

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

# Major Research Paper: Soccer and International Relations

Can Soccer Improve International Relations?

Jon Theis Eden

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## Abstract:

*The paper establishes that international soccer plays an important role in foreign policy by improving the communication between countries and by extension their international relations. The paper demonstrates how sports and political ideology have often mixed historically and continue to do so today. Sport's ability to be used as a tool in building national unity and in shaping collective identities is also discussed. What follows is an overview of sport's role within international relations and foreign policy. The subsequent section focuses more specifically on how soccer is used as a tool in foreign policy and international relations and explores the possibility that soccer can succeed in situations where business, political and diplomatic initiatives have failed. 'Soccer and Diplomacy' explores the subject through a number of practical examples ranging from Brazil's national team in Haiti, to the Iran's national team visiting the United States. Four case studies examine real world scenarios where soccer has had a direct impact upon the political relationships of countries. The first case study - 'The Case of Egypt & Algeria' - is a negative example of how international soccer games can lead to more animosity at a diplomatic level. The two case studies that follow - 'The Case of Turkey & Armenia' and 'The Case of South Korea & Japan' - exemplify how soccer has helped to improve international relations. The case study on FIFA - the organization's governance and its decision to place the 2022 FIFA World Cup in the Gulf - illustrates that soccer's international governing body does not live up to its own idealized expectations of honorable fair play and sportsmanship it shows on the pitch; off of it. With the aid of the case studies and the literature review, the paper demonstrates clearly how soccer can be utilized as a tool in foreign policy to improve international relations between geopolitical entities.*

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## 1. Introduction

The focus of this paper is the role of international soccer in international relations. This paper attempts to answer the following main research question: ‘Can soccer be utilized as a foreign policy tool to improve overall communication and subsequently international relations between countries?’ Hough argues that “[f]ootball, of course, cannot stop a war or eliminate injustice in the world but, undoubtedly, communication can and football contributes to this in a significant way”.<sup>1</sup> It closely follows Hough’s theoretical perspective where he argues that within soccer’s international track record the positives outweigh the negatives.<sup>2</sup> The concept of soccer’s usage as a foreign policy tool is taken from Bainvel<sup>3</sup>, who shows that soccer can be utilized to share comradeship between nations, to amplify friendship, to support peace and to improve international relations.<sup>4</sup> Grant points out that while there have been fundamental challenges for sporting governance, the global era of sport “has also created the opportunity for [soccer] to be a social force for internationalism, reconciliation and international development”.<sup>5</sup>

In the literature review it became clear that the dominant academic view is sport should be kept out of politics, or conversely, that politics should be kept out of sport.<sup>6</sup> This paper focuses on sources that argue for sport and politics being difficult to separate. James and Krüger explain: “[...] sport would no longer seem to be (if it ever was) the

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<sup>1</sup> Hough, p. 1303.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 1291.

<sup>3</sup> Bainvel, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Grant, p. 242

<sup>6</sup> Sage, p. 214.

neutral, apolitical medium that some people considered it to be”.<sup>7</sup> Nauright argues that “[i]n this increasingly unified yet divided world, sports mega-events, particularly the Olympic Games and the FIFA Soccer World Cup, have become high demand focal points that have symbolic value well beyond the results on the fields of sporting competition”.<sup>8</sup> Modern sport represents a major political, economic, social and cultural force in today’s world.<sup>9</sup> Jackson and Haigh state: “whether serving as *bread and circuses* to appease and distract the disposed citizens of ancient Rome or to return to sense of order, safety and humanity for children living in today’s post-conflict regions, sport is just too pervasive, popular and important for us to ignore”.<sup>10</sup> Many countries have ministers of sport and during international sporting events, like the FIFA World Cup, nationalistic displays of various kinds are omnipresent.<sup>11</sup> Often governments and politicians use success on the international stage to improve their own ‘brands’ among their citizenry in order to gain legitimacy.<sup>12</sup> Sport functions as an element in the globalization of culture, as a foreign policy resource and as an arena in which international relations can take place.<sup>13</sup>

First is a segment on the interrelationship between political ideology and sport. It sets a basis for the interconnectedness of sport and politics through historical examples. Second, the concept of sport forming national unity and collective identity is discussed. This is important in the wider context because these concepts play a significant function of how states perceive themselves domestically and how they are perceived abroad. Third

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<sup>7</sup> Riordan, James, and Arnd Krüger, p. 62.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Beck, Peter J. "The Most Effective Means of Communication in the Modern World?": British Sport and National Prestige.", p. 90.

<sup>10</sup> Jackson and Haigh, p .1.

<sup>11</sup> Sage, p. 214.

<sup>12</sup> Nauright, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Houlihan, p. 52.

is a review of the literature on sport in international relations and foreign policy. It provides an explanation for the lack of coverage of sport within IR literature and subsequently makes the case for the importance of further academic study. It also dismantles the academic viewpoint that sport is on the margin of international relations. The fourth section focuses on soccer as a tool in foreign relations. It builds upon the case created in the previous section from a soccer paradigm. Subsequently ‘soccer diplomacy’ is defined. The myriad of functions it fulfills within international relations is explained through a number of concrete examples. To provide real-world context for this paper’s thesis four case studies are utilized. The first case study of Egypt and Algeria is a clear example of international soccer reinforcing an already negative relationship between two states. While it runs contrary to this paper’s thesis, it clearly emphasizes the influence of soccer on international relations. The second and third case studies show how soccer can improve international relations of states with difficult histories and in one case non-existent interaction. The fourth case study highlights the world-governing body of soccer’s (FIFA) strong influence on international soccer on the global stage and its controversial role of awarding the 2022 FIFA World Cup to Qatar. This case illustrates how the institutions’ deficiencies in integrity have seriously impacted its ability to function as a positive tool in foreign policy.

## **2. Political Ideology and Sports**

Research conducted for this paper has shown that political ideology has often been intermingled with international sporting events. This has been the case historically in ancient civilizations such as Greece and Rome, onwards to the societies of early

modern Europe and continues into contemporary Western societies as well as in less developed and non-Western ones.<sup>14</sup> Houlian has argued that this should not be a surprise since “[...] sport is a mirror of society and consequently it is a reasonably accurate reflection of the prevailing ideology found within a particular state at a particular time”.<sup>15</sup> In the past sports have also been used to demonstrate the superiority of one system (or people) over another. Allison reminds us:

All kinds of governments, representing every type of political ideology, have endorsed international sporting competition as a testing ground for the nation or for political ‘system’. German Nazis, Italian Fascists, Soviet and Cuban Communists, Chinese Maoists, Western capitalist democrats, Latin American juntas – all have played the game and believed in it.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, Harvey points out:

The high visibility of international sports events has fostered a favorable climate for state intervention. Nations have increasingly forged direct propaganda links between sport triumphs and the viability of their political-economic systems. In this strategy, sport is an instrument of state policy that ties achievements of the nation’s athletes to the country’s political-economic system to promote the system’s superiority. This has been called sports diplomacy, and the athletes used for this purpose have been labeled diplomats in sweat suits.<sup>17</sup>

Communist states and their leaders in particular took the role of sports in their foreign policy strategies extremely seriously. Riordan and Krüger sum this up well: “[W]ith its control of the sports system, the communist leadership was able to mobilize resources to use sport to perform what is believed to be salient political functions in foreign policy”.<sup>18</sup>

Luckily sports today are free from the tensions and limitations of the Cold War and other equally depressing epochs, allowing them to play a new, positive role in

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<sup>14</sup> Tomlinson and Young, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Houlihan, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> Allison, Lincoln. *The Changing Politics of Sport*, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Harvey, p. 189.

