TRT WORLD research centre

Beitar and Beyond:
The United Arab Emirates and Qatar's use of Football as Soft Power

Anna Murphy

(Howard Walker - Anadolu Agency)

In 2008, Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a member of Abu Dhabi's ruling family, formed the City Football Group as a branch of the private investment and development company known as the Abu Dhabi United Group to facilitate the purchase of English football team Manchester City F.C.. In 2012, Qatar Sports Investments, a subsidiary of the Qatar sovereign wealth fund, purchased the French team Paris Saint-Germain. In the decade since these acquisitions, Manchester City and PSG have become fascinating and lucrative examples of soft power for the two Gulf states. In September of 2020, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Nahyan, a lesser-known member of Abu Dhabi's ruling family, purchased a 50 per cent stake in Beitar Jerusalem F.C, an Israeli football team. This investment has shed light on the shifting economic relations between Israel and the UAE and highlighted the unique influence of football in Israeli politics. This policy outlook examines the UAE and Qatar's investment in football clubs in Europe and Israel as two distinct and developing modes of soft power.

Background

The team that currently sits atop the English Premier League, Manchester City, has been lauded as one of the most exciting, star-studded sides in European football today. Thousands of miles away, household names of the past — like Barcelona and Spanish national team star Xavi — manage heavily-funded and ambitious teams from the same stadiums that will most likely host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. At first glance, these distinct moments in football do not reveal themselves as the deeply interconnected and competing efforts of two neighbouring nations in the Middle East. Yet, a further look into the finances and structures in top-tier over the last few years reveals extensive investment from the United Arab Emirates and Qatar in the world's most popular sport. The billions of euros that have been funnelled into the global game reflect the UAE and Qatar's wide-scale efforts to diversify their financial portfolios in anticipation of a world where oil and gas are no longer the financial boons they once were. The money also reflects the growing allure of owning a football club that has prompted some of the world's wealthiest individuals — and now countries — to purchase stakes.

In 2008, Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan formed the City Football Group (CFG) as a branch of the brand new private investment and development company known as the Abu Dhabi United Group (ADUG). Sheikh Mansour, a member of the Abu Dhabi royal family, created City Football Group to facilitate the purchase of English side Manchester City F.C.. Upon purchasing the club, Sheikh Mansour poured millions of pounds into it, making it one of the first European football clubs to be owned by someone with a direct link to the governing body of a country. In 2012, the Qatar Sports Investments (QSI), a subsidiary of Qatar's sovereign wealth fund, bought the French side Paris Saint-Germain F.C.. QSI, under the leadership of chairman Nasser Al Khelaifi, also facilitated some of the largest investments football has ever seen, buying global stars like Neymar Jr. and Kylian Mbappé and transforming the PSG brand. Owning a football club is a notoriously financially draining enterprise and there is a notable past of foreign nationals who purchase European clubs being met with fierce opposition from fans. Yet, so far, both Manchester City and PSG appear to have been long-term investments worth making, so much so that they have become known as prominent, if not token, examples of soft power in the 21st century. The two sides reflect popular lenses through which to study future Gulf investment strategies and gain insight into their leaders' interests and priorities.

The global success of CFG and QSI's initiatives — as well as efforts to fund football at home — has popularised concerns over "sports washing", a term popularised by Amnesty International that refers to the efforts of countries to use sport, often abroad, to divert attention from problematic domestic and foreign policies. This phenomenon has been granted greater recent attention concerning both the UAE's involvement in the war in Yemen and Qatar's treatment of workers involved in the preparation for the 2022 World Cup. Both states have been accused of utilising their successful stakes in European football to divert focus from these realities. Yet, the gravity of this concern has mainly culminated in few consequential calls to action. In other words, the UAE and Qatar, for the most part, successfully navigated this calculated and extensive investment in two of the world's most successful football clubs, rendering it a model for others to follow.

