



*Sportswashing: a political tool for
national power- and cultural
development*



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Abstract

Sportswashing. The use of sport to improve and develop the image of a corporation, government, or nation. This could be done by hosting large sporting events, purchasing or sponsoring international sports clubs.

So, what is the first thing you think of when you hear the term Sportswashing? Perhaps a specific nation, sports club, or sporting event springs to mind. Probably one of the most controversial sporting events in recent history was the 2022 FIFA World Cup which was hosted by The State of Qatar. A nation that during the build-up to the tournament met several accusations regarding human rights violations, labor violations, corruption, and the use of the tournament as a political tool to launder its national image, gain power and increase national development.

According to previous academic research, Qatar is far from the first example when sportswashing has allegedly been used in an attempt to achieve another goal, whether it is to create a better national image for the outside world, develop a nation, or gain power.

This paper aimed to examine how a nation could use large sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup, as a political tool to increase a nation's power, global influence, and cultural development. In this case, the focus was primarily on Qatar since it is close in time and sparked discussions around sportswashing and human rights. This paper did also use other historical sporting events as examples to examine the effects of sportswashing and to initiate discussions about the future of sportswashing.

This investigation found for example that sportswashing could be used as a political tool for laundering a national image, creating control over information, developing power relations, and playing an important role in the cultural development of a nation.

This desk study did not use human participants but rather relied on academic papers as its foundation, together with news articles from *The Guardian* and *Al Jazeera* with official documents from FIFA as support.

Keywords: *Sportswashing, Culture, Development, Power, FIFA World Cup, Qatar*

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	4
Introduction	4
Purpose	6
Research questions	6
Literature review	6
Theories	12
Methodology	14
Design	14
Participants	15
Operationalization	15
Sources	16
Delimitations and Limitations	18
Ethical considerations	18
Findings	19
Sportswashing and cultural development	19
Sportswashing and power relations	20
The Future of sportswashing	22
Analysis	23
Lukes’s three dimensions of Power	23
Hayward’s “De-facing power”	24
Modernization theory	25
Discussion	26
Discussion of Methodology	26
Discussion of Findings	27
Discussion of Future Investigations	29
Conclusion	30
List of References	33

List of Abbreviations

FIFA: The acronym FIFA stands for " Fédération Internationale de Football Association". FIFA is the governing body that is in official control of international football, is in charge of organizing the FIFA World Cup, and has authority when it comes to decision-making for the tournament (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022; Fédération Internationale de Football Association, 2020).

IBSS: The acronym IBSS stands for "International Bibliography of Social Science". IBSS is an essential online resource for social science with over two million bibliographic references (ProQuest, 2023).

Introduction

Sportswashing is a recently established term in the Western English-speaking media, even if the method per se has existed throughout history. The term sportswashing is often described as a form of soft power. Instead of the traditional use of force and/or military power, soft power is a way to use culture to influence people (Al Thani, 2021; IRIS 2022; O'Kelly, 2022; Sveriges Radio, 2022). Sportswashing is a form of soft power, where sports are being used to "launder" the global image and/or reputation of a nation or actor (Ellis, 2020; National Public Radio, 2022). Sportswashing is often used as a political tool to attract future tourists, secure investments, development of a nation, and/or gain power (Andersson, 2023; Koch, 2013). One could equate sportswashing with a form of reputation laundering, where the nation invests in a sporting event to clean the public image, control information, develop a nation and use manipulation (Ganji, 2022).

Even if the term sportswashing is relatively young, the use of sports by nations to achieve their goals and ambitions goes far back in the history of mankind. Already during the time of the Roman Empire, people in power used gladiator games and chariot races to divert the attention of the public and satisfy the basic needs of the population (Hathtotuwa, 2022; Sveriges Radio, 2022).

Another nation that allegedly used sportswashing was Germany back in 1936. This year, Germany used their position as host for the Olympic Games in an attempt to create a positive image of their nation, since the nation the previous year had instituted laws against specific ethnic groups within the nation (Carpenter, 2016; New Hampshire Public Radio, 2022; Sveriges Radio 2022). Argentina is also a nation that allegedly used sportswashing

during the 1978 FIFA World Cup that Argentina also hosted. Allegedly, the tournament could be seen as a distraction used by the national military, which at the time was in power, in an attempt to create a better national image on the global stage (Ellis, 2020).

In more recent years, two of the most globally powerful nations have been accused of sportswashing. Both The Russian Federation and The People's Republic of China have allegedly used their positions as host nations for the Olympic Games of 2008, 2014, and 2022 respectively in an attempt to influence and create a better national image for the outside world. For example, the Olympic Games of 2008 were viewed as an opportunity for The People's Republic of China to increase its soft power and promote its cultural heritage, and similar allegations were directed at The Russian Federation when they hosted the 2018 FIFA World Cup (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2014; Dooley, 2022; Sveriges Radio, 2022).

These examples presented in this investigation are just a handful of cases where sportswashing allegedly has been used. Sportswashing is a global phenomenon and many nations use it to different degrees to achieve their national goals, whether it is to gain power or to promote their nation.

In this investigation, the author will investigate how sportswashing could be used to develop the culture of a nation and its power relations. This investigation will primarily focus on The State of Qatar (hereafter referred to as Qatar for the rest of the investigation) and the 2022 FIFA World Cup where another case of sportswashing allegedly took place. Qatar was chosen for this investigation since it is recent in time and there have been reports of alleged breaches of human rights concerning the welfare of migrant workers and the welcomeness of people depending on their sexuality during the tournament preparation (MacInnes, 2022).

Since Qatar's hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup is still close in time it will make for interesting discussions regarding the future of sportswashing, with the lessons learned from previously historically sporting events.

In this investigation, culture will be defined as *social behaviors, norms, traditions, values, and views of the society, and the national image for the outside world*. Cultural development will in this investigation be defined as *a process of enabling cultural activities aiming for a more developed and better society with the combination of power relationships*. The term power could be defined in different ways. In this investigation, power will be defined as the Cambridge Dictionary definition, which is *the ability to control people and events* (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

Both sport and culture share similarities with each other, the same as individuals playing a specific sport also share a specific culture with another. Sports are said to have the

effect of breaking down barriers between people of different cultures and enabling people to identify themselves (Butt, 2019). Could this perhaps be a reason why sportswashing seemingly is a more frequently used method in the society of today?

Purpose

The purpose of this investigation is to attempt to reduce the academic research gap on sportswashing by examining how sportswashing could be used as a political tool for the cultural development of a nation and its power relations. This investigation will also aim to inform and/or remind people of the existence of sportswashing, and its effects while also initiating discussions about the possible future of sportswashing. This investigation will not aim to persuade the reader in any way. This investigation instead aims to present impartial information and encourage the reader to make his or her own opinions regarding this specific topic.

Research questions

Based on the purpose of this investigation, the following research questions have been constructed:

1. How could sportswashing be used as a political tool for the cultural development of a nation?
2. How could sportswashing be used as a political tool for national power relations?
3. What is the future of sportswashing?

Literature review

During the last couple of years, the term sportswashing has seemingly begun to appear more and more frequently in everyday conversations. This might be attributed to the fact that reports of alleged cases of sportswashing by different news agencies have been growing and sparked discussions regarding moral dilemmas and moral positions.