<sup>18</sup> Riordan and Krüger, p. 62.

politics.<sup>19</sup> Sports can now be utilized as an avenue to demonstrate similarities and bring societies (and people) closer together, preparing the way for eventual public policy changes.<sup>20</sup> It is common to see international sporting events used as a stage for individual protestors and nongovernmental activists to take advantage of the massive worldwide media coverage, which they hope will broadcast their political messages throughout the globe.<sup>21</sup>

### **3. The Role of Sports as National Unity and Collective Identity**

Sport is a fundamental prism that plays a decisive factor in shaping a country's idea of collective identity and national unity. Whether viewed domestically or internationally it refracts an uncomplicated vision that is universally understood. Sport in modern societies is a means by which nation-states socialize their citizens, transmitting symbolic codes of the dominant culture and inducing citizens towards conformity with beliefs and values that prevail in the wider society. Sport is one of the most significant molders of national unity and collective identity.<sup>22</sup> It is also a powerful tool in shaping the minds of people and developing a common political culture. The use of sport by governments for nation building and their own legitimization is common, especially in the developing world.<sup>23</sup> Jackson and Haigh explain: "Sport has long served as an important source of collective identification and is perhaps one of the most powerful and visible symbols of national identity and nationalism".<sup>24</sup> Freeman describes this usage of

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<sup>19</sup> Goldberg, p. 65.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>21</sup> Harvey, p. 215.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>23</sup> Franks, Hawes and Macintosh, p. 669.

<sup>24</sup> Jackson and Haigh, p. 3.

sport as a soft power as 'swaggering'. According to his view there are two primary ways sport is used to swagger:

(1) to develop a national identity – for nation building; and (2) to create an appealing national 'brand' to display to the rest of the world. However, the two processes are very closely related, and arguably can be done simultaneously. Cha argues that sport is very important in regards to nation building, because it 'promotes a sense of unity and identity in young nations or newly formed ones'. But he also notes that sport acts as a prism through which national identity gets refracted both domestically and internationally. How a country performs in global sporting events thus not only contributes to artificially creating a national identity to strengthen a country internally, but also it contributes to international prestige 'and the message that a government wants to send to the world about its country'.<sup>25</sup>

The belief that international sport has the ability to promote a sense of national unity, builds national identity and projects a positive reputation internationally has lead to governments all over the world using sport as a political tool in foreign policy.<sup>26</sup>

#### **4. Sport in International Relations and Foreign Policy**

The available literature covering the correlation between international relations and sport is an area that requires further examination in the academic research community. Sport has been written out of international relations and hence figures rarely, if at all, in IR books and journals.<sup>27</sup> What has been written are usually sporadic articles that are case specific.<sup>28</sup> Black speculates that there are several well-known biases within IR as a field of study that contribute to this condition:

The first is a bias towards the powerful and, more particularly, towards Western or indeed American agendas and interpretations. Simply stated, the field continues

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<sup>25</sup> Grant, p. 1265.

<sup>26</sup> Harvey, p. 188.

<sup>27</sup> Beck, Peter J. "The Relevance of the 'Irrelevant': Football as a Missing Dimension in the Study of British Relations with Germany.", p. 390.

<sup>28</sup> Murray, p. 2.

to be dominated by American and, to a lesser extent, European scholarly preoccupations. The result is a widespread neglect of the concerns of newer and smaller jurisdictions, except as they impinge on the scholarly and policy preoccupations of those in historically metropolitan centres. Such neglected concerns include, I would argue, international sport and sporting events, which have emerged as high political priorities for a growing number of smaller and/or 'emerging' countries and regions. Closely related to this is a bias towards the material and empirical, or measurable, and against the cultural, symbolic or intangible."<sup>29</sup>

Hill believes one reason why the influence of sport in international relations is often ignored and has lagged behind sociologists and historians giving serious attention to sport is due to a residual intellectual snobbishness, which "still leads some to assume either that sport is a mindless activity or that it poses no interesting questions for the student of society and politics".<sup>30</sup> Despite sport occupying a strategic and enduring place within politics and international relations, sport continues to be seen as ambiguous, intangible and conspicuously elusive part of contemporary foreign policy. This is due to the fact that sport is being conceptualized and even celebrated as something that is pure and serious on the one hand and quite trivial on the other.<sup>31</sup> So unfortunately, "[w]ith a few notable exceptions, sport remains widely neglected in the scholarly fields of International Relations (IR) and Foreign Policy specifically, and Political Science generally".<sup>32</sup>

Scholars who have spent some time researching the relationship between sport and international relations no longer believe that sport exists along the margin of the subject. Nelson Mandela's powerful quote illustrates this well:

Sport is probably the most effective means of communication in the modern world, bypassing both verbal and written communication and reaching directly

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<sup>29</sup> Black, David, p. 121.

<sup>30</sup> Hill, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Black, David, p.120.

out to billions of people world-wide. There is no doubt that sport is a viable and legitimate way of building friendship between nations.<sup>33</sup>

Sport should be seen as an important instrument of soft power in our globalized world with the capability of impacting international relations and national prestige both positively and negatively.<sup>34</sup> Barrie points out: “[s]port can be used to strengthen relations between allies, for example within the Commonwealth and also through the medium of aid for sport development”.<sup>35</sup> As Redeker addresses: “[...] some less powerful countries seek to call attention to themselves through sport, which procure for them a surplus of power and influence greater than that which is effectively theirs on the world stage”.<sup>36</sup> It is really important for IR scholars to consider the development of international forms of sport; just as different IR paradigms can assist in an understanding of the history and development of international sport.<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, often the bidding competitions to host sport events and the deliberations and dealings that take place within sport federations are often fascinating extensions of international relations and mirror world schisms of influence, power, rivalry, or conflict.<sup>38</sup>

Nation-states primarily use sport in foreign relations in two principal ways: firstly, to sell themselves and enhance their images and secondly to penalize international behavior of which they disapprove.<sup>39</sup> There is little doubt that “[...] within the context of an increasingly interconnected world [...] the global spectacle, commodity and cultural phenomenon that is modern sport influences, and is influenced by politics and foreign

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<sup>33</sup> Maguire, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Beck, p. 392.

<sup>35</sup> Houlihan, p. 205.

