million by 2027.

**Qatar plans to establish a petrochemical complex that will be the largest in the Middle East (an agreement between Qatar Petroleum and the US-based Chevron Phillips Chemical Company holding a 30% stake).**

As the World Cup demonstrates its ability to gain international prestige, Qatar's status as a highly coveted gas supplier promises to transform the tiny peninsula into the bigger player it has always wanted to be.

The key for Qatar is the Port of Ras Laffan, which is the world's largest LNG export facility and is capable of receiving the largest cargo ships. It is located on an international trade route, thus transporting hydrocarbon goods to almost all regions of the world. Ras Laffan was built primarily for the natural gas industry. It handles about 1,000 ships and 10,000,000 tons annually.

When it comes to oil and oil derivatives, Qatar is the world's 16th largest exporter and these are the second most exported products from the country after LNG. Qatar's main oil export destinations are Japan, Singapore, South Korea, China, India, and the United States. Interestingly, Qatar has also imported oil for itself from countries such as the United States and Spain.

<sup>4</sup> Canal+ television ran an unfavourable narrative against Nicolas Sarkozy's actions. In view of this, the French president felt that by introducing a strong counterbalance to Canal+'s sports stations into the French market, he would play on that television coverage.



After Russia's invasion of Ukraine and energy supply problems, Doha was under immense pressure to help Europe avoid dependence on Russian gas. At the time, Qatar pointed out that it was locked into multi-year LNG contracts with Asian countries, and thus replacing Russian gas was impossible in the short term. However, the Arabs pointed out that the next few months would allow the creation of conditions for permanent cooperation between Europe and Qatar in the context of the supply of energy resources. In 2021, the EU and the UK imported 70% of their LNG needs from the US (26%), Qatar (24%), and Russia (20%). Now, given Qatar's capabilities, it will be a key supplier to Europe in the coming years. Importantly, Germany, which is heavily dependent on Russian gas, has begun talks with Qatar to start supplying by 2024 as an alternative to working with Russia.

➤ **Crucial to energy supply are the two straits through which Qatar transports its energy resources.**

The first is Bab al-Mandab – between Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, which is a strategic point on the globe for the transport of energy resources and maritime trade between Europe and Asia. It was from Yemeni territory that rockets were repeatedly fired by the Houthis (armaments were supplied to them, for example, by Iran using Chinese technology), which flew towards the Saudis, the UAE<sup>5</sup>, and also just the Bab al-Mandab Strait<sup>6</sup> and ships passing through there. The other key isthmus is the Strait of Hormuz, which is considered the world's most important energy hub, as 90% of the Arabian Peninsula's oil exports each day and 20% of global demand pass through it. It is this isthmus that Iran controls, repeatedly threatening to block it. About one-fifth of the world's oil reserves and one-quarter of the world's liquefied natural gas supplies flow through it, and it is Qatar, among others, that must use the Strait.

## 03.5 CHALLENGE

The World Cup organiser is not expected to become a target of attacks by either countries in the region or terrorist organisations, but the situation in the Middle East remains unstable. The issues of emerging threats are not just a period during the championship, but changes that have been occurring for decades. It is important for Poland because it has participated in military missions in Iraq, energy resources are imported from the Arabian Peninsula, and key goods pass through the straits. In addition, the Polish national team's participation in the World Cup is not insignificant, drawing worldwide attention to Qatar. In view of the above, it is fundamental to understand, albeit residually, the changes taking place in the region and the geopolitical challenges emerging there.

<sup>5</sup> Qatar has withdrawn from the coalition with the UAE and SA with regard to the intervention in Yemen.

<sup>6</sup> When analysing the Bab al-Mandab Strait, it is also important to focus on the Suez Canal and the SUMED pipeline, since entering through the Bab al-Mandab there is no other way to leave the Red Sea. It's worth noting that Saudi Arabia has an oil pipeline from Ras Tanura to Yanbu, which bypasses the Bab al-Mandab Strait and sends oil directly to a Red Sea terminal. Nevertheless, the pipeline cannot fully replace traditional tanker transport, which allows much larger volumes of oil to be shipped.