In September 2020, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Nahyan, a lesser-known member of the Abu Dhabi royal family, purchased a 50 per cent stake in Beitar Jerusalem F.C.. At first, this announcement went relatively unnoticed by the international press. While Beitar is one of the "big four" clubs in the Israeli Premier League it has limited global recognition. Yet, what Beitar lacks in European accolades and a worldwide fan base it makes up for by way of its fiercely political history: Beitar Jerusalem has long been a "bastion" of Israel's right-wing politics. It is also the only team in the Israeli Premier League to have never signed an Arab player. Moreover, a branch of its fan base, known as 'La Familia', has gained global recognition for its racism and Islamophobia. Recently, it was announced that this deal was put on hold due to concerns over the liquidity of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa's assets. However, both sides of the agreement have remained steadfast in their desire for the purchase to continue. This moment in transnational football investment falls far beyond the standard operating procedure of the Emirati's soft power ambitions: Sheikh Mansour and the City Football Group are nowhere to be seen, Israel lacks a league with an immediately foreseeable trajectory for substantial growth, and Beitar Jerusalem is possibly the most anti-Arab side in the global game. Yet, this purchase may reflect the beginnings of an attempted new form of football diplomacy, sparked by the recent normalisation of ties between the UAE and Israel. This policy outlook examines the UAE and Qatar's investment in football clubs in Europe and Israel as two modes of soft power that differ in intent, scope, and strategy.

The making of Manchester City

When Sheikh Mansour and the City Football Group purchased Manchester City in 2008, the club was surely experiencing 'little-brother syndrome' with respect to its neighbour, Manchester United. At the time, United was a well-funded and star-studded side experiencing almost unmatchable success: that year, United not only topped the English Premier League but also won the UEFA Champions League, possibly the most respected club football tournament in the world. Manchester City, in contrast, placed in the middle of the EPL and did not qualify for the

Manchester City's manager Josep Guardiola Sala. (Burak Akbulut - Anadolu Agency)

Champions League. Yet, in the decade under CFG ownership, Manchester City has completely transformed its financial, athletic, and public infrastructure. According to the [Deloitte Football Money League](), Manchester City generated 611 million Euros in revenue over the 2018/2019 football season.[1] According to the 2020 Brand Finance Football Annual Report, its skyrocket up to the 5th most valuable football club since CFG's takeover represents the fastest growth in value in the world. Per custom, all decisions in football are results-driven, and with the influx of finances, Manchester City has also seen success in the Premier League — winning the title for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 seasons — and in Europe. In 2013, City qualified for the knockout stage in the Champions League for the first time since 1968 and has consistently made successful appearances in the tournament since.

Furthermore, Sheikh Mansour is no man behind the curtain; City Football Group has created a multinational investment model with seemingly no upper financial limit. They have secured some of football's top talent on and off the field — including Belgian midfielder Kevin De Bruyne, English winger Raheem Sterling, and former Barcelona-great turned manager Pep Guardiola — for its flagship club Manchester City, while also launching or investing in other clubs on five continents, including New York F.C. and Mumbai City F.C.. It is safe to say that Sheikh Mansour has not only challenged the historical convention that football is not often a good investment but has also launched a global franchise with state-backing that does not appear interested in slowing down any time soon.

The presence of money is not new in the EPL; with average seasonal revenue of over 7 billion pounds (including club revenue and the lower three divisions), it is the most lucrative football league in the world. Yet, City Football Group appears poised to take the scale and style of those investments to new heights. In 2014, local Manchester press began to report that the ADUG had signed a deal with the Manchester City Council (not to be confused with the football club) agreeing to invest up to 1 billion pounds in real estate throughout the city, particularly near Manchester City's Etihad Stadium. Sheikh Mansour's investment in City's future was literally spilling out beyond the walls of the institution and into the city that hosts it. This anecdotal insight into the scope of Sheikh Mansour's ambitions for the club highlight exactly why it is not an exaggeration to suggest that the UAE has transformed the rules and strategies of football financing. Yet, the logical question follows of why exactly the small Gulf state would pour so much money into a dreary city in the north of England.