<sup>36</sup> Redeker, p. 499.

<sup>37</sup> Beacom, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Cornelissen, p. 136.

<sup>39</sup> Allison and Monnington, p. 107.

policy”.<sup>40</sup> In order for states to respond to social, political, cultural and economic pressures, they are progressively turning to sports as a foreign policy instrument as they cannot ignore the corresponding influence that global sport has on their core interests.<sup>41</sup>

There are many good examples that show the role sports can play in breaking down barriers and fostering diplomatic efforts. A famous sports example from the early 1970’s has been dubbed ‘ping pong diplomacy’ where the U.S. table tennis team visited the People’s Republic of China. It has been argued that this visit, followed by the U.S. basketball team, laid the groundwork for President Nixon’s first official visit to the country in 1972 and the subsequent normalization of relations.<sup>42</sup> The previous example provided an ideal setting for the Americans to reengage with China as it was a low-risk testing ground for gauging the public’s reaction to this country and ultimately for moving towards rapprochement. Additionally, it was sure to receive mass media coverage and involve the broader public; a precondition for broader policy changes with ‘states of concern’.<sup>43</sup> These are all requirements that make sport such a valuable tactic in diplomacy. Undeniably sports have become a diplomatic tool, whether the government uses boycotts, sports propagandizing, denial of visas, sports assistance, hosting of Olympics and World Cups, or sports exchanges to further political aims.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Jackson and Haigh p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p.4.

<sup>42</sup> Goldberg, p. 67.

<sup>43</sup> Stevenson and Alaug, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> Goldberg, p. 64.

## 5.1 Soccer and its Role in International Relations and Foreign Policy

What makes soccer such a useful conduit for foreign policy is its role as undeniably the world's premier sport. It is easily the world's most popular sport, commercially or via allegiance. Soccer has at least 200 million registered players<sup>45</sup> and some estimates put the number at 250 million; roughly one out of every 24 people in the world.<sup>46</sup> National Geographic has suggested that soccer is the number one sport in over 84% of the world's countries.<sup>47</sup> No other form of popular culture surpasses soccer's huge and participatory passion among its devotees<sup>48</sup> or generates as much commercial revenue at either the club or international level.<sup>49</sup> The FIFA World Cup is the most watched television program in the world; the 2006 World Cup in Germany attracted thirty billion viewers (in total) and the final match was watched by two billion of the world's population.<sup>50</sup> More than any other sport soccer transcends ethnic and cultural boundaries around the world. Redeker asks: "Who is against the sport? No one, or almost no one. The Inuits are as interested in the World Cup as the Argentineans, Congolese and European".<sup>51</sup> Soccer is also age-independent, the young and old are able to enjoy the impact of the game equally. In 2001 a Swedish parliamentarian nominated soccer for the Nobel peace prize<sup>52</sup> and national holidays have been declared after soccer victories in

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<sup>45</sup> Lee, p. 112.

<sup>46</sup> Manzenreiter, p. 66.

<sup>47</sup> Hough, p. 1299.

<sup>48</sup> Giulianotti, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Lee, p. 112.

<sup>50</sup> Markovits and Rensmann, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> Redeker, p. 495/496.

<sup>52</sup> Manzenreiter, p. 66.

Costa Rica, Nigeria, Jamaica, Cameroon, Turkey and elsewhere.<sup>53</sup> Frenchman Jules Rimet, founder of the World Cup and nominated for the Nobel peace prize in 1956 firmly believed that “soccer could reinforce the ideals of permanent and real peace”.<sup>54</sup> Walvin explains:

No one seriously doubts that football is the national game, a game described by one critic as having entered the national psyche. For the same reason, football is highly political, subject to the stresses and strains of political involvement. In fact football had long been in the political eye. At critical moments, politicians could not afford to stand aloof from the game (quite apart from the fact that many politicians were keen fans).<sup>55</sup>

It has already become pretty much compulsory for head of states and head of governments in Europe to attend all the important matches that her or his country’s national soccer team contests even beyond the World Cup.<sup>56</sup> Boniface elegantly articulates how important soccer’s role in international relations has become:

Football is not, or is no longer, a simple team sport to be played in the context of one’s private life. It is also a social, political, cultural, economic and diplomatic issue. Nowadays, football is a valid component of international relations, which can no longer be limited to pure diplomatic relations between states. There is no aspect of present-day diplomatic relations that cannot be applied to football as well.<sup>57</sup>

More importantly, Boniface argues: “Where politics, diplomacy and the business world have failed, I believe that football can succeed”.<sup>58</sup>

## 5.2 Soccer Diplomacy

Bubalo provides the most straightforward definition of ‘soccer diplomacy’ within the literature reviewed. He states:

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<sup>53</sup> Kuhn, p. 52.

<sup>54</sup> Hough, p. 1288.

<sup>55</sup> Walvin, p. 272.

<sup>56</sup> Markovits and Rensmann, p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> Boniface, p. 87.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 95.

At its simplest level, [soccer] diplomacy is the use of a common interest in football to create networks. These networks can be used for a variety of other purposes, including diplomacy, forging political and business connections, promoting products, tourism, development, and education.<sup>59</sup>

Boniface explains:

Of course football does not rule the world. But it is nonetheless an important element in a country's influence and prestige. It can play a supporting role in diplomacy and can help confirm national identity. Globalization and changes in the criteria for power have bestowed an increasingly important role in the international arena on this leading sport.<sup>60</sup>

There are several different ways soccer diplomacy can be applied as a political and diplomatic tool. With its emphasis on broad spectrum engagement, soccer diplomacy can be used to; (1) improve and refine the image of one's country, (2) amplify friendship, boost peace, and share comradeship among nations, (3) promote trade and tourism, (4) encourage international development, (5) integrate minorities, and (6) most importantly to improve international relations.<sup>61 62</sup> This section will provide real world context for the potential of soccer diplomacy.

When Brazil played a friendly in war-torn Haiti in 2004, politicians made no attempt to deny the fact that the game was a part of Brazil's efforts to boost chances of gaining a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council.<sup>63</sup> In exchange of the Seleção traveling to the Caribbean nation, Haiti agreed to back Brazil in their UN Security Council bid. The Economist wrote: "The biggest football diplomat of them all was Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who travelled with the team to Haiti to attend the match. In wilting heat, the Brazilians trounced the Haitians 6:0. But this did not

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<sup>59</sup> Bubalo, p. 14.

<sup>60</sup> Boniface, p. 98.

<sup>61</sup> Bubalo, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> Bainvel, p. 79.

<sup>63</sup> Kuhn, p. 54.

seem to bother the Haitian fans, who went on partying long after the South American stars had left”.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile the Brazilians won the bid to sit in the UN Security Council.