THE COST OF HOSTING  
THE WORLD CUP  
AND THE CONTROVERSY  
OVER THE QATAR WORLD CUP

# 04.1

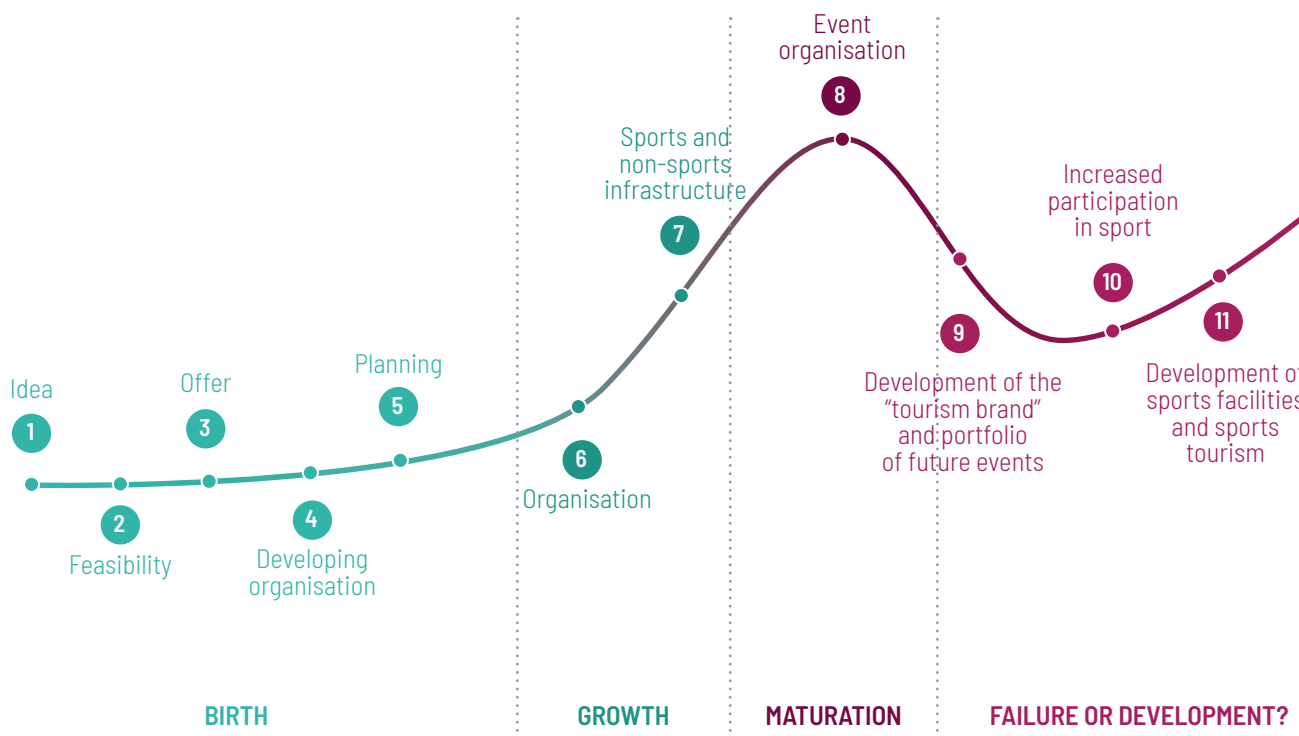
## QATAR NATIONAL VISION 2030

Hosting the World Cup in Qatar is part of the broader context of the country's progress. In July 2008, the "Qatar National Vision 2030" was announced, i.e. a master plan for Qatar's evolution until 2030. It is based on four pillars of development – human, social, economic, and environmental – and consists of a general direction for every possible aspect of Qatar's economic and social life. The plan does not include hosting the World Cup as part of the country's evolution as it was published before FIFA granted Qatar the right to host the tournament.

Nonetheless, it is the World Cup that has become the main driver of these changes, so the financing of World Cup preparations may be subject to misperception. This is evidenced by the implementation of several programmes referring to the "Qatar National Vision 2030" project – also related to preparations

for the World Cup. The "Generation Amazing" programme fits within the framework of corporate social responsibility and sets new career paths for young generations growing up in Qatar. The "Challenge 22" programme, on the other hand, is designed to boost innovation in the country and the region. Another programme, "Community Engagement", aims to integrate immigrants better into Qatari society and encourage their professional development in the country. Each of these programmes is linked to some extent to preparations for the World Cup. For Qatar, therefore, the World Cup is expected to be not only a whirlwind of infrastructural change, but above all a social one.