However, from an academic literature point of view, the interest in sports being used to develop a nation has a relatively short and recent history. This could explain why academic papers on this specific topic are limited. A search of the online database IBSS (International Bibliography of Social Science) only results in a few articles, and the ones presented are mostly from the last couple of years (Skey, 2022). The same happens when using the search

engine “OneSearch” and you write “sportswashing” in the search bar. The result as of now is seven papers that are peer-reviewed and all published after 2020. However, if one searches for “sportswashing” on Google Scholar, there are more results than on the other search engines. Without any regulations on the year of publication, there are over 370 results. Of these results, over 320 of them are published between 2020-2023, which could empower the argument that the term sportswashing is new even if the practice is older.

One academic paper that has been cited frequently is *Channelling Soft Power: The Qatar 2022 World Cup, Migrant Workers, and International Image* by Mohammed Al Thani. According to Al Thani (2021), a major sporting event such as the FIFA World Cup could benefit a host nation, both in economic and cultural aspects. In the case of Qatar and the 2022 World Cup, the host nation has used the global event as a platform to construct its soft power with the purpose to influence foreign policy, and development and showcasing a favorable image of the nation to the global audience (Al Thani, 2021).

In the case of Qatar and its alleged use of sportswashing, Qatar did allegedly not begin with the 2022 World Cup. Before the 2022 FIFA World Cup, Qatar hosted international sporting events within sports such as golf and tennis (Al Thani, 2021) and is allegedly confirmed to host several more sporting events in the upcoming years (Ibrahim, 2023; Kilani, 2022). A subsidiary of the wealth fund of Qatar, Qatar Sports Investments, has also financed major sporting teams with global fanbases, prior to the 2022 World Cup, for example, FC Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain (Al Thani, 2021).

Hosting major events such as the FIFA World Cup has in general been connected to discussions regarding human rights and the welfare of low-skilled workers (Al Thani, 2021). The latest FIFA World Cup was no exception. During the build-up to the tournament, the host organization FIFA participated in these discussions and ran campaigns including anti-discrimination and LGBTQ+ pride rights. Despite this, a few months later during the tournament, discussions regarding the relations between sport, morals, and politics surfaces once again when FIFA was prepared to hand out sporting sanctions affecting teams whose captains wore a “OneLove” armband in support of the LGBTQ+ community in a nation where these types of relations were forbidden (Shumaker, 2023).

Al Thani (2021) claims nonetheless that one aspect of major events is that they could inspire humanity, resulting in a platform for promoting human rights. This is argued to be through the creation of job opportunities that come with hosting global events. With the creation of jobs, there will also be discussions regarding the rights and working conditions of the workers. In the case of Qatar, global attention was attracted when reports regarding poor

working- and living conditions for migrant workers and forced labor surfaced (Al Thani, 2021).

Another academic paper on this specific topic that several other papers refer to is *Sportswashing: Media Headline or analytic concept?* by Michael Skey. According to Skey (2022), sportswashing is a term that has begun to appear more often in English-language media over the last few years even if academic discussions are limited. According to Skey, there is still an absence of analysis regarding what sportswashing could or could not offer to scientists in sports studies. This absence of academic research and analysis is according to Skey interesting, since the accelerated rise in interest concerning sportswashing and issues connected to the term, for example, the overlap between sportswashing and soft power (Skey, 2022). In the same academic paper, the author refers to another author when describing soft power. According to the paper, soft power is a recent term from a historical perspective. The term was allegedly coined during the 1990s by the political scientist Joseph Nye and was discussed as being a nation's values, ideologies, and cultures. According to the paper, Nye distinguished between soft power and what he called the more traditional hard power that included military and economic strength (Nye, 1990; Skey, 2022).

Another academic paper on sportswashing is *Sportswashing: Complicity and Corruption* by Archer, Fruh, and Wojtowicz. In this paper, the authors claim that the interest that Qatar is showing concerning hosting the World Cup corresponds with the characteristics of sportswashing. According to the authors, their paper aimed to undermine the way that people act in the face of moral violations, for which the actor of sportswashing is responsible. This could be done in different ways, for example distracting away from wrongdoings or attempting to normalize them (Archer, et al, 2022). This paper also brings up a seemingly new aspect to the table, namely the role of the participant in sports and the moral challenges that practitioners, journalists, and fans are forced to face in these situations (Archer, et al, 2022).

An academic paper on this topic is also the paper entitled *Sport and soft authoritarian nation-building* by Natalie Koch. In this paper, it is said that authoritarian regimes have taken an interest in promoting sport for a long period of time, intending to develop a nation and gain respect globally. However, there is a difference between different types of regimes according to the author. She claims that the use of sports to develop a nation and its global image is characteristic of a "soft" authoritarian regime. In other words, a nation that does not rely on violent tactics to achieve its goals, but rather positive tactics or persuasion. The author

exemplifies this by using Kazakhstan as a reference and more specifically when the state promoted a team of cyclists intending to build up the nation (Koch, 2013).

One academic paper regarding the development of cultural and national identity, is the paper *National identity, social legacy and Qatar 2022: the cultural ramifications of FIFA's first Arab World Cup*. In this paper, the author discusses the global impact that awarding Qatar the 2022 FIFA World Cup will have on the nation. The author continues to discuss how this hosting of the FIFA World Cup could be a central part of Qatar's plan to launder its reputation and image, in an attempt to be seen as a legitimate actor on the global stage. With this tournament, it is argued that Qatar will have an opportunity to address specific issues instead of surrendering to external norms and values, and prove to the world that their national image presented in conjunction with the build-up for the tournament are genuine and long-lasting (Griffin, 2019).

One recently published Bachelor thesis is *Tvätten I Öknen* (freely translated to: The Laundry in the Desert) written by a student named Linus Andersson. In this paper, the author states that Qatar has been accused of using the FIFA World Cup as a political tool to launder its national image to attract future tourists and investments. Furthermore, the author states that previous research has demonstrated the connection between nations hosting large sporting events and the ambition to gain soft power. In his paper, the author used discourse analysis in an attempt to show how the Qatari state tried to associate the tournament with positive values and whether their efforts were successful or not (Andersson, 2023).

One recently published thesis is *Newcastle, Saudi Arabia, and the Shifting of the Goalposts in English Football: A Triangulated Case Study Analysis of Sportswashing in the "Beautiful" Game*, written by a student named Matthew O'Kelly. In this paper, the author describes how some Gulf States have begun to use sportswashing by investing in European football clubs to launder their national images, which has led to controversial developments and discussions regarding possible future consequences of global relations. According to the author, sportswashing is everywhere and seemingly here to stay, in some shape or form (O'Kelly, 2022).

Another recently published Bachelor thesis is *Sportswashing - En kvalitativ innehållsanalys av begreppet sportswashing i brittisk media* (freely translated to: *Sportswashing - A qualitative content analysis of the concept of sportswashing in British media*) written by a student named Oskar Andersson. In this paper, the author describes how the term sportswashing has been popularised by human rights organizations and media during the last years and how states use sportswashing to extract soft power and an improved

national reputation. The author's view is that sportswashing has made the connection between sports and politics stronger. The result of this paper was that sportswashing was being presented in the company of culture, performance, soft power, and human rights (Andersson, 2022).