There is a long-held prestige of owning a football club, particularly one in the English Premier League, that has drawn in wealthy investors from around the world. Manchester United is jointly owned by the Glazer family, American business moguls who bought the club in 2005. Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich owns the London side, Chelsea. Since 2018, there have been rumours that Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman is attempting to purchase Manchester United, but no such sale has yet taken place. In fact, prior to Sheikh Mansour, Manchester City was owned by a company controlled by a former Prime Minister of Thailand. In a certain way, owners, like players and managers, become part of these teams' histories, and their time with the club is often looked back on and judged in accordance with their contributions.

Of course, the other side of CFG's investment in the EPL is profit, and with it, influence over the financial, cultural, and even political institutions across Europe. This sway refers to the aforementioned soft power identified by analysts who have observed the UAE's integration into the sport over the last decade. According to one such analyst, this type of soft power investment is how countries in the Gulf "tend to do diplomacy and business". If the name of the game is influence through money, football has become a vessel for it, but instead of parliaments and political treaties, the pursuit of influence has been driven by dominating the global football transfer markets, establishing beneficial relationships with UEFA and FIFA, securing the most lucrative sponsorship deals for football kits, stadiums, and matchday events, and generating hundreds of millions of pounds in revenue that is then used to expand CFG and Sheikh Mansour's ambitions further around the world.

1 Note, I have used the 2018-2019 season figures instead of the 2019-2020 results because of the irregular results of the latter report due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

You've got something on your shirt

There is no greater insight into the UAE's overarching investment model with respect to Manchester City than the framework of sponsorships that exist both within and outside of the club. Over the last decade, Etihad Airways and Emirates – owned by the ruling families of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, respectively - have emerged as leading sponsors across Europe. Etihad's logo can be found not only on Manchester City's kit but also proudly atop their home ground — a ten-year collective sponsorship deal made in 2011 reportedly worth 400 million pounds. This deal is one of the biggest of its kind; the accuracy of its market value has been called into question, as the sponsorship to ownership streamline of funds all heavily feature senior members of the Abu Dhabi royal family. This facet of the sponsorship market and its connection to UEFA's Financial Fair Play regulations will be subsequently explored.

However, Dubai-owned Emirates, the largest airline in the world, has secured global sponsorship deals that collectively dwarf Eithad's agreements. Emirates' multinational sponsorship presence showcases that while Manchester City is the pinnacle of CFG's goals, there is also a highly active collective Emirati influence being developed that extends to every major European league. Emirates sponsors the shirts of some of the world's top sides for eye-watering annual fees that include, Real Madrid for $85 million annually — the largest shirt sponsorship deal in history — Arsenal for $42 million, AC Milan for $20 million, and (until 2019) Qatar-owned PSG for $31 million per year. This hefty investment has rendered Emirates will the highest level of exposure and brand awareness of all leading sponsors. These numbers demonstrate how companies like Emirates and Etihad are moving to raise the stakes and set the value of the football sponsorship game, an agenda that ultimately benefits their interests in their companies and their football teams.

Other examples of soft power through forms of sponsorship include the hosting of winter training for top clubs in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the promotion of campaigns for the UAE as a sight of tourism and investment, and the push for public visibility for figures like Sheikh Mansour in the EPL, UEFA, and FIFA. These instances cannot be fully explored within the scope of this outlook, however, they collectively contribute to the depiction of the UAE as a state with immeasurable influence over football in England through purely financial means.

Beitar Jerusalem F.C.