The beauty of soccer as a tool in diplomacy is that it has on occasion provided a useful channel for diplomatic initiatives to improve relations even between hostile governments.<sup>65</sup> The Americans staged a soccer game on their soil and invited the Iranians to join them. This approach - sometimes dubbed ‘sports exchange’ - is very useful as for “[them] to come about, administrators, coaches and diplomats have to work together, which can contribute to breaking the ice between officials and ordinary citizens of the estranged states”.<sup>66</sup> Goldberg explains that “sports exchanges between the United States and Cuba, North Korea, or Iran can break down stereotypes, increase understanding, and confine battles to the playing field rather than the battlefield. They are a ‘safe’ way to ease a country out of isolation, acting as a first step of engagement, if not the first step”.<sup>67</sup> Murray writes: “Sports-Diplomacy exchanges can promote international understanding and friendship, as well as dispel stereotypes and prejudices. Not to mention they are also ‘low-risk, low-cost and high profile’.”<sup>68</sup> Future sports exchanges, in particular a visit of the American national soccer team to Teheran; could challenge ingrained stereotypes and historical animosity and help shape beliefs before they are formed.<sup>69</sup> With 21 percent of Iran’s population less than 24 years old,<sup>70</sup> they would be especially receptive towards such a public show of conciliation.

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<sup>64</sup> “The Americas: Football Diplomacy; Haiti;”, p.1.

<sup>65</sup> Houg, p. 1293.

<sup>66</sup> Chehabi, p. 91.

<sup>67</sup> Goldberg, p. 63.

<sup>68</sup> Murray, p. 11.

<sup>69</sup> Goldberg, p. 68.

<sup>70</sup> "Central Intelligence Agency." The World Factbook.

In the summer of 2012 when Ukraine was given the opportunity to co-host the UEFA European Football Championship. Markiyan Lubkivskyi, Ukraine's former ambassador to Bosnia and Croatia and the UEFA representative responsible for organizing the championship, said that the decision where to hold the tournament was political. He stated: "It was a decision of UEFA to bring Ukraine closer to Europe. UEFA wanted to bring us closer to the EU. It is doing the job of the European Commission".<sup>71</sup> As a result of the tournament being held in Ukraine and Poland, tourism and trade greatly increased in the region.<sup>72</sup>

Soccer is also used as a tool in international development. The largest sport-plus NGO is the Toronto-based 'Right to Play', which operates projects in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.<sup>73</sup> They use soccer, among other sports, as a means to "[...] to educate and empower children and youth to overcome the effects of poverty, conflict, and disease in disadvantaged communities".<sup>74</sup> These types of programs empower participants and communities and promote sustainability. Forty-four percent of their funding comes from government agencies including the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>75</sup>

Soccer is an effective instrument at integrating minorities into society. One particularly well-known example in Canada is Ottawa's own 'Community Cup'.<sup>76</sup> Spearheaded by the Catholic Immigration Centre, this initiative is best explained by executive director Carl Nicholson:

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<sup>71</sup> Rettman, p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> Liashenko, p. 2.

<sup>73</sup> Levermore, p. 58.

<sup>74</sup> "Right To Play International.", p.1.

<sup>75</sup> Koss, p. 21.

<sup>76</sup> "A Celebration of Our Welcoming Communities.", p1.

The Community Cup consists of two parts: First, it is simply a ‘competitive tournament’, but certain conditions apply: e.g. there has to be at least a female and a Canadian on each team. The second aspect of it is called the ‘Spirit Cup’, which rewards fair play and has at its centre the celebration of interculturalism. The latter cup is really at the centre of attention and trophies primarily reward players for their sports conduct, such as ‘most sportsmen like’ and those who have most effectively demonstrated values of solidarity, tolerance, respect for others, etc.<sup>77</sup>

This is just one of countless examples of how soccer tournaments can be used as a way of bringing people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds together.

Soccer diplomacy has moved from a theoretical idea to a viable policy instrument in the field of international relations. The examples above clearly demonstrate the possibilities for real life application of soccer in public diplomacy.

## **6. Case Studies**

The following case studies explore the spectrum in which soccer influences international relations. The first study of Egypt and Algeria is a negative case in point. The following two case studies are both instances in which international relations have improved due to the influence of soccer. The final case study demonstrates the influence of FIFA as an actor in world politics followed by an examination of the controversial bidding process of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. This investigation into the corrupt nature of the organization highlights its potential and unfortunate impairment as an actor in foreign policy.

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<sup>77</sup> Nicholson.

## 6.1 The Case of Egypt and Algeria

Algeria and Egypt were drawn to play in the same Group C for the qualifying competition for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. This stipulated that the two teams play each other home and away. The soccer rivalry between these two countries could not possibly be bigger. It has been dubbed “one of the fiercest rivalries in world football”.<sup>78</sup> In 1989 - the last time the two national soccer teams of Egypt and Algeria met for a game to decide which nation would qualify for the World Cup - the conflict on and off the pitch ended up being such a violent affair that one Egyptian supporter lost an eye and one Algerian player was issued an Interpol arrest warrant.<sup>79</sup> An Egyptian player, who was involved recently recalled:

It was an incredible atmosphere. The stadium was full five hours before the game [...] The Algeria team was full of stars and on the pitch it was very crazy; 11 fights between every player. Everybody forgot what the coaches had to say and just fought instead. It was a battle, not a football match. It was like our war against Israel in 1973.<sup>80</sup>

In 2009, Algeria won the first match with relatively few incidents at home 3:1. When the Algerian squad arrived in Cairo for the return match they were reportedly attacked by Egyptian fans who threw rocks at their team bus. So many rocks were hurled at the team bus on its way from the airport that several windows were smashed, which led to three Algerian players arriving at their hotel drenched in blood. According to the Guardian Newspaper these developments were “[...] condemned as a ‘massacre’ by the Algerian media. Algeria’s president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, called his counterpart Hosni

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<sup>78</sup> Montague, James. "Egypt versus Algeria: Inside the Storm.", p.1.

<sup>79</sup> Mackey, p.1.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

Mubarak twice to discuss the crisis”.<sup>81</sup> In response to these allegations “Egyptian sports writers claimed that there had been no attack at all and that the whole thing had been staged by the Algerians”.<sup>82</sup> Despite this nasty incident the match went forward. Egypt was winning 1:0 when a heart stopping second goal was scored in the last minute by Emad Moteab of Egypt in the fifth minute of added time, seconds before the match was due to end.<sup>83</sup> The final score was 2:0. Following the match there were riots in Algiers where offices of Egyptian companies were ransacked by mobs and staff evacuated.<sup>84</sup> In Marseille and elsewhere riots flared, where youths of Algerian origin set fire to boats and cars.<sup>85</sup>

Since both countries were now tied after their six group games on points and goal difference, it was determined that a deciding playoff match in a neutral country should occur.<sup>86</sup> This match took place in Omdurman, Sudan on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2009. The Guardian wrote at the time:

Arab unity faces a severe test tonight - not over attitudes to Israel, Iraq, or any of the usual hot items on the Middle Eastern political agenda, but over the battle between the Egyptian and Algerian football teams for the last African slot in the World Cup. Not surprisingly, it's being dubbed ‘the mother of all matches’.<sup>87</sup>

Egypt’s Minister of Information, Anas el-Feqqy spoke on one of Egypt’s most popular television talk shows and stated: “What you don’t know is that the Algerian fans have been in the streets of Khartoum for the past three days purchasing daggers and knives.

