Who's winning? Authoritarian soft power through Sports Mega-Events

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WHO'S WINNING?

AUTHORITARIAN SOFT POWER THROUGH SPORTS MEGA-EVENTS

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Abstract

Following the controversy surrounding Qatar's winning bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup, this thesis sets out to investigate the extent to which Qatar was able to harness soft power through its hosting of this global competition. The research gap from which this research stems is that of authoritarians' struggle in wielding soft power. Sports, being a field that is frequently instrumentalized for political purposes, is argued to be an attractive venue for authoritarians to overcome this struggle. Taking the fields of soft power, sports diplomacy, and Sports Mega-Event hosting as its theoretical foundations and the Sports Diplomacy Model by Abdi et al. (2018) as its design, this research uncovers observable implications of successful soft power wielding by Qatar. These implications are linked to state visits undertaken and received by Qatar, bilateral investment treaties Qatar has signed, and Qatari participation in international fora. The timeline spans from 2012 to 2022 and within the relatively small sample yielded by this research, slight increases in all three variables indicate that some degree of soft power was successfully harnessed by Qatar through its hosting of the World Cup.

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Introduction

Whoever was to lift the trophy in exhilarated triumph amidst a sea of waving flags, Qatar had won. While Argentina would eventually take the glory of victory of the 2022 FIFA World Cup back with it to Buenos Aires, the real victory, so it was argued, was firmly anchored in Doha (Walker, 2022). The competition to which was referred here was strongly tethered to the World Cup but constituted a contest in its own right. And instead of large sums of money, national pride, and a polished trophy, the winner is granted the power of attraction. Or so it is assumed.

In gathering attention and inspiring others to follow one's lead, *soft power* has become a crux of asserting one's global position. In the aftermath of the Cold War, focus was shifted from vanquishing a rival through means of force to galvanizing spectators in support against said rival, the so-called "hearts and minds" argument (Nye 2019, 9). Through soft power, an actor has the ability to attract and persuade, and eventually even lead others, while it sets the example. Through principles of trust, confidence, and credibility, others are motivated to follow (Gass and Seiter 2009,155; Fitzpatrick 2007, 189-190). Such a concept and the support-driven, trust-induced mechanisms it relies on is arguably difficult to reconcile with authoritarian governance. Characterized among others by a lack of freedom and transparency, strong control over the media, and ubiquitous repression (Ezrow and Frantz 2011, 2; 55; Glasius 2018, 517), the authoritarian reality is arguably far removed from the aforementioned trust, credibility, and attraction soft power fosters and relies on.

Sports offer an increasingly interesting terrain in which to both foster and wield soft power. Contrary to international sports bodies' claims, sports are not, nor have they ever been, neutral. Since Ancient Times, sports have been instrumentalized for the sake of politics and diplomacy. International competition in particular has been the subject of political motives; from proxy of inter-state relations (Grix and Houlihan 2014, 575) and booster of national pride (Freeman 2012, 1260-1261), to vehicle of rapprochement (Grix and Brannagan 2016, 261). *Sports diplomacy* maps these processes and conceptualizes both the use of sports for political purposes and the effect of diplomacy on sports and vice-versa (Murray and Pigman 2014, 1099). Within this frame, hosting a Sports Mega-Event (SME) such as a FIFA World

Cup or Olympic Games is a particularly beneficial venue for the wielding of soft power. Following a model established by Adbi et al. (2018) *SME hosting* is considered a strategy to generate desirable diplomatic outcomes. These are cross-cultural communication, mutual understanding, and trust building (Abdi et al. 2018, 370).

The opening statement of this section raises the question whether SME hosting provides authoritarian states with the opportunity to wield the soft power they typically struggle to harness. This question is set against an arguably grim context; the headline from February 23, 2021 left little to the imagination regarding Qatari governance (Pattison and McIntyre, 2021). Exploitation, violation of human rights, and overall mistreatment were the hardships labor migrants erecting the stadiums for the World Cup were confronted with (Brannagan and Giulianotti 2015, 714). Simultaneously, there is an observable trend of increased SME hosting by authoritarians (The Economist, 2022). Taking into account these circumstances and taking the case of the 2022 FIFA World Cup hosted by Qatar as case study, this research sets out to answer the following research question: *Does SME hosting enable authoritarian states to wield the soft power they typically struggle to harness?*