Thousands of miles away from the multi-million-pound establishment that is Manchester City, the Israel Football Association released a report revealing that almost half of the footballers in the Israeli Premier League earn less per season than the average national salary. While, like many countries, Israeli football has its share of top-class players and respected teams, the Israeli version of the sport has little in common with the EPL. Founded in 1999, the Israeli Premier League lacks the clout of the older European leagues and the potential for investment of the Chinese and Indian leagues. Yet, what it lacks in international recognition, it more than makes up for in influence over politics. Beitar Jerusalem F.C. was first formed in 1936 and has enjoyed a highly political and deeply controversial presence in the sport ever since. The side's fans, including its ultra-nationalist branch known as 'La Familia', are deeply connected to right-wing politics, namely the Likud party, and have a well-documented history of racism, anti-Arab sentiment, and Islamophobia. The notoriety of the fans has become as famous as the regular appearances of senior members of the Israeli government at the club's matches. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Reuven Rivlin, and former Minister of Defence and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman — to name a few — are well-known fans and patrons of the club. A 2016 UK-Israeli documentary film entitled "Forever Pure" — named after a banner made by members of La Familia in opposition to Muslim players on the team — follows one of Beitar's season immediately following the signing of two Chechen players. The film depicts the widespread animosity and violence demonstrated by La Familia in response to the signing that ultimately results in the mass boycotting of the team, major losses of matches, the threatening of the team's management and captain, and the ultimate exit of the two Chechen players from Israeli football.

This is the team that Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Nahyan announced his intentions to invest a 50 per cent stake in. The Emirati royal and the Israeli club are undoubtedly an odd pairing, but to consider this coincidental is to underestimate the levels of research that occur prior to investment in international clubs, as well as to ignore Beitar's particular political history. The attempted-deal has occurred in the backdrop of UAE-Israeli normalisation; Sheikh Hamad's efforts to invest in the club represent a new form of soft power through football aimed at navigating a new era in UAE-Israeli relations. As demonstrated with CFG and Manchester City, the Emiratis have a history of investment as a form of not only business but diplomacy. However, the unique political connection between Israeli football and politics creates an opportunity for this investment to have a more immediate political influence, particularly if that club is directly connected to Netanyahu and the Likud party.

While the deal is temporarily frozen as Sheikh Hamad addresses concerns over his stated finances, some of the Royal's remarks on the attempted purchase already shed some light on the increasingly political nature of this transaction. When asked about his interest investment in Beitar, the Sheikh was quoted saying, "I am thrilled to be a partner in such a glorious club that I have heard so much of and in such a great city, the capital of Israel and one of the holiest cities in the world." This direct reference to Jerusalem as the capital of Israel is a far cry from the hands-off, financially driven investment strategy of Sheikh Mansour and the CFG. Yet, this is not the first time current events in relation to Jerusalem have been reflected in Beitar's fan base. After former President Trump announced the move of the American embassy to Jerusalem, Beitar declared that they would be renaming the club as "Beitar Trump Jerusalem". This immediate connection between politics and Beitar is readily recognised among the club's management. Former owner Arcadi Gaydamak once stated that "Beitar has more fans than all other clubs in Israel combined, and that is why it is a very interesting propaganda tool". The club's perceived ability to influence large numbers of Israelis, as well as gain access to senior members of the government, is a reality that should be paid attention to as the UAE and Israel begin to strengthen their political, financial, and cultural ties. If the purchase clears, and the levels of investment in Beitar measure even a fraction of the funds dedicated towards Manchester City and CFG, then the role of Israeli football as a platform of Emirati influence is likely to expand. Unlike the UAE's investment in Europe, this mode of soft power may have a more direct political line.

Moreover, the UAE-Israel football-based relationship can be seen in other, admittedly smaller, moments of collaboration. The Israeli Professional Football League and UAE Pro League recently announced a "memorandum of understanding" and highlighted plans for "promotion, sports technologies and social and commercial collaborations" in the game. There have also been reported plans for Israeli and Emirati sides to engage in friendly matches. In September 2020, Israeli player Dia Saba signed with Al-Nasr Dubai, becoming the first Israeli footballer to play in an Arab country — a deal announced just weeks after the two states normalised relations. In November of 2020, the Dubai Sports Council announced that former Israeli national team and Chelsea coach Avram Grant would be directly collaborating with the Council to improve the UAE's professional leagues. These announcements, which are by no means the full extent of measures launched between the two states, begin to paint a picture of collaboration driven by football. It exhibits how both the UAE and Israel aim to invest in their respective domestic football leagues, establish bilateral economic bonds within the realm of sports, and, as is the case of Beitar, potentially use football as a platform for deeper political relations.