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<sup>81</sup> Black, Ian, p.1.

<sup>82</sup> Mackey, p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>84</sup> Black, Ian, p.1.

<sup>85</sup> Montague, James. "Egypt versus Algeria: Inside the Storm.", p.2.

<sup>86</sup> Wikipedia contributors. "2010 FIFA World Cup qualification (CAF).", p.3.

<sup>87</sup> Black, Ian, p.1.

These are not people going to cheer for soccer, these are people going to take revenge and exercise violence”.<sup>88</sup> Algeria ended up winning the match 1-0 and qualified for the World Cup final tournament in South Africa at the expense of Egypt. At the match Egyptian fans were attacked by their Algerian counterparts in Khartoum, which led to Egypt recalling their ambassador to Algeria.<sup>89</sup> The Egyptian Foreign Ministry summoned Algeria’s ambassador to Egypt, Abdel Qader Hadiar to express “Egypt's extreme displeasure with the assaults on Egyptian citizens who went to Khartoum to support the Egyptian team. Egypt also expressed its outrage and its denunciation after continuing reports and many appeals from Egyptian citizens residing in Algeria over the assaults and intimidation they face”.<sup>90</sup> However, the Egyptian soccer fans were not entirely innocent. Hundreds of young men rushed to the Algerian Embassy in Cairo after the game; vandalizing cars and stores, burning Algerian flags and injuring around 35 police officers.<sup>91</sup>

The events described above serve as an illustration that while soccer does not always have a positive effect on the relations of two countries, it clearly plays a significant role. Madichie wondered in early 2010 about soccer’s ugly side and the politically charged hatred between the two North African giants Egypt and Algeria: “The question is whether this beautiful game called football is deserving of such a bad name as all eyes look towards the continent again this summer?”<sup>92</sup> Luckily the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa was free of any incidents that could be considered to represent the

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<sup>88</sup> Slackman, p. 2.

<sup>89</sup> "Egypt-Algeria World Cup Anger Turns Violent in Cairo.", p.2.

<sup>90</sup> Hassan, p. 1.

<sup>91</sup> Slackman, p. 1.

<sup>92</sup> Madichie, p. 135.

‘ugly’ side of soccer. The continent was able to utilize the positive powers of the game and enhance its image and prestige. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the potential negative impact of international soccer matches as it may catalyze or enhance a preexisting conflict.

## **6.2 The Case of Turkey and Armenia**

The beauty of soccer as a diplomatic tool is that it has the power to be a useful channel for diplomatic initiatives even between hostile governments.<sup>93</sup> The following case study illustrates how two nations - who have previously shunned each other - can be forced as a direct result of a soccer match to resume international relations. In this case, Turkey was scheduled to play a FIFA World Cup pre-qualifier match against Armenia in their capital on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2008. Bransten and Recknagel explain the nature of Turkey-Armenia affairs:

They do not have diplomatic relations, their border has been closed for 15 years and there are at least two deeply felt issues that separate their peoples. One is the mass killings of Armenians in Turkey during and just after World War I. Armenia calls the killings genocide. Anyone referring to them that way in Turkey faces criminal persecution. The other issue is Armenia’s support of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan. Ankara accuses Armenia of occupying part of the territory of one of Turkey’s closet allies. Armenia says it is helping its ethnic kinsmen defend themselves.<sup>94</sup>

Despite these circumstances Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan invited Turkish President Abdullah Gül to watch the match. This resulted in the first modern Turkish leader visiting the country and the first Turkish fans (over 5000) to travel to a game in

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<sup>93</sup> Houg, p. 1293.

<sup>94</sup> Bransten and Recknagel, p. 1.

Armenia courtesy of special visas issued by the Armenian government.<sup>95</sup> Many people at the time viewed Gül's decision to accept his Armenian's counterpart's invitation as an opportunity for the establishment of formal ties between the traditionally hostile neighbors and the re-opening of their long frozen border.<sup>96</sup> According to Giragosian: "The invitation and subsequent visit by the Turkish president followed months of secretive closed meetings between Armenian and Turkish officials in Switzerland".<sup>97</sup> A full deal seemed imminent when the two countries initialed a preliminary agreement, including a plan to reopen the border.<sup>98</sup> Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian stated:

By initiating the football diplomacy, Armenia for the first time started speaking to Turkey on equal terms. For the first time the foreign high-ranking officials said that in the Armenian-Turkish relations the ball is on the Turkish field. For the first time the international community fully supported Armenia's stance in this matter.<sup>99</sup>

This soccer diplomacy provided new impetus between Turkey and Armenia. Due to the warmed up climate between the two countries, the two foreign ministers - Ahmet Davutoglu and Edward Nalbandian - signed the Turkey-Armenia Protocols in the presence of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrow and EU foreign affairs and security official Javier Solana.<sup>100</sup> On April 22 2009, the parties arrived at a two-part 'roadmap' document towards establishing diplomatic

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<sup>95</sup> Gunter and Rohtus, p. 165.

<sup>96</sup> Zaman, p. 1.

<sup>97</sup> Giragosian, p. 2.

<sup>98</sup> Europe: Football Diplomacy; Turkish-Armenian Relations, p. 55/56.

<sup>99</sup> "Edward Nalbandian: By Initiating "football diplomacy", p.1.

<sup>100</sup> Çandar, p. 1.

relations.<sup>101</sup> The first document was a Protocol on the Development of Relations and the second document was a Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations.<sup>102</sup> As a result, an exchange of ambassadors between the two countries occurred to establish diplomatic ties and the normally closed land border was opened temporarily.<sup>103</sup> Integral to this progress was both parties adhering to two preconditions: First, Turkey and Armenia was not to demand steps in the Nagorna Karabakh issue. Secondly, Armenia was not to demand Turkey's recognition of 'genocide' as a precondition.<sup>104</sup>

Gunter and Rohtus point out:

[A]t least one scholar believe[d] that pressure on Sargsyan for this bilateral agreement came from the perception that the Armenian president would not be able to reciprocate Turkish president's Gul's attendance at the World Cup qualifying soccer match by attending a game [the 2<sup>nd</sup> leg] between the two countries in Turkey on October 14, 2009, unless progress had been made by that date.<sup>105</sup>

In fact, Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan had declared that he would not attend the Turkey-Armenia return match unless the border was re-opened or was close to being re-opened. Amid these fears, Swiss mediators resumed their efforts to get each side to agree on a path that would clear the way for formal ties and re-opening their border.<sup>106</sup>

Aras and Özbay argue: "It would be an exaggeration to regard the football match as a historical turning point. However, it will certainly have a symbolic influence on attempts to normalize relations between Armenia and Turkey".<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Gunter and Rohtus, p. 168.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>103</sup> Çandar, p. 1.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Gunter and Rohtus, p. 168.