### EVENT LIFE CYCLE by ROBERT KASPAR

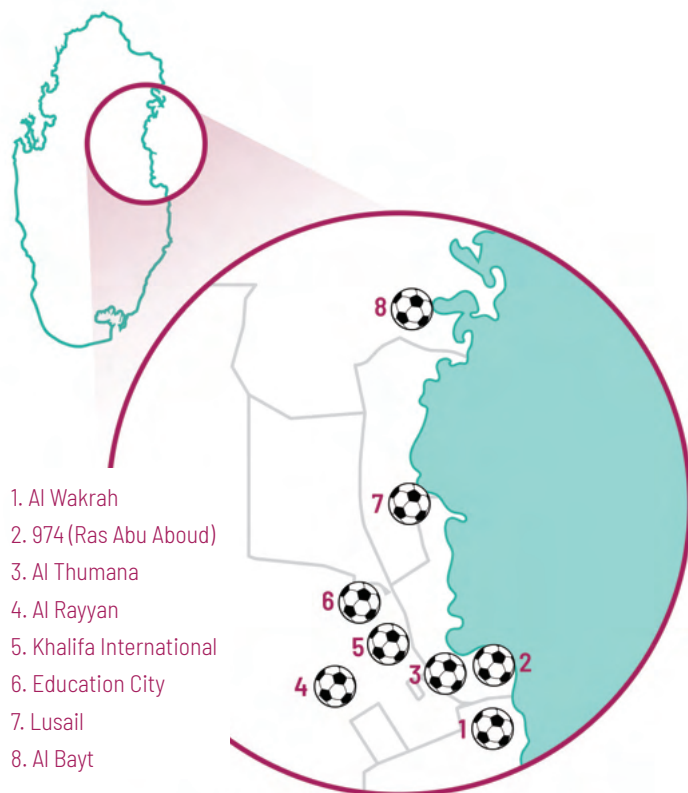


# 04.2

## WORLD CUP STADIUMS

The most important aspect from the point of view of any World Cup, the stadiums, were mostly prepared from scratch. Qatar, until FIFA's decision to award the country the right to host the World Cup, had one stadium suitable for hosting the tournament, but it still needed extensive renovation. In recent years, tournaments of this stature have been held across 12 stadiums. This was the case at the World Cup in Germany (2006), Brazil (2014), and Russia (2018). In South Africa, 10 stadiums were used. A 21st century sensation was the tournament in Japan and South Korea (2002) where 20 stadiums were used.

The World Cup in Qatar is unique in this regard as the organisers requested that FIFA be allowed to reduce the number of stadiums. FIFA agreed to this arrangement and the World Cup will be held in only eight stadiums. The organising committee of the championship in Qatar made this decision with full knowledge, as it is well aware that so many large facilities in such a small territory are completely unnecessary. Pragmatism on the part of the organisers is certain prudence in action, although global public opinion viewed and continues to view Qatar very differently on this issue. The number of seats in many stadiums will be reduced after the championship, which should simply be considered a good and just decision. The dismantled parts of Qatar's stadiums will serve other sports infrastructure in the region, especially in poorer countries.



The issue of stadiums for the Qatar World Cup is yet another important aspect, i.e. who builds these facilities. Here, the cooperation with contractors from all over the world can be seen. Companies from the United States, China, Turkey, the UK, Lebanon, India, or Cyprus are present. This demonstrates the Qataris' ability to hold talks with entities from every part of the globe, which fits in with their goals of maintaining political and business contacts with representatives from all over the world as their geographic location, raw material potential, and their own economy allow them to.

### STADIUMS IN QATAR

1	<b>Al Janoub Stadium</b>	CITY: <b>Al Wakrah</b>  NUMBER OF SEATS: <b>40,000</b>	YEAR OF OPENING: <b>2019</b>  COST OF CONSTRUCTION: <b>USD 656 million</b>	ARCHITECT: <b>Zaha Hadid (UK - Iraq)</b>  CONSTRUCTOR: <b>Midmac Contracting Co. (Qatar)</b> <b>Six Construct (Qatar)</b>
2	<b>Stadium 974</b>	CITY: <b>Doha</b>  NUMBER OF SEATS: <b>40,000</b>	YEAR OF OPENING: <b>2021</b>  COST OF CONSTRUCTION: <b>No data</b>	ARCHITECT: <b>Fenwick Iribarren Architects (Spain)</b>  CONSTRUCTOR: <b>HBK Contracting Co., DCB (Qatar)</b> <b>Schlaich Bergermann Partner (Germany)</b>

### 3 Al Thumama Stadium



CITY:

**Doha**

NUMBER OF SEATS:

**40,000**

YEAR OF OPENING:

**2021**

COST OF CONSTRUCTION:

**USD 342 million**

ARCHITECT:

**Ibrahim Jaidah Architects & Engineers**

(Oman, Qatar)

CONSTRUCTOR:

**Schlaich Bergermann Partner** (Germany)

**Thornton Tomasetti** (USA)

**Al Jaber Engineering** (Qatar)

**Tekfen Construction** (Turkey)

### 4 Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium



CITY:

**Al Rayyan**

NUMBER OF SEATS:

**40,000**

YEAR OF OPENING:

**2020**

COST OF CONSTRUCTION:

**USD 360 million**

ARCHITECT:

**BDP Pattern** (UK)

CONSTRUCTOR:

**AECOM** (USA)

**Larsen & Toubro Ltd** (India)

**Al Balagh Trading & Contracting Co.** (Qatar)

### 5 Khalifa International Stadium



CITY:

**Doha**

NUMBER OF SEATS:

**40,000**

YEAR OF OPENING:

**1976**

COST OF CONSTRUCTION:

**USD 374 million**

ARCHITECT:

**Dar Al-Handasah Consultants** (Lebanon)

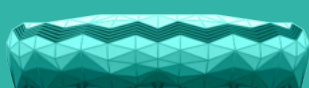
CONSTRUCTOR:

**Midmac Contracting Co.** (Qatar)

**PORR** (Malaysia)

**Six Construct JV** (UAE)

### 6 Education City Stadium



CITY:

**Doha**

NUMBER OF SEATS:

**45,000**

YEAR OF OPENING:

**2020**

COST OF CONSTRUCTION:

**USD 700 million**

ARCHITECT:

**Fenwick Iribarren Architects** (Spain)

**BDP Pattern** (UK)

CONSTRUCTOR:

**Joannou & Paraskevaides** (Cyprus)

**Conspel** (Qatar)

**Buro Happold, Arup** (UK)

### 7 Lusail Iconic Stadium



CITY:

**Lusail**

NUMBER OF SEATS:

**80,000**

YEAR OF OPENING:

**2022**

COST OF CONSTRUCTION:

**USD 767 million**

ARCHITECT:

**Foster and Partner** (UK)

CONSTRUCTOR:

**HBK Contracting Co.** (Qatar)

**CRCC** (China)

### 8 Al Bayt Stadium



CITY:

**Al Khor**

NUMBER OF SEATS:

**60,000**

YEAR OF OPENING:

**2021**

COST OF CONSTRUCTION:

**USD 847 million**

ARCHITECT:

**Salini Impregilo** (Italy)

CONSTRUCTOR:

**Cimolai S. p. A.** (Italy)

**Galfar** (Oman)

**Hightex** (Germany)

# 04.3

## QATAR'S TRANSFORMATION AND THE COST OF THE PROCESS

Any amount that appears in the media and functions in the minds of the global public is referred to as Qatar's total spending on the World Cup. As it turns out, however, hosting the World Cup is causing a major transformation of Qatar and its cities, so the expenses incurred in preparing for the tournament cannot be included only in the category of sport. The final costs may, therefore, be much higher than originally anticipated.

➤ **Qatar had already become a construction site in the first decade of the 21st century, but since 2011 the whole process has accelerated.**

To be able to host such a major tournament, Qatar had to fully dedicate itself to such a great evolution, so it is difficult to compare Qatar's preparations to other host countries of previous World Cup tournaments, i.e. Russia, Brazil, South Africa, or Germany. Qatari authorities were well aware that stadiums are one thing, but the country needs to be prepared for "life after the World Cup".

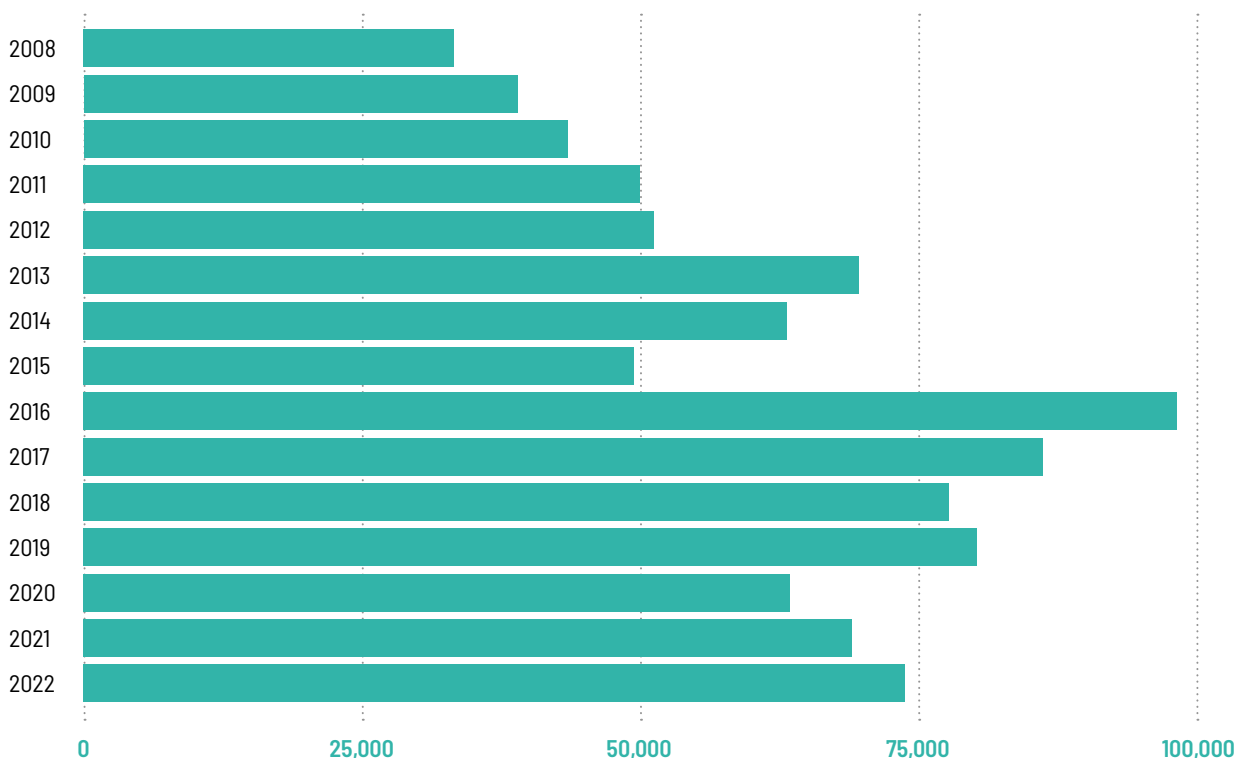
The potential change in perceptions of Qatar and increased tourism has meant thorough infrastructure and urban development. From 2008 to 2020, the number of hotel rooms in Qatar rose from 6,600 to more than 28,000, according to data from the World Tourism Organization. However, the organisers' and FIFA's estimate of the number of visitors who will arrive in Qatar for the World Cup – about 1.2 million – is still too large to properly locate all of them in Qatar (for this reason, the Qataris are in talks with the Iranians in the context of placing some of the fans on the Iranian island of Kish). Qatar's hotel base has grown tremendously, but there are questions about whether all the fans can be accommodated. The context of post-championship tourism is very important for Qatar.