In striving to answer this question, the research proceeds as follows. The following section is dedicated to a review of existing academic literature pertaining to three main fields; soft power, sports diplomacy, and SME hosting. Firstly, soft power and possible manners of wielding it are conceptualized. The inherent mismatch between soft power and authoritarian governance is also highlighted. The literature review then turns to the field of sports diplomacy, as sports constitute an appealing venue for all actors to apply their soft power strategy to, seemingly regardless of political orientation. Examples of this will be provided, followed by a particular elaboration on SME hosting, and how hosts of such events may realize diplomatic outcomes. Through these three fields, the literature review completes its path from soft power and the authoritarian struggle in wielding it, to the opportunities offered by sports and by SME hosting in particular.

The stipulated question relates to whether the opportunity of SME hosting enables authoritarians to overcome their struggle in wielding soft power. In order to ascertain this, the section following the literature review, the theoretical framework, advances the hypothesis of this research. It also frames the theoretical underpinnings the research emanates from, departing from the field of sports diplomacy. Finally, it describes the aforementioned model

by Abdi et al. (2018) through which the guiding variables of this research have been identified, and elaborates on the theoretical gaps the research hopes to help fill.

Following this theoretical framing, the research design is conceptualized. The design section provides the so-called "roadmap" of the research and treats both the methodology that is employed and the criteria according to which data has been collected. Given there is a single case study, the within-case methodology that has been selected is process-tracing. This method traces causal mechanisms and will therefore enable linking observable implications from the case to the diplomatic outcomes advanced through the aforementioned model by Abdi et al. (2018). Additionally, conducting chi square tests will complement the process-tracing. Based on these foundations, the variables *State visits*, *Bilateral treaties*, and *International fora* are conceptualized, which will serve to determine any soft power results obtained by Qatar through its hosting of the World Cup.

Finally, the analysis to which the collected data has been subjected will be treated in the analysis section. After being collected within a specific timeframe, the data has been collated in tables and subjected to process-tracing and statistical tests in order to assess their significance. While this analysis is undertaken with great care and maximum objectivity, an additional final section elaborates on limitations that were deemed unavoidable.

Literature review

Soft power

On the notion of soft power

In a situation of conflict, an actor seeking to gain the upper hand over another can employ force and coercion. From the deployment of armed forces to the imposition of sanctions, these methods, united under the umbrella term *hard power*, are intended to pressure a rival into submission. When an actor instead seeks to inspire and attract support, efforts in achieving this are referred to as *soft power* (Nye 2019, 9). Rather than vanquishing an

unwilling rival and forcing them to submit, the practitioner of soft power will set out to persuade the other to willingly commit to their cause. In doing so, they opt for co-optation rather than coercion (Keohane and Nye, 1998; Nye, 2008). While the essential objective of soft power is thus to gain another's support, this may by extension translate into an alignment of interests and a role model-like role for the soft power emitter (Pratkanis 2009, 111; Yablokov 2015, 303; Fitzpatrick 2007, 189-190). Empirically, the aftermath of the Cold War illustrates the use of soft power aptly. In this period of time, the United States (USA) undertook efforts to complement their hard power resources with an approach focused on the "politics of attraction," or soft power (Grix and Brannagan 2016, 255). As the Soviet Union collapsed, the US set out to secure the role of a global leading force and galvanize other states into support (Baykurt and De Grazia 2012, 2).

Soft power thus enables a state to profile itself in such a way that others are attracted to it and pledge their support. In the previous example, the US sought to prevent other states from falling prey to Soviet communist expansion. To orchestrate this, they portrayed themselves as global power leading the West against a Soviet bloc. In a modern day context, emerging powers such as China enjoy significant soft power by virtue of a rich cultural and historical legacy, facilitated by considerable economic resources (Bhatta 2019, 7; Zhao 2015, 67). While not necessarily aimed at attracting others to consider it a leader, this projection of soft power bestows upon China the appearance of an influential actor that will play a determining role in the global order. Naturally, "projecting" in itself does not capture the process of wielding soft power. Soft power resources, which constitute footholds through which to transmit soft power, include culture, tourism, branding, diplomacy, and trade (Grix and Brannagan 2016, 260). Transcending this process is information. Information is a red thread in harnessing soft power, and clear direction of this information towards target audiences is paramount (Fisher, Klein and Codjo 2022, 3).