<sup>106</sup> Zaman, p. 2.

<sup>107</sup> Aras, Bülent, and Fatih Özbay, p. 1.

Four years later, the preconditions reappeared and eventually became stumbling blocks towards normalization. Turkish Prime Minister Tayip Erdogan, in a speech at the Azerbaijan parliament in Baku to alleviate the concerns of Azeris, declared that there would not be Turkey-Armenia normalization if there were no progress at Karabakh.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, Armenia under strong Russian influence has currently no intention of taking any further steps forward neither in the genocide or Karabakh questions anytime in the near future.<sup>109</sup> Çandar concludes: “No Turkey-Armenian normalization is detected in the horizon. And there won’t be unless there are mutually enticing and strong incentives”.<sup>110</sup> This new-found engagement resulting from a soccer match and the subsequent high level round of bilateral talks offered both countries a new opportunity to move forward in seeking to normalize relations. Despite significant challenges that still need to be overcome, it provided the impetus to begin a process that had heretofore been unavailable. This case clearly illustrates that soccer can and has the power to improve international relations between two previously hostile countries.<sup>111</sup>

### **6.3 The Case of South Korea and Japan**

The second case that clearly illustrates how soccer can lead to improved international relations involves South Korea and Japan. In 1996 FIFA made an unusual announcement. They decided to award the 2002 World Cup to two countries, South Korea and Japan. The Economist immediately exclaimed: “‘Soccer diplomacy’ has scored its first victory. Unable to choose between Japan and South Korea, FIFA decided

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<sup>108</sup> Çandar, p. 1.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> Houg, p. 1293.

in frustration to force the two rival contenders to hold the World Cup in 2002 jointly”.<sup>112</sup>  
This would make the 2002 World Cup Finals the first ever to take place in Asia and more importantly the first to be co-hosted by two countries.<sup>113</sup>

As Sakaedani points out: “Japan and the Republic of Korea are close in terms of geography, language, and culture, and yet they had been very far in terms of diplomatic relations, regulations, and national sentiments”.<sup>114</sup> The main reason why Japanese-Korean relations were strained at the time has to do with their historical legacy. In 1910, Japan took over Korea’s sovereignty under the Korean Annexation Treaty:

During the colonization, Japan exercised a strict integration policy: Korean language education, history, and geography were restricted in schools, and Korean family names were forbidden. Adopting economic exploitation policies, Japan undertook a landownership investigation to collect taxes, and forced the Korean people to work under poor conditions. Such measures hurt Korean nationalistic pride immensely, and eventually spurred a backlash of increased Korean nationalism. The upsurge of Korean nationalism caused hostility within Japan, who retaliated with what we would identify now as being massive human rights violations. In the wake of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, for example, a groundless rumor was spread that Korean people had poisoned the wells, and more than six thousand Koreans were killed. After the outbreak of war with China in 1937 until the end of the Asia-Pacific War in 1945, Japan forcibly brought roughly seven hundred and thirty thousand Koreans to Japan to work under extremely harsh conditions, conscripted two-hundred thousand Korean men into the Japanese military [and] recruited hundreds of thousands of Korean women to work in munitions [...]<sup>115</sup>

Additionally, the issue of compensation for Korean women, who under Japanese rule had been forced to serve as ‘comfort women’ (sexual slaves) for the Japanese Army was a long standing point of discontent.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> "Football Diplomacy." *The Economist*, p. 1.

<sup>113</sup> Horne and Manzenreiter, p.1

<sup>114</sup> Sakaedani, p. 234.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>116</sup> "Football Diplomacy." *The Economist*, p.1.

Horne and Manzenreiter explain: “This decision, that forced FIFA to change its own regulations, provoked the formation of a fragile alliance between the two East Asian states and their people whose relationship is still deeply tainted by memories of [their shared history]”.<sup>117</sup> Neither South Korea nor Japan were at first particularly excited to co-host the tournament. However: “Although both countries had originally hoped to host the championship independently, once they declared commitment, it became a matter of mutual face-saving, which might have caused a sense of rivalry but in a constructive way. They worked diligently together to set a stage, which was admirable enough to receive international attention”.<sup>118</sup> Some scholars have pointed out that the Japanese realized first that co-hosting could relax the tensions with South Korea while improving Japan’s international image and most importantly that they could lose the bid if they would not accept FIFA’s co-hosting suggestion.<sup>119</sup>

The Economist was one of the first to speculate that the tournament could lead to improved relations between the two countries and that both could benefit from those developments:

Everyone must play if soccer diplomacy forces the Koreans and the Japanese to treat each other with more respect that will be just as well. There is a pressing need for Japan and South Korea to get along better over the next few years. It may be that, well before soccer fans pour through the turnstiles in 2002, a crisis on the Korean peninsula will oblige Japan and South Korea to co-operate more closely. In the event of the internal collapse of North Korea, or of an attack across the border, South Korea would need swift and solid support not only from its main ally, the United States, but also from its cousin across the East Sea.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Horne and Manzenreiter, p. 189.

<sup>118</sup> Sakaedani, p. 243

<sup>119</sup> Podoler, p. 6.

<sup>120</sup> "Football Diplomacy." *The Economist*, p. 1.

Curtin speculated before the event that the World Cup could create an environment of goodwill and relationship strengthening: “Whether Korean or Japanese leaders will use this opportunity to do so is another matter. If the chance is utilized, then co-hosting the World Cup might be seen as having made a great contribution to improving long-term bilateral ties. [...] In the global age, international soccer is much more than a mere game”.<sup>121</sup>

These two scholars appeared to be right about their predictions. As Horne and Manzenreiter wrote two years after the tournament occurred:

The issue of peaceful collaboration between a former colonial power and its colony underpinned much of the 2002 co-hosting ideology. Without enhancement of bilateral relations the complex tournament logistics, involving travel and communication between two countries separated by sea, could not have been mastered so successfully. In the end, clearly improved relationships between the co-hosting nations, either on the practical working level of bureaucracies or on the conceptual level of mutual perception, laid the foundations for the smooth and congenial procedure of the event.<sup>122</sup>

Opinion polls conducted in both countries showed that some 70 percent of South Korean and about 60 percent of Japanese felt that their bilateral relationship had improved directly as a result of the World Cup tournament.<sup>123</sup> Sakaedani even writes: “[...] 80% of Japanese and South Korean people saw the positive impact that the co-hosting of FIFA World Cup played in the bilateral relationship. The key to such widespread recognition was in its mobilization power. It not only covered both countries but also reached various levels of actors, from diplomatic to local towns and young people”.<sup>124</sup> Sakaedani has also conducted extensive interviews on the subject matter and found: “There was a common

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<sup>121</sup> Curtin, p. 2.

<sup>122</sup> Horne and Manzenreiter, p. 200.