**The country's authorities estimate that tourist traffic will increase to 6-7 million tourists a year in 2030.**

Key projects related to Qatar's development in preparation for the championship include the construction of the modern city of Lusail (where the finals will be held), the construction of the artificial luxury island The Pearl, the construction of the subway in Doha, and the expansion of Doha Airport. These projects are related to the business community. The World Cup is also a potential large group of investors and companies that will come to Qatar after the tournament, so the Qataris are also developing extensive business infrastructure as can be seen by

### ANNUAL VALUES OF INTERNAL INVESTMENTS OF QATAR

(in millions of Qatari riyals)



the number of skyscrapers rising up in Doha and Lusail. Since 2011, nine new skyscrapers have appeared and another 12 are under construction.

In October 2021, Qatar’s ambassador to Russia, Sheikh Ahmed bin Nasser bin Jassim Al Thani, told Russia’s TASS News Agency that initial spending on preparations for the World Cup was around USD 200 billion. However, not all of that is related to infrastructure prepared specifically for the World Cup. The vast majority of it is made up of other facilities developed for Qatar’s future. They will be built sooner or later as it fits into the previously mentioned “Qatar National Vision 2030” plan, but granting Qatar the right to host the World Cup has accelerated the country’s development process.

At this point, we know from most media reports that the cost of preparing for this tournament has cost something in the order of USD 229 billion. Qatari authorities are currently estimating budget revenue of USD 17 billion. Hassan Al-Thawadi, Secretary General of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, indicated that the exact cost of the World Cup alone would be USD 6.5 billion. And while this amount should be viewed with some caution (realistically, the cost of the stadiums and other facilities dedicated to the World Cup could have been three times greater), it shows that the perception of the cost of hosting the World Cup in Qatar was misjudged.

## 04.4 CORRUPTION

An important component of Qatar’s overall cost associated with the World Cup is “unofficial expenses”. That is, all financial operations which may not be directly related to infrastructure, but to the very process of granting the right to organise and maintaining a proper lobby inside FIFA. In other words, financial operations that can be defined as “corruption”.

These expenses can include not only the payment of individual FIFA activists related to the process of selecting the World Cup host country, but all kinds of business agreements between Qatar-related entities and FIFA. Here it is worth saying that three weeks before the vote to select the 2022 World Cup host on 2 December 2010, Qatar’s Al Jazeera TV offered USD 400 million to FIFA for the rights to broadcast the tournament. Furthermore, an additional USD 100 million was to be credited to FIFA’s special account, but only if Qatar was awarded the right to host the tournament. It is also worth mentioning that the Qatari government was allegedly going to “throw in” another USD 480 million which would bring the total to USD 980 million from

### COSTS OF THE WORLD CUP

PROJECT	COST OF THE DEVELOPMENT
Construction of World Cup stadiums	USD 4.5 billion
Other infrastructure related to the World Cup	USD 2 billion
Doha subway construction	USD 36 billion
Construction of the City of Lusail	USD 45 billion
Expansion of Qatar’s road infrastructure	USD 20 billion
Construction of The Pearl Island	USD 15 billion
Expansion of Qatar’s hotel infrastructure	USD 40 billion
Doha airport expansion	USD 15.5 billion
Expansion of Qatar’s port infrastructure	USD 5.5 billion
Other costs (Doha downtown development, rail infrastructure, green spaces)	USD 45.5 billion

TV contracts alone. The legality of all these contracts is being investigated by the Swiss justice system.

Any additional costs that are part and parcel of the overall financial landscape of the championships must still be included. Here, there is the question of paying for the spying activities that were reported in the media prior to the World Cup. This element of corrupt activity is worth investigating.

A former CIA agent obtained information on key individuals who influenced the selection of the World Cup host country and spied on committee members of other candidate countries. This was all with the aim of identifying the specific needs of these people, and thus facilitating corruption. The agent in question, Kevin Chalker, had a registered company in Doha that specialised in cyber security and network operations. In 2014, his firm Global Risk Advisors reported that its biggest success to date was a successful penetration operation against critics inside FIFA. The project was valued, at its lowest estimate, USD 387 million over nine years. Ultimately, it is not known how much Qatar paid for the operation. The Qataris had access to key FIFA documents through this activity. At the same time, it was determined which private matters were worth including in the process of corruption on individuals.