One peer-review book on cultural development and sport is *Routledge Handbook of Sport and Politics* by Bairner. In this book, the author describes what could be understood as sportswashing, even if the term never is spoken. The author talks about China and how the Chinese government wanted to host the Olympic games to raise the Chinese status in the world, and to promote economic and cultural development within the nation (Bairner, 2017).

Since there is a limited amount of academic papers on sportswashing, this investigation will have to rely on additional forms of sources. Official reports from FIFA have been used in this investigation regarding cultural development in Qatar in connection to the impact of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. In one of the official reports from FIFA, entitled *FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 - Development of Sustainability Strategy*, there is a paragraph regarding the understanding of culture. This understanding includes how a tournament generates changes in awareness and understanding between different cultures and includes values, beliefs, and heritage (Fédération Internationale de Football Association, 2020). This additional definition of the term culture will also be used in the investigation.

In another official FIFA document regarding Community Programme, the future role of culture within a process of development is brought up. It is stated that by the year 2030, the necessary knowledge to promote sustainable development including the promotion of a culture of peace, cultural diversity, and cultural contribution is to be ensured (Fédération Internationale de Football Association, 2019).

Since there is a limited amount of academic papers on sportswashing and cultural development, this investigation also relied on news articles. Since there are almost an infinite amount of articles and newspapers, this investigation had to limit the selection. It was decided to use articles that were written in English and from different parts of the world. That the articles had to be in English was decided out of convenience for the author of this investigation. The newspaper that was used in this investigation was *Al Jazeera*, based in Qatar. The other newspaper used in this investigation was *The Guardian*, based in the United Kingdom. These newspapers were decided since they are based in different parts of the world and could bring different perspectives to events. The timeframe for all the articles was the same nonetheless, all papers had to be published between the years 2010 and 2023. The year 2010 was decided since it marked the year Qatar was awarded the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Three articles from Al Jazeera used in this investigation were *Why are football teams protesting against Qatar 2022 World Cup?*, *When they came, a Qatar World Cup was unthinkable. Now it's here*, and *FIFA president slams Western "hypocrisy" over Qatar criticism*. In these articles, counterarguments are made against the comments regarding negative views and alleged moral violations in the build-up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Arguments are brought to light regarding the legitimacy of claims thrown at Qatar. These articles address that FIFA believes in freedom of speech and the positive power football brings, simultaneously stating that players and teams could face disciplinary sanctions if sporting events are being used to demonstrate against non-sporting topics. The aspect of cultural development is also brought up, along with discussions regarding the future of Qatar (Adil, 2022; Al Jazeera, 2021; Mohamed, 2022).

Three articles from The Guardian used in this investigation were *Holding the World Cup in Qatar has damaged football and I will not be going*, *A game of two halves: how "sportswashing" benefits Qatar and the West*, and *Could 2022 be sportswashing's biggest year?*. In these articles, discussions regarding sportswashing and hosting large sporting events are being held, including several sporting events from the year 2022 alone. These articles also discuss the impact of sportswashing and how it could impact the future. In these articles aspects of power relations are brought up for discussions and provide more pieces of a larger puzzle regarding the concealed agendas of sportswashing (Lahm, 2022; Wearing, 2022; Zidan, 2022).

Most of the available research focuses on describing what sportswashing is and exemplifies how nations have used sports throughout time to improve the national image and gain soft power. A small amount of the available data discusses how sportswashing is being used to improve a nation and how a nation could use sportswashing as a method of development. Even so, there is limited information regarding what kind of national development sportswashing could improve. So, the author of this investigation will first attempt to add to the limited academic work on sportswashing to reduce the current gap in academic work. Furthermore, the author will try to investigate if there could be a positive aspect of sportswashing as well since there is seemingly a major negative view regarding the subject. Finally, the author will investigate and speculate about the future of sportswashing.

Theories

As this investigation will examine how the phenomenon of sportswashing could be used as a tool for the cultural development of a nation and its power relations, and also speculations regarding its future, theories grounded within these subjects seem fitting.

As there are seemingly no direct theories connected to sportswashing, the chosen theories had to be connected to sportswashing in other ways. One such theory is Lukes's three dimensions of power (2005), which connects to the term sportswashing since Lukes's third dimension of power includes the power to shape, influence, and determine different beliefs, and values. Resulting in securing the compliance of other people, which could be achieved through sportswashing (Al Thani, 2021; IRIS, 2022; Lukes, 2005; Sveriges Radio, 2022).

One aspect that is present in Lukes's theory of power is the term soft power (Lukes, 2005). Since sportswashing is described as a method where culture is being used to influence people, and simultaneously being a subgroup of soft power there is a connection between the two terms (Al Thani, 2021; IRIS 2022; Sveriges Radio, 2022). Since a connection or overlap could be established (Boykoff, 2022), a justification for the use of Lukes's theory appears. Lukes's three dimensions of power theory is, according to Lukes himself, a theory that does not only focus on one aspect of power but several different aspects. According to Lukes, the more classical definitions and theories regarding power do not talk about power at all. Instead, they describe the action of securing compliance to dominate. One example is that most definitions and theories regarding power solely focus on the aspect where one actor exercises power over another actor. It could be a state exercising physical power over another state, or a government exercising power over its inhabitants. That A exercise power over B, and makes B depending on the actions of A (Lukes, 2005).

From the view of Lukes, there are instead three dimensions of power. In the first and second dimensions (One-dimensional view and Two-dimensional view) aspects such as decision-making and non-decision-making, behavior, control over the agenda, and structural power are discussed. In this investigation though, the focus will mainly be on Lukes's final dimension of power (Three-dimensional view). This is because, within this specific dimension, more subtle aspects such as discourse, manipulation, and soft power are credited (Lukes, 2005).

Another connection between sportswashing and Lukes's three dimensions of power theory could be found in Ganji's definition of sportswashing. According to Ganji,

sportswashing is the laundering of a reputation, where the sporting event serves as a political tool for the practitioner to control information and use manipulation (Ganji, 2022). In both Lukes's second and third dimensions of power, both manipulation and control over the agenda are two important aspects of power (Lukes, 2005).

Another theory of power is entitled "De-facing Power" and is by Hayward. This theory connects to sportswashing in similar ways as Lukes's theory, in the way that power is an important aspect of sportswashing. Either to gain power or to exercise power. Either way, power and power relations are central aspects of sportswashing, and this theory by Hayward also brings a different aspect of power than Lukes. Therefore, the "De-facing Power" theory by Hayward connects to sportswashing and this investigation (Hayward, 1998; Lukes, 2005). According to her, Lukes's theory is not completely accurate. According to Hayward, the concept of power should be seen as a network of social boundaries that impact all levels of actors. All the way from the powerless at the bottom, and all the way to the powerful at the top. According to Hayward, this theory will challenge the traditional concept that power has a face in an attempt to "de-face" it (Hayward, 1998).