<sup>123</sup> Curtin, p. 1

<sup>124</sup> Sakaedani, p. 243.

understanding among all the interviewees that there has/had been a barrier between Japan and the Republic of Korea, but that the situation is changing, or starting to change. They also agreed that the year of 2002 steered the two countries toward a new relationship”.<sup>125</sup>

The World Cup had the added effect of increasing exchange activities between the two countries:

According to the Japan Foundation, which compiled and created a calendar of exchange activities between Japan and the ROK, there were around 54 activities per month on average in 2001, and over 100 in 2002, half of which were supported by the government. The content of activities varied from physical activity (sports, dance), art (movie, music), life (food, clothes, Buddhism), social (disability, farmers), academic (history, environment, alternative education), to business forums. What is more significant is the nature of activities. While the initial activities often took the form of an ‘exhibition’, many activities in 2002 were a dynamic collaboration between Japan and the ROK, which allowed the participants to experience one another.<sup>126</sup>

The wider diplomatic impact of the World Cup may turn out to be its most pervasive heritage. Flows of tourism and other inter-cultural exchanges between the two countries - including TV series, pop music, fashion, cuisine and language learning - continued and thus outlived the football exaltation.<sup>127</sup> Chung Mong-Joon, who was chairman of the Korean Organizing Committee, honorary vice president of FIFA and the former president of the Korea Football Association expressed his deep gratitude towards Japan and stated: “[...] the 2002 FIFA World Cup has helped to bring the people of these two countries closer together”.<sup>128</sup>

Curtin points out: “Another important benefit of the World Cup was the impact it had on youth in both countries. Many young Japanese got a very favourable impression of Korea from the tournament. Young Koreans now feel more confident and proud about

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>127</sup> Horne and Manzenreiter, p. 200.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

their country. This is a good basis upon which to build better youth ties and understanding between the two countries”.<sup>129</sup> An interesting observable phenomenon was the redirection of the Japanese’ national media’s public support towards Korea - the only team remaining from Asia in the tournament - after Japan’s elimination. The matches of the Korean squad were closely followed by mass television audiences in Japan, recording rates of up to 48.3 percent for the semi-final.<sup>130</sup> Curtin explains: “Anyone who experienced the World Cup in Japan will tell you that the majority of Japanese were genuinely happy for Korea. They might not have been passionate in their support, but many were cheering Korea on”.<sup>131</sup> This case study clearly elucidates how international soccer has the power to positively affect relations between countries with historically battered relations. Despite a rocky beginning, the outcome of the 2002 FIFA World Cup resulted in a significant improvement of the international relations between Korea and Japan.

## **6.4 FIFA, Governance and the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar**

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association, or FIFA in short is the international governing body of football (soccer) and the ultimate power within the soccer world. Formed in 1904 in Paris, seven nations attended FIFA’s first meeting: Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. It now has more members than the United Nations (208 vs. 193).<sup>132</sup> FIFA is both a non-governmental, non-profit organization and a global company with huge revenues,

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<sup>129</sup> Curtin, p. 2

<sup>130</sup> Horne and Manzenreiter, p. 196.

<sup>131</sup> Curtin, p. 2

<sup>132</sup> Roderick, p. 1.

unprecedented reach, political clout and enormous worldwide social influence.<sup>133</sup> João Havelange, FIFA's former president and honorary president until he resigned on April 30<sup>th</sup> 2013, explained FIFA's enormous influence:

I've been to Russia twice, invited by President Yeltsin. I've been to Poland with their President. In the 1990 World Cup in Italy I saw Pope John Paul II three times. When I go to Saudi Arabia, King Fahd welcomes me in splendid fashion. In Belgium I had a one-and-a-half hour meeting with King Albert. Do you think a Head of State will spare that much time to just anyone? That's respect. That's the strength of FIFA. I can talk to any President, but they'll be talking to a President too on an equal basis. They've got their power, and I've got mine: the power of football, which is the greatest power there is.<sup>134</sup>

Other than being admitted as a member of the United Nations, being admitted to an international association such as FIFA is the clearest signal that a country's status as a nation-state has been recognized by the international community.<sup>135</sup> Tomlinson and Young explain that "in participatory terms, the World Cup and the Olympics offer a platform to all nations, and most all to small nations, of the world that is unrivaled by any other cultural or political body, even the United Nations".<sup>136</sup> Joseph Blatter, current president of the association, sums up the situation:

FIFA is no longer merely an institution that runs our sport. It has now taken on a social, cultural, political and sporting dimension in the struggle to educate children and defeat poverty. At the same time it has also become a powerful economic phenomenon... Football can move mountains.<sup>137</sup>

The beauty of the game on the pitch and the power of the game off it is unquestioned; however as Becker points out: "the widespread corruption within FIFA has tarnished the on the field beauty of the game. The perception that football is corrupt

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<sup>133</sup> Scheck, p. 2.

<sup>134</sup> Kelly, Mortimer, and Lewis, p. 2.

<sup>135</sup> Levermore and Budd, p. 21.

<sup>136</sup> Tomlinson and Christopher Young, p. 2.

<sup>137</sup> Murray, p. 12.

became a reality after bribes and vote trades surrounded the 2018 and 2022 World Cup bid processes”.<sup>138</sup> Ideally FIFA should be truly democratic, presented through one unified organization, promoting the interests and values of itself, its member associations and its commercial partners.<sup>139</sup> Sadly, FIFA’s performance in reality could not be further away from this ideal. This segment will focus on bidding irregularities within FIFA’s executive committee that resulted in Qatar being awarded the 2022 World Cup.

FIFA’s greatest asset, and soccer’s flagship tournament, the Men’s FIFA World Cup has become one of the biggest media spectacles and profitable cultural events in the world.<sup>140</sup> The FIFA World Cup, which happens in a recurring four-year cycle, surely is the sports’ most important event. Jackson and Haigh write: “[The FIFA World Cup] reminds the world of the fact that the tournament and the appearance of national teams in the ‘theatre of the great’ also serves as a showcase for the display of nationalism and nation-state achievement”.

Integral to analyzing FIFA’s awarding of the 2022 FIFA World Cup to Qatar is an understanding of the bidding process. Currently the process consists of three stages. First, a country submits its bid to FIFA. Second, FIFA visits each potential host country. Third, the executive committee votes to determine the host country.<sup>141</sup> The executive committee consists of a president, elected by the Congress in the year following a FIFA World Cup, eight vice-presidents and fifteen members that are appointed by the various confederations and associations. Each member’s appointment term lasts four years.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Becker, p. 3.

<sup>139</sup> Brand Health Check: FIFA - Can FIFA Keep Football as the Beautiful Game, p. 1.

<sup>140</sup> Tomlinson, p. 55.

<sup>141</sup> Samuel, p. 547.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 545.