This case, therefore, shows how the programmed machinery for illegally influencing FIFA's decision-making process worked in practice. And here, Mohamed bin Hamman, a Qatari member of FIFA's Executive Committee, played his part. With the right knowledge and the knowledge of the potential amounts that could influence FIFA activists to support Qatar's candidacy in the Executive Committee, he allocated the appropriate funds to individuals. The total of all contributions to individual accounts of FIFA activists then amounted to USD 5 million. Knowledge of Qatar's extensive network of corrupt influence over individual FIFA activists was spread by the results of a United States Department of Justice investigation into the process of awarding the right to host the World Cup to Russia and Qatar.

In the context of the 2022 World Cup, the US Justice Department is singling out for payment three South American football activists, i.e. Argentine Julio Grondona, Paraguayan Nicolas Leoz, and Brazilian Ricardo Teixeira. The problem with confronting these allegations is that Grondona and Leoz are no longer alive. The following names are associated with Fox TV, which just so happened to have won the rights to broadcast the World Cup in the US: Hernan Lopez (CEO of Fox International Channels) and Carlos Martinez (president of Fox Network Group in Latin America). According to the US Department of Justice, they were involved in the entire procedure of lobbying South American football activists. A properly programmed influence machine could ultimately determine a number of important votes in favour of Qatar on FIFA's Executive Committee along with the simultaneous acquisition of a television contract in the US. Fox Television in 2011 paid USD 400 million for the TV rights to the 2018 and 2022 World Cups, as well as the 2015 and 2019 Women's World Cups, in a surprise move that came in the face of

the discontinuation of ABC and ESPN's long-standing contract with FIFA in the US market. Fox Television has extended its rights for the 2026 World Cup without an open tender.

## 04.5 THE STATUS OF EMPLOYEES

For 12 years of preparation, Qatar has had to face image problems related to the status of workers. It is primarily about the issue of workers' rights in Qatar, the kafala system and the dreadful working conditions, which has resulted in the deaths of more than 6,500 workers, mostly migrants from poorer Asian and African countries. Under the kafala system, a foreign worker is under contract with his sponsor, the so-called "kafala". The employee is not allowed to leave the country or leave it for any period of time without specific written permission from the guardian (sponsor). The kafala provides its employees with transport, lodging, and food.

However, the nature of this relationship unfortunately has all the hallmarks of a dehumanising approach. We can use the phrase "21<sup>st</sup> century slavery" with full knowledge when it comes to the treatment of immigrants looking to earn better in Qatar than back in their home countries. The acts of abuse include the seizure of passports by employers, health and safety conditions that degrade human dignity, lack of overtime pay or disregard for the health of workers, and exposing them to work in extreme weather conditions for several hours. This is not just about building stadiums or sports infrastructure for the World Cup. These situations were also common at other construction sites in Qatar.

### DOCUMENTED CORRUPTION PLOTS

PARTIES INVOLVED	THE NATURE OF THE OPERATION	COSTS
Al Jazeera → FIFA	TV contract between the parties	USD 400 million
Government of Qatar → FIFA	Closer to unspecified fee associated with TV contract	USD 480 million
Government of Qatar → FIFA	Extra "allowance" by virtue of Qatar being awarded the right to host the World Cup	USD 100 million
Government of Qatar → Global Risk Advisors	Covering the costs of the intelligence and surveillance operation	USD 387 million
Mohammed bin Hammam → FIFA officials	Transfers from FIFA Executive Committee member to other members' accounts to persuade them to vote for Qatar's candidacy	USD 5 million
Fox Broadcasting Company → FIFA	Two high-ranking Fox station employees lobbied for votes in favour of Qatar while negotiating a TV contract	USD 400 million

Organisations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Trade Union Confederation, appealed to FIFA and the World Cup organisers to improve workers' conditions. Unfortunately, change came too slowly and cost the lives of several thousand people. There is no denying, however, that working conditions have changed, as Qatar's labour minister referred to in person at the International Labour Conference in Geneva in June 2022.

The change consisted mainly of regulating issues that had previously not been properly regulated, i.e. work at high temperatures, overtime pay, termination of employment, and the raising of the minimum wage for 280,000 workers. The kafala system has also been modified and liberalised. However, the conditions of workers are still far from what they need to be.

What did these earnings look like in real terms? A Doha News investigation was conducted to look into the wages of migrants from poorer regions of the world who were there working to build infrastructure for the World Cup in Qatar. The study revealed that in 2015, an Indian worker at Khalifa International Stadium was paid USD 467 per month (with a six-day work week). Workers typically worked about 13 hours a day, and the hourly wage averaged only USD 1.5. There were also reports of monthly salaries of 750 QAR (Qatari riyal, i.e. about USD 215). In 2020, Qatari authorities communicated that all employees should receive a minimum of QAR 1,000 per month (about USD 275).