Even if Lukes's and Hayward's theories mostly contradict each other, there is one thing they both agree upon. Lukes's theory seems more connected to the "power over" aspect of power and according to this type of power, aspects such as domination and force are dominant. However, according to this aspect of power, it all leads to one aspect, namely the aspect of relationships. This form of power is a form of relationship in a way. This view connects with Hayward's view of power. That power is relational and that every relationship exhibits a power relationship (Hayward, 1998; Lukes, 2005).

Another theory that could be used for this investigation is Modernization Theory. This connection could be established through the aspect of soft power. As previously stated, one aspect of soft power is the use of culture to influence the surrounding (Al Thani, 2021; IRIS 2022; O'Kelly, 2022; Sveriges Radio, 2022).

Modernization Theory also connects to the concept of sportswashing since the attempt to launder an image of a nation could be seen as an important aspect of a larger national plan of development. Since often a majority of nations using sportswashing for developmental purposes allegedly have archaic views and traditions that they attempt to launder and improve the national image of the nation. So from this perspective, the national image of a nation could be seen as an important aspect of the overall national strategy of development. A positive national image will improve the nation's power relations and overall soft power. (O'Kelly, 2022).

Two important aspects of Modernization theory are just the development/evolution of culture and power relations. From these specific points of view, the use of Modernization theory to explain how sportswashing can be used to develop a nation's culture can be justified.

Within the modernization theory, a central claim is that cultural-, economic-, and political development go together in mostly predictable patterns. How each aspect of development impacts the other is still debated. According to Marx, it is the economic aspect that forms the cultural and political aspects. Weber, on the other hand, had another perspective. According to Weber, culture was an important factor that could shape economic behavior while being shaped by it (ScienceDirect, n.d; Shrum, 2002). Since this investigation aims to examine how sportswashing could be used to develop the culture of a nation, the theory of modernization seems to fit the purpose of the study.

Methodology

Design

This study is written as a case study. The objectives of this investigation are to examine how sportswashing could be used as a political tool for the cultural development of a nation and its power relations, while also investigating and discussing what the future of sportswashing could look like.

Case studies are performed when one examines and better understands the complexity and nature of a specific case (Bryman, 2012). By definition, a case study should be aiming to go through a detailed analysis of the research objective. Still, there are different types of case studies, for example, the critical-, extreme or longitudinal case (Bryman, 2012).

For this investigation, the type of case study could be defined as a typical/exemplifying case. With this form of case study, the main objective is to apprehend the nature of an everyday situation. Hence, a specific case could be chosen in the interest of exemplifying a broader subject and providing context for specific research questions. The chosen case does not have to be "extreme" in any way (Bryman, 2012).

In this investigation, the choice to primary (but not limited to) focus on the case of Qatar when examining the world of sportswashing was to provide context to the discussions and examinations regarding sportswashing as a phenomenon.

Participants

There are no human participants in this investigation. Since this investigation is a desk study and relies on already published papers and reports, no human participants are deemed to be necessary. For this reason, no personal data have been collected.

Operationalization

Since sportswashing as a term is still quite new and defined in different ways, it is difficult to create concrete, scientific, and academically accepted guidelines as a foundation. This investigation have therefore used previously composed characteristics of sportswashing presented by the authors Archer, Fruh, and Wojtowicz in their academic paper entitled *Sportswashing: Complicity and Corruption* to identify characteristics in the case of Qatar hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, based on their academic research. In their paper, the authors include several characteristics of sportswashing (Archer, et al, 2022).

These include *moral violations, strategic use, potential usefulness, distraction, minimizing - and normalizing the moral violation, positive association, and infiltration of the community*. Moral violation is explained as a moral stain that requires washing, while strategic use is described as managing how the moral violations are being seen by others. One important aspect of this characteristic is the reach of sport today and the reach of power it brings with it. All due to the technical development of broadcasting the events.

The characteristic of potential usefulness refers to the improvement of the national image, while the characteristic of distraction seeks to reduce the number of people opposing the moral violations and increase the number of people exposed to the positive association between the sporting event and the nation/actor. The characteristic of minimalizing and normalizing moral violations refers to the way information regarding these moral violations is being brought to attention and how to influence people to question the legitimacy of the alleged moral violations. These final characteristics could allegedly be achieved through positive association and infiltration of the community (Archer, et al, 2022).

Another important term to define is cultural development. This is a term that could be defined in multiple ways. In this investigation, cultural development will be defined as a process of enabling cultural activities aiming for a more developed and better society with the combination of power relationships.

With the help of these characteristics, definitions, and the case of Qatar, this investigation will examine how sportswashing could be used as a political tool for the cultural

development of a nation and its power relations and to inform and/or remind people of its existence and effects while simultaneously encourage further discussions regarding the topic of sportswashing.

Sources

The objectives of the investigation were to investigate how sportswashing could be used as a political tool for the cultural development of a nation and its power relations, and finally to create a discussion regarding the future of sportswashing. The objectives of this investigation were created so that the investigation would function as a reminder or informer for people regarding the existence of sportswashing and its impact on the world. At the same time, it was important to make clear that this investigation would not aim to persuade the reader in any way, but rather seek to present impartial information and encourage the reader to create his or her own opinions on this topic. This was expectedly achieved by examining previous sporting events where sportswashing allegedly had occurred and trying to find parallels between these cases and the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

The primary source for this investigation was published academic research on the topic of sportswashing. These academic papers were then used to identify specific characteristics associated with sportswashing and that could be found in the case of Qatar. Furthermore, official reports from FIFA were used to bring their perspective to the table. Since there could be a bias from FIFA to present their image in a good light, these reports were used with caution. In addition to these sources, articles from newspapers were also used to add to the pool of references. However, unlike academic reports, there are a lot of articles on sportswashing. In an attempt to limit the number of articles available for this investigation, it was decided that the articles had to be from either *The Guardian* or *Al Jazeera*. This was because both newspapers were available online and were both written in English. These newspapers are generally both accepted on a global scale. The newspapers were also from different parts of the globe (The United Kingdom and The State of Qatar), enabling different perspectives to emerge and challenge the dominant negative view present in the Western world.

Since both *The Guardian* and *Al Jazeera* are arguably large newspapers with widespread influence, there are still large amounts of articles to sort through, so further limitations had to be done. It was decided that the articles had to have been published between 2010 and the present day 2023. This was done since it was decided in 2010 that the

nation of Qatar would be hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and around this period in time, discussions of sportswashing began to slowly rise.

Since this investigation does not intend to force any views on the reader, it was also important to include the same amount of articles from both The Guardian and Al Jazeera. Therefore it was also important that all the articles did not say the same thing. All in an attempt to provide the reader with a nuanced picture of the situation. Since one part of the purpose of this investigation was to present impartial information to the reader so that he or she would have the opportunity to create his or her own opinions on this specific topic, it was important to provide information that did not only repeat itself. Instead, the use of sportswashing as a tool for development could be seen from different points of view. By doing so, the reader could use perspective-taking to understand a larger piece regarding the concept of sportswashing.

The articles that were chosen for this investigation had to be used in a certain way. That means that these articles had to be analyzed in a certain way when they were being read. For this investigation, the chosen approach towards a method of analysis became descriptive analytics for the first and second research questions of this investigation (*How could sportswashing be used as a political tool for the cultural development of a nation?* and *How could sportswashing be used as a political tool for national power relations?*).

