



Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed)

Qatar's Use of Soft Power Has Led to a 21st Century Slave State: A Leadership Dilemma

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Abstract

In recent years the Arab Gulf States and more specifically Qatar, has been demonstrating soft power by luring different international institutions into its state in order to form a better standing internationally. They have demonstrated this by bidding to host some of the world's largest sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup. Through this act; Qatar has been successful in enhancing its internal and external reputations for the following three reasons. First, by hosting these large events the country's economy and international character will gain an advantage. The revenue for each country can increase in size, which will lead to a stronger economy. Second, it attracts potential investors who will see a modern competitive economy. Lastly, it will showcase a strong state that will be able to advertise its developments, products, and exports to the world. And as a result Qatar's economy will continue to flourish. However, the amount of mistreat, cruelty, and abuse that the millions of migrant workers who are laboring on the infrastructures for the world cup should not be forgotten. Qatar is unrightfully using soft power by acting as a '21st century slave state' and if this issue is not addressed then the title of hosting the 2022 World Cup will be stripped from them.

Key words: Qatar, Soft Power, Leadership, Economy

Qatar, the richest country in the world per head population has proven to be powerful after being given the right to host the 2022 World Cup. Within the region, many applaud Qatar for having this exceptional opportunity to expose Arab culture while others believe that it's a mistake after learning about the corruption and mistreatment of laborers who are working on the infrastructures for the World Cup.

The 2022 World Cup has kicked off a multibillion-dollar construction boom in Qatar. For example, hotels, roads, and attractions are being built in order to accommodate the huge crowd that will be attending the World Cup. Behind the scenes, there are over a million migrant laborers that are toiling on the infrastructures of the World Cup in order to turn the Emir's vision into a reality. However, after an investigation that was done by The Guardian in 2013, the world

was exposed to a reality that Qatar chose to shut-off. The innocent migrant workers who work endlessly are being forced to labor under very strenuous conditions in which they are subjected to cruelty and inhumane acts, things that even animals would not be put through.

Workers are pressured to work 12 hours a day and seven days a week, under extreme heat conditions in order to meet the demands of their employers. They are denied free drinking water and hunger is prevalent among the workers. And if they do not show up to work they are beaten, threatened to be deported, or deprived of their salary. Even though most workers are paid poorly, many are not even paid because their employers retain their salaries for months on end. This is truly an appalling discovery that was made because one would not expect a wealthy country that wants to stand on the same pedestal as other Western Civilizations such as the U.S., France, and England to have such low standards for their workers. What western civilization is known for violating their workers from basic human rights and abusing them?

Does Qatar actually believe that they can follow the footsteps of these successful countries by committing inhumane acts upon desperate laborers? It has become clear that the Qatari government approves of the violence that is going on because the workers are faced with the same conditions in the labor camps in which they live in. In a labor camp with over 2000 men, it has been noticed that 12 or more men are forced to sleep in one room. There is an overpowering smell of excrement, no Western-style toilets but holes in the floor, dirty water and sewage which flows under the feet's of the workers, and they only have salt water to drink and cook with. There are no signs of freezers or fridges except for filthy grills and stoves that they cook on. Most of the camps do not have air conditioning or irregular water and electricity supply. Moreover, it has become evident that these men are living in poor, overcrowded conditions and are overworked in a brutal environment.

Ultimately, these conditions have affected the vast majority of the workers because of the pressure and high levels of stress that they experience. The filthy and repulsive living environments have caused many workers to get sick and the terror has led to deadly diseases such as heart disease and failure. In fact, hundreds of workers have actually died from heart failure in the past two years—many of whom are young men who never had a history of such illnesses.

As a result of their mistreatment, many workers wish to go back to their countries. Unfortunately, because they work under the Kafala system, which is equivalent to modern day slavery, they are unable to make a move. Under this system, workers cannot leave the country without an exit visa and they can't get an exit visa without their employer's approval. This system is depriving workers from their basic human rights by holding them under confinement until the job is complete. But the reality of this issue is that it will take years to complete the infrastructures for the World Cup and so the laborers will continue to suffer.

Due to the harsh working environment and unbearable conditions of the labor camps, the lives of innocent individuals are being taken away. This is unacceptable and Qatar should be reprimanded for having their name associated with this type of act. The International Trade Union Confederation has confirmed that Qatar will cost the lives of at least 4,000 migrant workers before a ball is even kicked in the World Cup 2022. Evidentially, Qatar's ignorance to this cause is affecting a huge population. So, how will the Qatari leadership justify all of the lives

that are being lost? Will they continue to sweep this issue underneath the rug or will they make changes in order to retain their socio-identity and improve lives across the kingdom?

As a 21st century slave state, Qatar has been unrightfully been using soft power to administer fear and misery in the lives of innocent individuals as a means of accomplishing their own goals. Consequently, their avoidance to this crucial issue has caused many to question whether they deserve to host the World Cup. Hence, Qatar needs to address this issue by revitalizing the current state of their workers or else the title of hosting the 2022 World Cup will be stripped from them.