Regulations for working at high temperatures were only superficially changed. According to a 2007 ministerial decree, no outdoor work is allowed between 15th June and 31st August between the hours of 11.30 am and 3 pm. In 2021, a new regulation was issued in Qatar to extend the period and hours of the ban. From 1<sup>st</sup> June to 15th September, between 10.00 am and 3.30 pm, no work can be done outdoors. After 15<sup>th</sup> September, work can be carried out all day long. However, temperatures in Qatar are also often very high after 3 pm in May or September, meaning that the provision is far from comfortable for workers.

Nonetheless, the issue of labour rights in Qatar is bluntly punctuated by two cases. The first is that only four out of 19 official sponsors of the World Cup in Qatar responded to the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre's initiative to assess occupational risks and address risks to workers in Qatar. Adidas, Qatar Airways, Budweiser, and Coca-Cola are the companies that have done little more than the bare minimum in the form of public pledges to support processes that improve the status of those employed in preparation for the championships. However, there is still too little and ineffective involvement, which leads

us to conclude that official sponsors are limited to marketing and PR activities in this regard, with no real intention to affect change.

The other issue contrasting with the statements of Qatari officials is the arrest of 60 foreign workers who were protesting seven months of non-payment. According to Qatari authorities, they were arrested for violating public security regulations. The media reported that these workers were deported to their home countries. The whole affair shows how far Qatar is from, for example, European Union labour standards.

## 04.6

### ISSUE OF APPROACH TO LGBT+

What has not improved is the situation of homosexual persons. In Qatar, non-heteronormativity is still prohibited by law and punishable by imprisonment (between one and seven years). Even the death penalty for homosexual activity may be implemented in Qatar under Shariah Law, the media has reported. Thus, we are dealing with religious measures of punishment that are harsher than the Shariah Law.

On the other side is FIFA, which emphasises tolerance and equality in many of its campaigns. This includes the acceptance of different sexual orientations, which FIFA expresses through the display of rainbow flags. The case is interesting in that FIFA promotes virtually every major event under its endorsement as a place where intolerance is out of the question. The World Cup is no exception and presumably FIFA also plans to promote equality for all people of any skin colour, religion, or sexual orientation.

**According to media reports, Qatar will allow the display of rainbow flags during the World Cup, which is interesting because any form of promotion of homosexuality in the country is subject to punishment.**

As Qatari organisers point out, Qatari authorities will respect FIFA's regulations in this regard as FIFA has its own regulations on how rainbow flags can be displayed in stadiums, which of course fits in with FIFA's anti-discrimination narrative.

However, the question must be asked - what will happen outside the stadiums - for example, on the way to the match? How will

the Qatari authorities approach this type of situation? These questions remain unanswered for now, but they are worth bearing in mind.

## 04.7

### WORLD CUP ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Another important aspect to pay attention to in the context of the World Cup in Qatar is global climate change. The very fact that the World Cup is being played in November and December is due to the fact that the weather conditions in June and July, when the world's most important football tournament is normally played, are too challenging for football players and fans to deal with. The decision to award Qatar the right to host the World Cup and move the date of the tournament has opened a debate on climate change and how global sport should respond to the problem.

The question that was formulated at the very beginning was precisely about the summer weather conditions in Qatar. The organisers of the World Cup took the issue of the environment very seriously and at the beginning of the preparatory process for the championship declared their aim to hold a zero-emissions tournament with respect for green sustainable construction. This involves, among other things, recycling waste or using a closed water cycle to reduce unnecessary consumption. Qatar boasts that all of its stadiums have achieved at least a 4-star Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS) certification, although this is a self-given award since GSAS is a trust established by the Gulf Organisation for Research & Development, which is headquartered in Doha.

However, there is no doubt that Qatar has set its sights on a high number of renewable energy sources to facilitate the achievement of carbon neutrality. Solar panels to take advantage of natural sunlight are common in many public places. And the urban landscape and perimeter space have also been transformed, with organisers boasting the planting of more than 5,000 trees, 80,000 shrubs, and 500,000 sqm of lawns.

However, the issue of the environment is also being closely watched by relevant organisations. One of them, Carbon Market Watch, believes that information about the potential of zero carbon emissions during the World Cup is one thing, but the construction of the eight stadiums themselves realistically cannot be considered a zero-carbon process. Organisers estimate that the World Cup will emit the equivalent of 3.6

megatons of carbon dioxide. Expert analysis shows that these estimates do not reflect actual emissions. The areas of the facilities built for the tournament alone was considered a “use-share” factor. In simple terms, this means that the number of days of the tournament was divided by the estimated lifetime of the facilities to determine the contribution to the total emissions associated with the construction of these facilities dedicated to the World Cup. This is problematic because these stadiums were built specifically for the World Cup, and the extent to which they will actually be used after the championships is unknown. What is more, stadiums are unlikely to be the most efficient and effective venues for providing social services that the organisers’ original plans envision.