A descriptive analysis was approached for the first two research questions since the focus had to be on the past to understand the current phenomenon of sportswashing and to attempt to investigate the first and second research questions of the investigation. Here, more focus was on facts and attempting to find parallels with past events where sportswashing allegedly had occurred. All whilst attempting to explain and investigate how a phenomenon such as sportswashing could be used as a political tool of national development (Lobo, 2023).

For the third and final research question (*What is the future of sportswashing?*), a more predictive analytics approach was deemed to fit best whilst attempting to investigate what the future of sportswashing could look like. Here, more focus is on what lessons could be found in history and how these lessons possibly could predict the future of sportswashing. So instead of just primarily focusing on historical aspects, this approach made it possible to discuss, investigate and predict how sportswashing is going to develop based on historical data (Lobo, 2023).

Delimitations and Limitations

This investigation has a few delimitations and limitations. Delimitations include the choice to primarily focus on one specific nation and one specific event, in this case, Qatar and the FIFA 2022 World Cup. This is a delimitation since sportswashing is global and the World Cup is one of many sporting events used in sportswashing. This investigation chose to only focus on the Men's FIFA World Cup, and not the Women's FIFA World Cup. This is a delimitation and was made to create a limited framework. The possible impact of this investigation regarding the exclusion of women's World Cup could only be speculated about.

One more delimitation is the choice to focus on one specific aspect of national development, namely culture. There are several aspects of national development, including political and economic aspects, that had to be deprioritized by the author. The author is also aware of his personal feelings toward this subject and did what he could in an attempt to prevent the rise of confirmation bias. This could be found in the material used for the investigation, where the aim was to use impartial research to create a nuanced view without imposing views on the reader.

Then some aspects could both be considered to be delimitations and limitations. For example, the author did not travel to Qatar in an attempt to talk to people in power. This was deemed to be next to impossible for a full-time student. No attempts to contact people in power within the Qatari government or FIFA were made by the author. This investigation did instead rely on already published materials. One limitation connecting to this aspect of the investigation is the fact that the term sportswashing only recently has gained mainstream popularity and therefore research on sportswashing dating further back in time would be difficult to find, even if the phenomenon has been around throughout history.

During the last few years, FIFA has faced accusations of alleged corruption. So the choice to use material directly from FIFA could be seen as unreliable. These reports that were used in this investigation were compared with other sources and used with caution. All in an attempt to provide an impartial and nuanced investigation.

Finally, one limitation was the timeframe of this investigation and the fact that it is just "a bachelor thesis" written by one student.

Ethical considerations

During the process of this investigation, an ethical worksheet was filled out and the author did not find any aspects that could cause any physical or mental harm to the reader. Since this

investigation does not include the participation of any human subjects, no participants will be harmed. No personal data has been collected for this investigation. Beyond these reasonings, no additional ethical considerations have been made.

Findings

As previously stated, cultural development could be defined in different ways. In this investigation, the term has been defined as a process of enabling cultural activities aiming for a more developed and better society with the combination of power relationships.

Sportswashing and cultural development

There are several aspects of the cultural development of a nation that could be attributed to sportswashing. One aspect found is the attempt to develop the national image by using sports. This aspect is highlighted by Andersson (2023) and his claims that Qatar used the FIFA World Cup to attract future tourists to the nation. This method of promotion is said to result in both economic and cultural development since the global image of the nation will be improved and increased tourism will spread the positive image and a larger amount of people will mainly associate the nation with positive aspects. By doing this, the less positive aspects of a nation will be laundered and perhaps forgotten entirely (Andersson, 2023).

Moving forward on the topic of promoting cultural development within a nation, one specific historical event where this was stated was found. This was stated by Bairner (2017) that the Chinese government wanted to host the 2000 Olympic Games to raise the national status on the global scale, while simultaneously promoting cultural - and economic development (Bairner, 2017).

According to FIFA, large sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup, could be used to improve several cultural aspects. FIFA states back in the year 2020, that the 2022 FIFA World Cup had the potential to generate opportunities for increased cultural understanding and awareness, between different types of cultures. It was said that this specific FIFA World Cup had the potential to educate the world regarding different values, beliefs, and heritages, resulting in increased acceptance and inclusion around the world (Fédération Internationale de Football Association, 2020).

FIFA did also publish a document back in 2019 where the future role of culture within a process of development was discussed. FIFA set a specific goal that by the year 2030, the necessary knowledge is set to be ensured regarding the promotion of cultural diversity,

culture of peace, and cultural contribution. This was stated in a document regarding the 2022 FIFA World Cup, implying the important role of this specific tournament and large tournaments overall (Fédération Internationale de Football Association, 2019).

National policies could also be developed or shifted due to the use of sport and alleged sportswashing. In the case of Qatar, the national policies have during the build-up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup been reformed and the aim is to continue these reforms after the end of the tournament. Qatar is an example where hosting large sporting events have resulted in a national shift of focus, where now the focus is more on sport, education, and culture. In the case of Qatar, a developmental plan for 2030 has been constructed where sports is said to be one important foundation of that vision of cultural progress (Adil, 2022).

Qatar has seemingly already made progress when it comes to this social - and cultural development. According to a statement made by the FIFA President Gianni Infantino back in 2021, Qatar made social- and cultural developments already when it became the host of the World Cup (Al Jazeera, 2021).

Sports could also be used to challenge the existing norms of a culture and develop new ones. In the case of Qatar, the culture around football was historically mostly seen as a “man’s game”. Today, the culture has instead become more “gender equal” and accepted. This historical shift of culture could have begun with the 2022 FIFA World Cup being awarded to Qatar. This shift in culture has reportedly spread to other sports and laid a foundation for a legacy for female sports in Qatar (Griffin, 2019).

Sportswashing and power relations

Sportswashing could also be used by a nation to develop and/or gain power in power relations. This statement could be strengthened since connections between using sports to gain and extract soft power have been previously found (Andersson, 2022; Andersson, 2023). Sportswashing is said to benefit a host nation of a large sporting event in possibly several ways, including economically and culturally. Sportswashing could be used as a platform for a nation to gain soft power and influence the development and foreign policies (Al Thani, 2021).

A few characteristics of sportswashing were found, including for example the normalization and minimization of moral violation. This was referring to how the way information regarding moral violations is being controlled and brought to attention (Archer, et al, 2022). A nation using sportswashing could in other words influence how people receive

information and therefore encourage people to question the legitimacy of the presented information. By doing so, a nation would minimize and normalize the alleged moral violations (Archer, et al, 2022). This also connects to the sportswashing characteristics of usefulness and distraction, where a nation would use sports to improve the national image and increase the number of people exposed to the positive associations between the sporting event and the nation (Archer, et al, 2022).

The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar could exemplify this aspect, where the Qatari government attempted to use the tournament to improve the national image and reach an increased amount of people with their positive association with the sporting event. All while the moral discussion of the tournament slowly faded away (Skey, 2022).

