

Youcef Bouandel



Abstract:

The World Cup and Human Rights in Qatar: A Catalyst for Change? (Youcef Bouandel and Thomas Bonnie James)

Hosting massive sporting events like the World Cup is a massive accomplishment for a state like Qatar. Regardless of the economic benefits, it forces Qatar to create infrastructure and improve the nation's landscape, but it also provides the country with an ideal chance to showcase its identity, culture, and legacy to the rest of the globe. Organizing a tournament of this size for the first time in a primarily Arab-Muslim country is a challenge to everyone connected with the event, including FIFA, the Qatari government, supporters, and the local populace.

In this paper, we will examine the cultural possibilities and problems that Qatar confronts as a result of hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup and how Qatar is reacting to these many challenges by communicating to both national and worldwide audiences. Qatar's staging of the World Cup is unquestionably a historic achievement. It increases the country's foreign exposure and helps it reap possible economic rewards, but it also provides the world with a window into Qatar's identity, culture, and tradition. Similarly, being a Muslim in a conservative country poses a difficulty to organizers and the populace.

This paper examines how Qatar in the process has garnered unprecedented global attention due to hosting the World Cup, prompting unprecedented assaults on the country. Qatar is in the position to "defend" itself against a plethora of allegations. Nonetheless, "What is in it for the country?" Why would it want to host a tournament that would be extremely difficult for organizers, locals, and worldwide fans alike? are the predominant questions which will be addressed in this paper.

Qatar has been subjected to a concerted effort to undermine its bid for more than a decade. Accusations ranged from paying FIFA officials to the country's incapacity to organize a tournament of this scale, a lack of football culture and empty stadiums, orthodox Islamic culture, workers' rights, and the Kafala (sponsorship) system among other things. Furthermore, the region's hot environment, which poses a significant threat to the players' well-being, has been raised.

In this paper, an analysis and overview will be provided of the motivations that prompted Qatar to apply for the World Cup and the rewards that it wants to reap from hosting such a tournament. We claim that Qatar is using this tournament to spark change. It is a chance for the country to strengthen its infrastructure while also reaping the potential rewards of hosting such an event. It also allows Qatar to showcase Arabo-Islamic culture and challenges preconceived notions about the Arab Middle East. This will also be achieved by providing an overview of human rights in context of the Universalist versus the Cultural relativism debate from the context of Arab-Muslim culture.

Bio:

Youcef Bouandel is Professor of Politics at the Department of International Affairs, Qatar University. He holds a License in Politics from the University of Algiers, Algeria, (1986) and an M.Phil. (1988) and a Ph.D. (1994) in Politics from the University of Glasgow, Scotland. He was Lecturer/Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Lincoln, England, as visiting professor in Bulgaria, Sweden, Latvia and the United States of America. He is the author of Human Rights and Comparative Politics (1997) and numerous articles and book chapters. His latest publication, co-authored with Mahfoud Amara is, “Algeria and the FIFA World Cup: between political legitimization and regional rivalry” published in Soccer and Society 2022.