**According to experts, the total emissions footprint of World Cup stadiums could be eight times higher.**



The question of the environmental impact of the World Cup in Qatar can not realistically be assessed until the year 2023.

## 04.8

### ALCOHOL DISPUTE

The issue of alcohol sales during the World Cup remains fully unresolved.

➤ **On a daily basis in Qatar, drinking alcohol in public places is prohibited.** Only non-Muslims can purchase at the country's only store offering alcoholic beverages, and they must have a permit issued by the authorities. Alcohol is also available in hotels.

FIFA and the championship's sponsors (including beer manufacturers) are working to loosen restrictive regulations for fans coming to Qatar. The federation's official website states that alcohol will be served in VIP boxes. A ban on the sale of alcohol in stadiums was in effect in the two previous World Cup hosting countries, Brazil and Russia, but it has been reversed for the duration of this tournament in Qatar.

The organisers of the tournament in Qatar have said that the purchase and consumption of beer will be possible in designated areas near the stadium and at designated times. Fans with valid tickets for the match will be able to make purchases. Alcoholic beer will be available for sale, at the earliest, three hours before the match and up to one hour after it, but purchase will not be possible during the match itself. In addition, beer will be available for purchase at the main fan zone in Doha between 6.30 pm and 1 am.

## 04.9

### LOGISTICAL CHALLENGE

There is no doubt that the Qataris and FIFA will boast about the scale of the hosted event and its efficient organisation. However, logistic issues can be difficult to manage perfectly.

Qatar covers an area similar to Jamaica, and the stadiums are located in an even smaller area. Given the fact that at least 1.2 million fans (more than half of the country's total population) will be arriving in Qatar, a host of problems may arise in many places related, for example, to the permeability of traffic routes, the efficiency of volunteer workers, parking spaces, public transport or even the accreditation of journalists from around the world.

It is also necessary to keep in mind the overriding issue – the safety of fans. If medical aid encounters problems in reaching those in need, it would be a huge organisational fiasco for Qatar and FIFA.



# CONCLUSION

The impact of sport on international relations and global geopolitics has been a well-known phenomenon for decades. However, it is only in recent years that the global public has become aware of this issue and familiarity with this function of sport has become widespread. Sporting events, bringing together millions of people in stadiums and in front of viewers, have become an excellent opportunity to promote countries, governments, and politicians. The emotions of the athletes and fans have been harnessed to the conduct of foreign policy. There has been a shuffling of values and methods, and politicians have begun to play their own games, in which the goal is benefits other than sport itself.

A key element here is to understand how sports games can be used to promote not only the host, but also their ideas and interests. Such activities include hosting the World Cup (previously, for example, Russia and South Africa), where Qatar now stands to gain the most. In addition to multi-million dollar contracts – both in the private and public sectors – Qatar has become a very close partner with NATO.

It remains to be seen what may happen during the championships itself. The World Cup matches are an excellent platform for talks with leaders of many countries, who are sure to be there to cheer on their national teams. The Qataris, who are capable diplomats navigating in a sea of dependencies, are sure to go on the diplomatic offensive during the championships, which could become the basis for many Qatari political and business deals in the coming decades.

An analysis of Qatar's actions in the international arena indicates that sport has become one of the most important tools in the country's foreign policy in recent years. Through the organisation of global and regional sporting events, extensive sports sponsorship and the naturalisation of foreign athletes, Qatar is building its visibility and positive image. Moreover, it is already clear that the Qataris intend to continue this policy. This is indicated by the generous financing of their flagship football club PSG (according to estimates, it cost them about EUR 100 million to keep French representative Kylian Mbappe at the club) and their interest in acquiring another – Spain's Espanyol.

In 2023, Qatar will host the world judo and swimming championships. They will hold the Asian Games in 2030. Qatar has also applied to host the 2027 football Asian Cup (it is being

considered to host the tournament as early as 2023 after China withdrew) and the 2025 World Table Tennis Championships.

The marriage of sports and politics, although criticised and seen as a perversion of sports competition, will be strengthened in the coming countries not only by Qatar, but also by other Arabian Peninsula countries. The "portfolios" of sheikhs from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates now include a growing number of football clubs from around the world. They are also putting more and more money into sports sponsorship and are organising more events. The limits of their involvement are hard to find, with Saudi Arabia submitting a proposal to host the 2029 Asian Winter Games.

The submitted report and analysis of sports diplomacy as performed by Qatar is proof of the effectiveness of sport as a foreign policy tool. The combination of the two elements has proved to be extremely effective, which only confirms that it is one of the fastest growing fields of making international policy today.

Societies around the world need to get used to the concept of sports diplomacy. This issue should also be considered in Poland in order to take advantage of the political potential inherent in the organisation of sports events, sports sponsorship and the success of the country's representatives. Polish national teams, clubs and players with political support can be excellent ambassadors of Polish interests.

Qatar's actions are a signal that it is important to join this political and sports race now in order to stay as close to the world's best as possible.

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