The same could be said about the 1978 World Cup in Argentina, where the host nation allegedly used the global sporting event to promote Argentina to the world and distract from the wrongdoings of the military regime. When Argentina later went on to win the tournament, wild celebrations arose across the nation and played right into the hands of the military regime in control of the nation. So the combination of Argentina hosting and winning the tournament shifted the focus of the population of Argentina away from the wrongdoings of the military rule (Ellis, 2020).

The 2018 World Cup in Russia could also be linked to the characteristics of sportswashing. Namely, the characteristic of normalization where the rule of Putin was legitimized by many people due to the use of the tournament, which allegedly was constructed through the use of forced labor in a nation with poor LGBT rights records (Ellis, 2020).

A nation using sportswashing could also be attempting to infiltrate the community and therefore normalizing their behavior, values, and actions (Archer, et al, 2022). An example of this could be the state of Qatar pursuing the French football club Paris Saint-Germain FC or the nation of Saudi Arabia pursuing the English football club Newcastle, where the managers and players of these teams often decline to speak out against their owners' misdeeds (Archer, et al, 2022).

Sportswashing could also be used for conserving already existing power relationships. In the case of Qatar and the 2022 World Cup, the tournament was more than a way for the nation to launder its image on the global stage. Sportswashing could be used to gain or conserve allies. In the case of Qatar, a goal of the tournament is said to provide the national allies (including Western allies) with an alibi so that the nations could continue their support

for each other. This support is said to be important for the durability of a regime in power, and also in this case. A nation could use sportswashing as a form of soft power by providing a culture in exchange for hard power (often military power). In this case, the use of the 2022 FIFA World Cup could be seen as a way for Qatar to exchange soft power with hard power (Wearing, 2022).

Sportswashing could therefore be used by a nation to gain and/or conserve relations of power with allies. In the case of Qatar, the nation has allegedly used sportswashing to develop into a large importer of arms, with the national military now being supplied with arms by Western nations. As previously stated, sportswashing is a global phenomenon not only connected to Qatar. According to Wearing, it is a “representative example built by Western power” (Wearing, 2022).

The use of sportswashing could also benefit more actors than just the host nation of a large sporting event. In the case of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, several Western brands were sponsoring the games who also benefited from the World Cup, just as the Qatari government did (Wearing, 2022).

The Future of sportswashing

In the present day, sportswashing is often used as a platform to gain power, laundering the host nation, and securing future investments (Al Thani, 2021; Andersson, 2022; Andersson, 2023). Major sporting events are said to generate a platform that could reach out globally, especially with the technology of today. This platform has the potential of promoting peace and inspiring humanity on a global scale (Al Thani, 2021; Archer, et al, 2022).

Today, sportswashing is a more widely known term. Yet, sportswashing is seemingly rarely discussed when it comes to actions of Western nations (Skey, 2022).

According to Joshua Kimmich, a player on the German national football team, the discussion of a potential boycott came a decade too late. According to him, these types of discussions should have begun back in 2010 when Qatar first was awarded to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. He continues by stating that people who have the opportunity to use their influence to raise awareness about these discussions should do so together (Al Jazeera, 2021).

The former football player for the German national team and the director for the 2024 European championship, Philipp Lahm shares the view Kimmich presented. According to Lahm, football should be aiming to expand to new regions but it has been damaged by the decision to let Qatar host the World Cup. Lahm highlights the important role football has in our community, its educational power, and its ability to increase solidarity. That the World

Cup did represent a festival for the people in the past where like-minded people shared the experience, but today people voluntarily dissociate themselves from the games (Lahm, 2022).

According to the current president of FIFA Gianni Infantino, and officials in Qatar, comments regarding the moral violations of the 2022 FIFA World Cup voiced by Western media and nations, are nothing more than old-fashioned hypocrisy and inaccurate coverage of Qatar and the preparations of the tournament. Infantino states that the nations of Europe should address its past wrongdoings instead of pointing fingers at Qatar and giving lectures on morality (Adil, 2022; Mohamed, 2022). Infantino continued and said that the tournament was a celebration of both football and social inclusion and that FIFA was the only governing body caring for the population of the entire world, even the ones needing it the most (Zidan, 2022).

Analysis

In order to better understand the term sportswashing, it is important to understand that the term sportswashing is quite new even if the method of using sport for its own benefits is older. The exact definition of the term is therefore still up for debate and could slightly vary depending on the source. In order to analyze the findings of the investigation, Lukes's three dimensions of power, Hayward's "De-facing power" theory, as well as the modernization theory will be applied. The use of these theories to investigate how sportswashing could be used as a tool for national development is justified since these theories consist of central and important aspects such as development, culture, power relations, and influence over people (Al Thani, 2021; Hayward, 1998; IRIS 2022; Lukes, 2005; O'Kelly, 2022; ScienceDirect, nd; Shrum, 2002 Sveriges Radio, 2022).

Lukes's three dimensions of Power

According to Lukes's three dimensions of power, one important aspect of power is the ability to have control over the agenda, what gets discussed, and what's not being discussed.

According to the second dimension of power, power over the agenda is a form of structural power that states often have a lot of (Lukes, 2005).

In the article of Archer, et al (2022) it is stated that a nation that uses sportswashing could control what kind of information people are receiving and how they are being received (Archer, et al, 2022). By doing so, the people in power could influence other people's beliefs and desires, in other terms a form of manipulation. A decides what B wants, and

simultaneously undermines free thinking (Lukes, 2005). This could be exemplified in the article by Archer, et al (2022) where it is stated that control over information and how it is presented could encourage people to question the legitimacy of the arguments being presented against the people in power. In the case of Qatar, plenty of the arguments directed towards the host nation were instead met with counter-arguments where the legitimacy of the alleged claims was questioned. By doing so, a nation (in this case Qatar) could both minimalize and normalize the alleged moral violations and justify its actions (Archer, et al, 2022).

Power could also be exercised in more traditional forms, according to Lukes's first dimension of power. In this dimension of power, traditional power could be exemplified as military and political power where alliances are being created or conserved (Lukes, 2005). As stated by Wearing (2022) sportswashing could be used in an attempt to conserve already existing relationships of power. According to Wearing, the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar was no exception to this. Allegedly, Qatar used its position as host of the World Cup for conserving its relations of power with its allies (Wearing, 2022). This national behavior connects to the first dimension of power presented by Lukes, where power relations with allies are in focus, even if no physical military power is exercised (Lukes, 2005; Wearing, 2022).

A form of soft power in the third dimension of power is according to Lukes's theory, the ability to use language as a form of soft power. This method is called discourse and could be used by a nation as a form of soft power to influence and remain in control (Lukes, 2005). This could be exemplified in the case of Qatar, where it is stated that much of the discourse around the tournament has implied that the alleged violations within Qatar are a result of the local culture, which compared to Western views are less modern and developed (Wearing, 2022). These methods of power are connected to Lukes's theory, regardless of the legitimacy of the claims.

Hayward's "De-facing power"

According to this theory, the concept of power is described as a network of social boundaries that impact all levels of actors, from the less powerful at the bottom, all the way to the more powerful at the top (Hayward, 1998).