The Qatar controversy began in October 2010, long before any voting was to take place. For the first time since 1966 the hosts for two separate World Cups were to be simultaneously selected. With the World Cup host nations to be determined at the same voting procedure, the odds of vote collusion - or vote exchanging - greatly increased.<sup>143</sup> At that time it was revealed that two FIFA executives Amos Adamu of Nigeria and Reynald Temari of Tahiti had offered to sell their votes, leading FIFA to bar both men from the voting process.<sup>144</sup> In the same revelation, two of the remaining 22 vote members were the focus of a pending investigation for allegedly selling their votes for US \$1.5 Million.<sup>145</sup> In total four members of the Executive Committee were either banned or under investigation for bribery.<sup>146</sup> From that point forward, the notion of corruption and unethical conduct ran rampant. Becker explains, how the vote for Qatar raised great suspicions worldwide:

In round 1, Australia had 1 vote, Japan had 3 votes, Korea Republic had 4 votes, Qatar had 11 votes, and the United States had 3 votes. Australia was eliminated with the least amount of votes. In round 2, Japan had 2 votes, Korea Republic had 5 votes, Qatar had 10 votes, and the United States had 5 votes. Japan was eliminated with the fewest votes. In the third round, Korea Republic had 5 votes, Qatar had 11 votes, and the United States of America had 6 votes. Republic of Korea was eliminated. In the fourth and final round, Qatar received 14 votes and the United States of America had 8 votes. Qatar was selected to be the host of the 2022 World Cup. To this day, a question remains why Qatar lost a vote from round one to round two. Due to the secret nature of the ballot, the reason why the vote changed is unknown. One theory is that Qatar and Japan made a deal exchanging their 2018 World Cup votes. Under this theory, Qatar exchanged its votes in an attempt to get the absolute majority in the first round, and Japan exchanged votes to make it into the later rounds of the vote process.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Becker, p. 7.

<sup>144</sup> Samuel, p. 549/550.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Becker, p. 7.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

After the voting Sepp Blatter admitted that Qatar had colluded with Spain and Portugal to trade their votes for the 2018 and 2022 World Cup bids. Although this is a clear violation of FIFA rules, the organization has not and does not plan to take any direct action against these nations.<sup>148</sup> As Phillips points out, the past four FIFA World Cups of the last 16 years have chartered a line straight down the Democracy Index from South Africa (30<sup>th</sup> place), Brazil (47<sup>th</sup>), Russia (107<sup>th</sup>) to Qatar (137<sup>th</sup>).<sup>149</sup>

The most controversial aspect of awarding the FIFA World Cup to Qatar is the weather in the country during the summer, as even FIFA's own technical report stated: "the high temperatures in Qatar could pose a health risk to not only players, but to officials and spectators as well".<sup>150</sup> Another significant factor is fan enjoyment. At the time of the proposal, Qatar greatly lacked the number of hotels that would be necessary to house the 500,000 people that are expected. Additionally, it lacks paved roads, a high-speed rail system and other infrastructure necessary to transport spectators around the event.<sup>151</sup>

Another main concern is the Qatari government's questionable human rights record. This includes its stance on homosexuality, which is punished by jail time and lashes. These laws establish an unwelcoming and fearful environment for homosexuals in attendance.<sup>152</sup> Further human rights violations are affecting migrant workers, who have encountered unpaid wages, illegal salary deductions, unsanitary labour camps and unsafe

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>149</sup> Phillips, p. 6.

<sup>150</sup> Samuel, p. 550.

<sup>151</sup> Becker, p. 9.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

working conditions.<sup>153</sup> The so called Kafala system – which ties employees to specific employer – has according to Human Rights Watch and the International Trade Union Confederation been open to systematic abuse and created a de facto form of slavery for the more than one million migrant workers living within its borders.<sup>154</sup>

The argument that international soccer has the ability to enhance cooperation and improve relations between countries would be even stronger if soccer's governing body was an organization that practiced the fair play, integrity and respect for the rule of law it ostensibly espouses. A great step forward would be if officials, management, employees, volunteers and players committed to implementing a concrete anti-corruption program.<sup>155</sup> As Becker writes in his article: "FIFA's mission is to 'develop the game, touch the world, and build a better future'. FIFA continues to pride itself on its authenticity, unity performance and integrity. Yet the actions of FIFA fail to demonstrate the organization following what they stand for. Currently, FIFA is ripe with corruption and it must stop."<sup>156</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

Overall this paper illustrates how soccer can be utilized as a tool in foreign policy. When applied successfully it can enhance the communication between countries, which ultimately leads to improved international relations. Despite its neglect by the international relations academic community, sport's role in the past as a rallying point for political ideology, current role in shaping culture, its function as an international

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 9/10.

<sup>154</sup> Montague, James. "Desert Heat: World Cup Hosts Qatar Face Scrutiny over 'slavery' Accusations.", p. 2.

<sup>155</sup> Schenk, p. 8.

<sup>156</sup> Becker, p. 14.

measuring stick and its universal appeal provide a compelling argument for its importance to international relations.

International sport is the perfect conduit and starting point for international cooperation. It is typified by a spirit of competition, fair play and shared enjoyment. Even at the international level this fosters a spirit between competitors and competing countries that encourages cooperation. The visceral thrill of winning and the pain of defeat it evokes transcend all boundaries and build empathy and emotional understanding. Unlike more conventional foreign policy instruments is has a unifying goal that all parties can agree on, the game must take place for the benefit of all those involved.

More than any other sport, soccer has a global appeal that reinforces these qualities. Stevenson and Alaug write:

[soccer] has been effective at promoting national integration. Its ability to draw together political antagonists, especially in culturally or politically divided societies, is particularly significant. [Soccer's] paradoxical ability to reinforce societal cleavages while transcending them makes soccer ... the perfect means of achieving a more perfect union among multiple groups.<sup>157</sup>

Soccer is the beautiful game, the passionate game, the global game. Few other cultural activities can reach the audience and exert the global influence that it possesses 365 days of the year. Soccer is incredibly cathartic both at the individual and collective level. This paper successfully argues that this catharsis can occur even at the level of international relations.

Bert Trautman was a legendary goalkeeper for Manchester City, who died, on July 19, 2013. He came to England as a prisoner-of-war during the Second World War

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<sup>157</sup> Stevenson and Alaug, p. 2.

after fighting for the Germans as a paratrooper.<sup>158</sup> He began his soccer career for a local team in Lancashire before signing for Manchester City in 1949. Bert Trautmann had a large role in improving the public perception of Germany in post-war England. His beginnings in English football were not easy and he was met with a great deal of hostility. However, through his charisma and many heroic performances - including finishing the last 17 minutes of the FA Cup final match with a broken neck - he was able to gain the respect of the English soccer fans. In 2004, he was awarded an Order of the British Empire for his efforts of improving Anglo-German relations through soccer. He is also known for the development of soccer in Africa.<sup>159</sup> His story is the magic of soccer; a universal language that surpasses impossible divides with sublime elegance and pure joy.

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<sup>158</sup> "Manchester's Legendary German Goalkeeper Bert Trautmann Dies.", p. 1.

<sup>159</sup> Starcevic, p. 2.

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