From Doha to Paris: Qatar's investment in professional football

If Sheikh Mansour and the CFG invented the Gulf's approach to soft power through football, the Qatar Sports Investment surely created the latest model. In 2012, the state-funded QSI purchased Paris Saint-Germain after identifying a promise in the team and its host city, as well as a lack of investment in the French league in contrast to its English and Spanish counterparts. As was the case with Sheikh Mansour and Manchester City, QSI's investment — spearheaded by Chairman of QSI and now-president of PSG Nasser Al Khelaifi — in the French side has driven a rapid rise in revenue. According to the Deloitte Football Money League, in the 2018/2019 season, PSG, generating 636 million euros (560.5 million GBP), actually surpassed Manchester City in annual revenue to become the 5th most lucrative club in the world. In comparison, the next ranked French club, Olympique Lyonnais (colloquially known as Lyon), is estimated to have generated a seasonal revenue of 220.8 million euros. PSG's rate of commercial revenue growth is one of the highest in football history, a growth directly funded by the sovereign wealth fund of one of the wealthiest nations in the world. As with CFG and Manchester City, Qatar's ambitions for PSG reflect a willingness to contribute unprecedented levels of investment in exchange for results. And like Manchester City, PSG has largely delivered them.

Since 2012, PSG has won Ligue 1 every year barring the 2016-2017 season; this resounding statistic showcases exactly how the side has come to dominate French football. In 2017, PSG completed a 222 million euro transfer to bring Brazilian star forward Neymar to its side; the deal broke the record for the all-time highest fee for a player. Shortly after, PSG signed Kylian Mbappé for 180 million euros, a collective purchase worth over 400 million euros. The two, along with a further star-studded squad, have turned PSG's attention beyond success at home, to Europe. While the side has yet to win the UEFA Champion's League, they successfully reached the final for the first time in the 2019-2020 season,

Neymar JR. (L) and Kylian Mbappe of PSG gesture during the UEFA Champions League final football match. (Michael Regan / UEFA / Handout - Anadolu Agency) and as of today, are still contenders for the 2020-2021 title. Success in the Champion's League is largely viewed as the pinnacle of club football success, a remarkable feat. Yet, PSG's rise to such heights is no fluke: when Qatar first purchased the club in 2012, a myriad of articles emerged either praising or lamenting the levels of investment introduced to French football. One such piece in the New York Times included a quote from Jacques Vendroux, the director of sports coverage for France's public radio stations. "In five years, PSG is going to clobber everyone", Vendroux responded when asked about his predictions for Qatar's new club. And while the Parisian team is still working towards European titles, its domestic dominance simply reflects an obvious fact: the contribution of that much money towards a football team will almost certainly deliver success on a global scale. This is the reality that likely motivates Qatar's efforts to make their side the envy of clubs, and in turn fans, all over the world.

Yet, as demonstrated with Manchester City, Qatar is not the only state to use money for sway in the sports world, and so QSI has worked to bolster a fan base and generate revenue in innovative ways. PSG has been at the forefront of cutting-edge collaborations and branding, including the most recent announcements regarding collaboration with Jordan Brand and the opening of a series of PSG stores in Japan. The former has generated particular buzz: in a special segment for BT Sport, Rio Ferdinand, a former England and Manchester United legend, travelled to Paris to interview several figures in the club. One of the featured parts of the episode showcases the iconic PSG Paris store location and the Jordan collaboration. There is a particular moment in which Ferdinand refers to his children wanting him to use his connections to acquire some of the products in the latest edition of the sold-out collaboration line. Ferdinand remarks that this sentiment is foreign to the football star; in the past, young people sought the kits of the players. In 2020, they want the Jordan line. The episode offers insight, admittedly anecdotal, into one of the methods through which PSG is attempting to use its fortunate backers to not only invest in the game, but change it, and expand brand awareness in the process. As PSG works to develop its fan base and market the club as not just a team, but a 'lifestyle', it hopes that this move will facilitate the continued growth of its revenue rates necessary for its future ambitions.