According to Wearing (2022), this aspect of Hayward's theory could be found in the case of Qatar. Since the nation of Qatar gained independence from Great Britain during the 1970s, Qatar is still influenced by its former rulers. Since independence, civilians with British

nationality still hold positions within the Qatari state and military, influencing national interests in a favorable way for the British (Wearing, 2022).

When Qatar's position as host nation of the 2022 FIFA World Cup was beginning to be questioned, and the state was equated with a nation of evil, power, and corruption, the author Wearer claimed this painted picture was partly inaccurate. To find the truth, one needed to look behind the presented picture or face, to uncover that there was more to it than met the eye. That the current state of Qatar and its culture could be a result of decades of collusion between local elites and Western nations. In other terms, behind the presented face of power, a nation (in this case Qatar) could be influenced and bounded by social networks (Hayward, 1998; Wearing, 2022).

In these instances, sports could be used to foster development. Since Qatar began hosting large sporting events, more young people have allegedly begun practicing sports. Before this period, the number of Qatari women in sports was insignificant due to the alleged constraints of religion and patriarchy. Now, many females of all ages and on all levels are practicing sports and a new culture has begun to develop. All due to the increased amounts of sporting events being hosted in or close to Qatar, and perhaps the 2022 FIFA World Cup was the most important event to catalyze this cultural development (Adil, 2022; Griffin, 2019).

Modernization theory

According to this theory, the development of culture is an important aspect. A central claim is that several aspects of development go together (including aspects of cultural-, economic- and political development) in mostly predictable patterns. According to Karl Marx, it is the economic aspects that form the other aspects of development. However, according to Max Weber, the most important part of development is culture, which could both form and be formed by different aspects of development. According to this theory, societies traditionally develop as they adapt to more modern practices (ScienceDirect, n.d; Shrum, 2002).

When Qatar began hosting large sporting events and simultaneously was awarded the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the nation began to adapt to more modern views and culture. This could be exemplified when Qatar's interest in hosting large sporting events resulted in an increase of female participants in different sports around the nation and the beginning of historical development in culture (Adil, 2022; Griffin, 2019).

This view of cultural development could once again reconnect to the current president of FIFA Gianni Infantino and his quote that Qatar began making cultural developments directly when they were awarded the 2022 FIFA World Cup (Al Jazeera, 2021).

A nation could in other terms use sport as a form of culture to either develop the nation's economy or let the national economy influence cultural development (Adil, 2022; Griffin, 2019; ScienceDirect, n.d; Shrum, 2002).

Discussion

Discussion of Methodology

For this investigation, it was decided to approach the topic of sportswashing through a case study. This was done since it was deemed to be the most effective way from the existing timeframe, delimitations, and limitations of this investigation. In this form of investigation where sportswashing is the focus, another approach could have been taken. In order to gather information for an investigation such as this, one could have used different forms of interviews, surveys, focus groups, or use observations. For this specific investigation, the method of a case study seemed to be the best pick. An investigation based on interviews could have been effective, however since sportswashing is a global phenomenon the investigation would have benefitted if participants therefore were from different parts of the globe. This large scale of investigation would possibly increase the reliability and applicability of the investigation. In this specific case, this investigation done by the student could have resulted in different ways if constructed in other ways. So with these aspects in mind, the reliability and applicability of this investigation will have been impacted in some ways.

With the choice of primarily relying on already published academic work, this investigation did not use any outside participants. How this choice could have impacted the result could only be discussed. The positive aspect of no outside participants was that no personal data were collected, and no participants would get harmed in any way. The less positive aspect was that this investigation relied on information from academic papers, news articles, and official FIFA documents, that had to be interpreted by the author in some way. Even if not consciously, perhaps unconsciously. With outside participants, different perspectives and information would have been available for this investigation. Both for the better and for the worse.

The theories chosen for this investigation could also have impacted the findings and analysis. These theories were chosen from the knowledge of the author. Therefore, there

could be theories that the author does not know about, that possibly could fit better for an investigation like this one.

The choice to primarily focus on the case of Qatar as a case where alleged sportswashing occurred, felt right for the author since it is a recent case. The term sportswashing has seemingly increased in everyday discussions with the case of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, which simplified and justified this choice. The choice to also include references to other historical events was done to show the reader that sportswashing is a historical phenomenon, to add depth to the investigation, and show that Qatar is far from the only nation using sports for political goals. This investigation did also mainly focus on the FIFA World Cup as a sporting event used by nations for sportswashing, with a few references to previous Olympic Games. This was not done to imply that these tournaments are the only ones used for sportswashing. There are several sporting events that nations have used and are using to launder their image, including but not limited to golf tournaments, motorsport races, fighting sports, and the purchase of different sports associations. This investigation did as stated focus on the Men's FIFA World Cup, and not the Women's FIFA World Cup. This was done in an attempt to limit the framework of the otherwise large reach of sportswashing. Why the Men's 2022 FIFA World Cup was primarily focused upon was because it was surrounded by discussions of morality and sportswashing, which resulted in increased awareness of sportswashing. However, one could have included the Women's FIFA World Cup as well. The inclusion of references to previous Olympic Games includes perspectives of both genders.

The method of only relying on already published and available works, and not attempting to gather first-hand information by contacting people in power was deemed to be next to impossible for a full-time student. However, if possible, the inclusion of information presented by people in power in an investigation like this would have been interesting. It was from the perspective of traveling to Qatar or Zurich (where FIFA's headquarter is located) that it was deemed to be next to impossible to gather this first-hand information. However, with today's technology, it could have been interesting to reach out to these people in an attempt to collect first-hand information. Perhaps this could be done in a future investigation with fewer limitations.

Discussion of Findings

The seemingly united view is that sportswashing is used to "launder" the national image of a nation. This is seemingly correct, but not all that sportswashing could be used for. This

investigation led to some interesting findings and analysis regarding the use of sportswashing as a political tool for cultural development and power relations.

One aspect that connects to the understanding of sportswashing being used to launder a national image, was the argument that sportswashing also could be used to change and develop the culture of a nation. This could result in the nation using sportswashing for securing future investments in the form of tourism or political allies. That sport could be seen as a product of a culture that could be used to gain, develop, or conserve power relationships.

This aspect is interesting to discuss since it magnifies the role of culture and sport in politics. That this could argue that the term sport and politics are more closely connected than one might think. Especially since one counter-argument that often was stated against the criticism of Qatar hosting the world cup was that people had to separate between sport and politics.

The findings regarding sportswashing being used to create control over the agenda and information are important since it may impact a large number of people. On one hand, control over information and discussions could result in a nation influencing people's values and beliefs. A nation could use this to normalize and minimize its actions and distract away from the wrongdoings of the nation. On another hand, control over information could result in questions of morality being brought to the surface for discussions.

The findings of this investigation demonstrated aspects that can support the view that sport has the potential to do good as well. Sports could raise cultural awareness and increase understanding between people, cultures, and nations. It could also challenge existing cultures and norms, possibly resulting in a more inclusive and granted society.

One interesting aspect that this investigation did not research, and therefore did not find any concrete supporting information, is the view that sport could aid in integration into a new society. The only aspect that this investigation found regarding this specific topic was a quote from Lahm (2022) where he emphasizes the important role of football in the communities, its ability to increase solidarity, bring people together, and be a tool of education (Lahm, 2022). It is an interesting aspect that this investigation did not investigate any further, therefore would it be interesting to see if future investigations approached this.