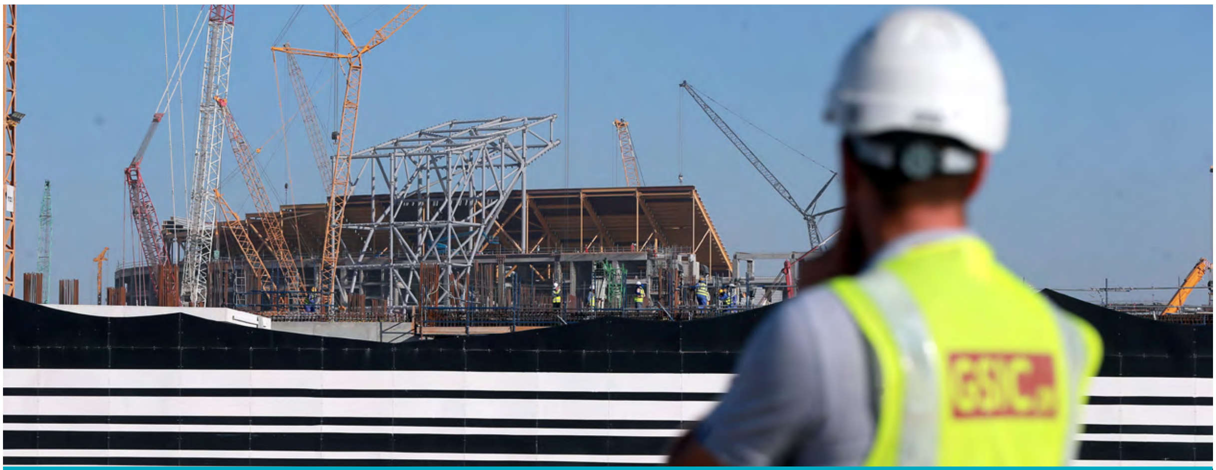
Show me the money

Given the record rates of capital that have been injected into the world of football, questions over the legality and morality of the levels of investment have arisen, particularly in relation to UEFA's Financial Fair Play rules. FFP, in a nutshell, dictates that clubs cannot spend more than they earn, and both PSG and Manchester City's record-breaking signings have raised some red flags. In 2017, an investigation was launched into PSG's finances. The initial lead investigator, however, declared no wrongdoing from the French club and its Qatari financiers, despite extensive evidence suggesting otherwise. After a re-examination was demanded by the judge, Cunha Rodrigues, who deemed the investigation's findings "manifestly erroneous", PSG fought the ruling and succeeded in avoiding any penalties or declarations of wrongdoing. Not-so-coincidentally, Nasser Al Khelaifi, chairman of QSI and president of PSG, is a member of UEFA's executive committee — an entity heavily involved in FFP violation investigations. Corruption in football is not a new phenomenon, nor one unique to wealthy foreign investors. Manchester City also underwent its own FFP violation investigation. Initially, UEFA found the club guilty and City was both fined and temporarily banned from the Champion's League. In July of 2020, however, the ban was lifted by the Court of Arbitration of Sport. Both PSG and Manchester City are actively competing in the 2020/2021 Champions League competition.

Furthermore, while PSG and Manchester City are located thousands of miles away from their owners, they have still been subjected to the consequences of Gulf regional politics. Dubai-based Emirates has famously been the primary kit sponsor for PSG since 2006. In 2018, however, PSG announced that they would not be renewing the multi-million-dollar sponsorship with the airline in favour of a 65 million euro per year deal with French hospitality giant Accor. The move occurred in the middle of the UAE-support "blockade" of Qatar, and the sponsorship decision has been largely attributed to fallout from the regional conflict. However, Accor's CEO Sebastien Bazin has also briefly served as president of the French club. These two components form an accurate depiction of the complex ways in which the leadership and finances of these clubs are determined, a reality that continues to trouble many witnessing the meteoric rise of both Gulf-sponsored teams.

The sports capital of the world

Qatar has the highest investment per capita in football in the world. While a part of this can be attributed to PSG and other sports investments abroad, the Gulf nation has also heavily prioritised the development of sports within its borders. This is not unique in the region; the UAE, for example, has steadily increased football funding — as many of the teams are owned by members of the royal family — over the last decade. For both states, a significant part of that investment is aimed at improving homegrown players to compete for the national team and in foreign leagues, as well as signing foreign stars to domestic teams. However, the scope of Qatar's efforts is unparalleled. In short, Qatar has had a public plan to brand itself as the sports capital of the world for decades. This approach is intended to boost the state's, generate revenue from tourism, and gain access to influential global sports organisations, such as FIFA. With all of these efforts, steady streams of money have fol-



Construction workers are seen outside the construction site of the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, Qatar on June 20, 2017. The stadium will be a venue for the FIFA World Cup 2022. (Mohamed Farag - Anadolu Agency)

lowed. When Qatar secured host status for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, many reacted in shock. That shock was soon followed by anger as reports of mistreatment and abuse of migrant workers hired to aid preparation for that World Cup reached the foreign press. Coverage of those abuses has continued since. Last month, the Guardian published an analysis alleging that 6,500 migrant workers, predominantly from South Asia, had died since Qatar was awarded the World Cup. These numbers, it was reported, equate to an average of 12 workers from South Asian nations dying each week since December of 2010, when Qatar was granted host status. NGOs, press, and some foreign leaders have expressed concern over these findings, particularly with regards to the former Kafala system and lack of institutional pressure to investigate these claims. In over a decade since the announcement, Qatar has yet to experience repercussions for these documented abuses. And as the world prepares for next summer, Qatar's successful efforts to bring attention to football at home, while masking the deadly fallout of these efforts, embodies its use of sports washing and soft power abroad.

The funding, however, does not stop there. Qatar has poured billions of dollars into the development of its QNB Stars League (or Premier League) with the hopes of bringing it the success of PSG. For the Qatar Premier League, significant sums of money have been dedicated to securing big-name foreign players. The Qatar Football Association allocated 10 million dollars to each Premier League team to purchase famous footballers from around the world. This effort prompted the introduction of a myriad of football stars, including former Barcelona player and current Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola, to the league. More recently, former Spanish footballer Xavi joined Al Sadd SC as manager. In fact, all top three teams in the Premier League have management and squads heavily populated with foreign players. The internationalising of the league has taken place within the setting of newly built world-class facilities. In turn, these stadiums and training grounds have attached some of the world's top clubs, including German powerhouse Bayern Munich, for winter training and exhibition matches. Other developing football leagues have also utilised this method, but Qatar appears to be at the forefront of the initiative. When viewed in conjunction with its efforts at PSG and other clubs around the world, Qatar's foreign policy outlook appears heavily influenced by the presence, purpose, and potential strength of its soft power around the world.

Conclusion

This policy outlook examined the UAE and Qatar's investment in football clubs in Europe and Israel as varying modes of soft power. In analysing Manchester City and PSG, similar, but competing strategies of investment can be observed as senior figures in both states aim to curate the world's best football club. While Sheikh Mansour and the CFG's approach has focused its operations on dominating Europe's most lucrative football league, Qatar Sports Investments has utilised innovative methods to bolster the French league and bring domestic success to Europe. However, both teams represent models of soft power that have deeply impacted European corporations, institutions, and even (per the case with Manchester) the makeup of cities. In contrast, the recent attempted investment in Beitar Jerusalem showcases a new format of soft power through sport, one more deeply and directly connected to politics. The history and political connection of Beitar to the Likud Party, as well as their fans' infamous reputation, has created a starkly different investment landscape for the Gulf nation. As this event continues to unfold, the direct consequences of the Beitar-UAE relationship may become a notable precedent for extensive football-driven collaboration between Israel and the UAE. This mode of diplomacy showcases the versatility of soft power through football, while also identifying key areas of concern over the ability of money and politics to influence, or even corrupt, the global game.