Another interesting aspect that this investigation briefly discussed, was the claims that only non-western nations are being accused and questioned when it comes to alleged sportswashing. Perhaps there is some truth to the claims brought forward by FIFA's President, Gianni Infantino. Both the choices of awarding the latest FIFA World Cups to Russia and Qatar were mostly met with critique. It will be interesting to see how the host

nations of the 2026 FIFA World Cup (a shared tournament awarded to Canada, Mexico, and the United States) will be met by the global community. Especially when one could argue that these nations are not morally fit to host a global tournament, for example since the United States still approves of the death penalty.

Nonetheless, the term sportswashing is still a global phenomenon. Its use to divert, launder a national image, and normalize questionably moral actions should arguably not be justified just because it has been done previously.

The purpose of this investigation included an attempt to reduce the academic gap of research on sportswashing which this investigation hopefully has achieved in some aspect.

Discussion of Future Investigations

The purpose of this investigation did include an attempt to research and discuss what the future of sportswashing would look like. During the period that this investigation took place, a few possible future aspects emerged.

As previously stated, an interesting topic for future investigation would be the role of sport in integration. Arguments could be made that this topic would fall under the area of sportswashing, at the same time would counter-arguments be made that it would fit better under an area of social inclusion. However, that is a discussion for future investigations.

One interesting observation done by the author was that during the period of the investigation, the majority of the available information gathered from academic papers seemingly only discussed alleged cases of sportswashing of more traditional non-western nations. Discussions of its meaning could be done. Perhaps it implies that there is no sportswashing in Western nations, or that it is so successful that it has yet to be discovered. Perhaps sportswashing has a different impact in Western nations. On the other hand, it could also mean nothing at all. Nonetheless, since sportswashing is said to be a global phenomenon, future investigations could focus on Western nations as well. Perhaps a comparison between several nations?

In this investigation, there was an assumption that sportswashing actually works. Since this investigation did not investigate this presumed assumption, it would be interesting for future investigations to examine if sportswashing actually works, and if so also how well it does work. Perhaps a connection between how well sportswashing is working and the minority of available data on sportswashing in more traditional Western nations could be found. Perhaps it will depend on which nation uses sportswashing and which nations receive it.

This specific investigation was limited to the timeframe and restrictions of the author. Therefore, an interesting aspect would be if a future investigation would approach sportswashing on a larger scale. Perhaps with the inclusion of human participants, an increased amount of people working on the investigation during a longer period of time and with more resources at their disposal. Perhaps an investigation of this scale could examine if and what kind of positive aspects sportswashing could bring.

One could question why it still would be important to keep researching sportswashing. Arguably, it is still important since it is a global phenomenon that could impact different aspects of society, such as culture, politics, relationships, influence, and power. Sportswashing is an old method, even if it has just begun to appear more frequently in everyday language. It is still important for people to be informed and reminded of the existence of sportswashing and its possible effects. Thereafter, with hopefully impartial information presented, everyone could have the opportunity to freely create their own opinions regarding sportswashing.

Conclusion

The use of sports to achieve political goals, improve a national image and develop a nation is nothing new. Sportswashing as a phenomenon has been around since the dawn of sports and will probably remain for decades. However, the term sportswashing has only been established during the last couple of years.

Sportswashing has been used by nations and actors throughout history to attempt to reshape the public image of a nation. All the way from the Roman Empire and the use of chariot races and gladiators to more recent sporting events such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cups where nations allegedly hoped that the global positive view of the sports would spill over onto the nation itself.

This investigation has discussed and given examples of how sportswashing could be an effective political tool for a nation to hide its alleged wrongdoings and be more positively associated with the hosting of a large sporting event or an international sports association.

A part of the purpose of this investigation was to function both as a reminder for people who already know about sportswashing as a phenomenon, and as an informer for those who did not know about sportswashing and its possible global impact.

While this investigation was conducted, a gap in academic research on sportswashing was established. Another part of the purpose of the investigation was, therefore, to add to the

pool of academic research on sportswashing and simultaneously contribute so that the gap could be closed in the future. This gap is however still large, but since the topic is being discussed more frequently today, the gap will possibly decrease in size with time.

The final part of this paper's purpose was to equip the reader with impartial information so that the reader would feel encouraged to create his or her own views and moral positions. This was due to be done without the investigation forcing values and ideas on the reader. How well this aspect resulted is difficult to examine with concrete data, and will therefore be up to the readers themselves to determine. The author of this investigation knew beforehand of his own values and moral positions on the topic of sportswashing and did his absolute all to make sure that these would not reflect the investigation.

The first of the Research Questions presented in this investigation focused on the aspect of the cultural development of a nation and sportswashing. Here it was discovered that sportswashing could (and historically has) play an important role in the cultural development of a nation. Since sportswashing could be used by a nation to launder its national image and develop a more positive view of its nation on the global stage. This has historically often resulted in both an economic and cultural development boost.

The use of sports for national development has allegedly also had the possibility to generate opportunities where understanding of cultures could develop and be more understood by different forms of already existing cultures.

The use of sports for cultural development within a nation could also lead to existing norms and cultures being challenged. As a result of this, new norms and cultures could emerge with the potential to lead to cultural shifts and a more widespread acceptance of equality.

The second of the Research Questions presented in this investigation focused on the aspect of the power relations of a nation and sportswashing. Here it was discovered that sports could be used by a nation to either develop, gain, or conserve already existing power relations and national allies. It was also discovered in this investigation that a nation could use its culture (in this case sports) as a form of currency to exchange soft power with more traditional "hard power" (for example military resources).

Sports and sportswashing could also function as a platform for a nation to influence foreign policies and national development. By using sportswashing, a nation could also gain the power to create control. By creating control and influence over people, the nation could normalize and minimalize alleged moral violations. A nation could also use the influence of

sports as a distraction and increase the number of people being exposed to the laundered and more positive national image connected to the sporting event.

It was also discovered that the use of sports to impact power relations could possibly benefit more actors than just the host nation of a large sporting event, for example, allies of a nation and sponsors of a sporting event.

The third (and final) of the Research Questions presented in this investigation, instead focused on the future of sportswashing. During this aspect of the investigation, it was established that hosting large sporting events results in a global platform, with the potential of promoting a message of peace and humanity.

It was also stated that discussions of sportswashing have developed and become more frequently used in everyday life. Since the discussions of sportswashing have become more frequent, the future of sportswashing could perhaps include events hosted by any nation where alleged sportswashing has occurred, and not just a majority of nations that traditionally are seen as "non-western" nations.

One conclusion could be that sportswashing as a method has positive potential. What one could argue for is that there is nothing wrong with the method of sportswashing per se and that it works seemingly fine on a large scale. On the other hand, one may argue about moral positions that may come with the use of sportswashing and that each and every person has to decide for themselves where they morally stand on these topics.

This highlights the complexity of sportswashing. It is not just black or white. The reality is more complicated than just being binary and it is something that future investigations of sportswashing could contemplate.

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