Reaching the audience: Soft power through public diplomacy

Reaching the intended audience indeed constitutes an important part of projecting soft power; without a targeted recipient, the message soft power hopes to send is less likely to gain ground. A manner of reaching audiences (and by extension, harnessing soft power) is through public diplomacy. In the context of a rapidly evolving overarching field of study, public diplomacy is a diplomacy subtype that takes root in most (if not all) other subtypes and forms

of the field (Melissen and Wang 2019, 2-3). It revolves around the fulfillment of foreign policy goals and the cultivation of an international support base for national interests, through interaction with foreign publics (Tsvetkova and Rushchin 2021, 51). This interaction ideally operates through long-term relationship-building (Vanc and Fitzpatrick 2016, 433).

Some states, especially those bearing authoritarian traits, use propaganda as a means of engaging audiences. This unilateral projection of dictated information then wears the mask of public diplomacy (Zaharna 2009, 89), and prioritizes quick wins and "strategic give-and-take" (Nygård and Gates 2013, 237). This forgoes the long-term relationship-building dimension of effective public diplomacy, however. Diplomacy is a dynamic and reactive practice in which actors shape their narrative in response to that of others (Adler-Nissen, 2015). Reflecting this are the aforementioned tools that public diplomacy employs: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange, and international broadcasting (Cull 2008, 32-34). These require some degree of interaction with the intended audience and demand continuous investment. By investing in these tools, through the enhancement of media coverage or the establishment of exchange programs for instance, states optimize their outward appearance and credibility.

A caveat to attraction: Attractiveness and authoritarian reality

The projection of soft power and practice of public diplomacy thus require significant input. Both can contribute to a larger sphere of influence and support base. However, the dynamics of engaging audiences and attracting them to one's cause departs from the assumption that there is, in fact, an inherent attractiveness. If the state in question and its practices are not attractive to foreign audiences to begin with, due to an unpopular regime for instance, fostering soft power will ultimately prove unfruitful (Grix and Brannagan 2016, 256). The implication of this argument is that soft power does not operate autonomously. It requires a certain coherence between a state's behavior and appearance, and the values espoused by the target audience. When the contrast between the state and its audience is too stark, soft power alone cannot bridge this gap. It is not a substitute to mask scrutinized or otherwise unpopular policy or demeanor (Cull 2008, 36). As such, this mismatch will impair the state's credibility. Credibility determines the ability to reach others and gain their trust and confidence, as it shapes how an actor is perceived (Gass and Seiter 2009, 158-190; Melissen 2013, 441).

As such, a state's appearance plays a significant role in how it is perceived, and what soft power opportunities it has. If the state's behavior stands in sharp contrast with that of its target audience, its odds of attracting said audience fall. The conceptualization of soft power so far is arguably difficult to reconcile with authoritarian governance. Soft power, as mentioned, focuses on attraction and gaining others' support (Nye 2019, 16-17). Authoritarian governance is characterized by a lack of institutional transparency, controlled media, electoral manipulation, and other forms of repression (Ezrow and Frantz 2011, 2; 55; Glasius 2018, 517). The projection of a positive image and the credible attraction of audiences seems somewhat far removed from this reality. At the time of writing, not in the least due to current events in Eastern Europe, authoritarian regimes are eyed with suspicion and scrutiny. Their soft power and public diplomacy efforts are likely hindered by their behavior, and there resides a stark contrast between the two (Tsvetkova and Rushchin 2021, 52).

This does not mean that authoritarian states are incapacitated in their soft power capabilities. The example of China portraying itself as a cultural beacon undergoing a peaceful ascension on the global stage demonstrates this (Bhatta 2019, 7; Melissen 2013, 442). This goes to show that states, regardless of potentially impaired credibility, will attempt to harness soft power. Empirical trends point to sports as a domain in which authoritarian states are eager to cultivate and harness soft power (The Economist 2022). The results of undertaken efforts in this new venue are yet to be rendered concrete, which is what this research sets out to do. In order to do so, it will first shed more light on the use of sports in diplomacy in general.

Sports diplomacy

In the frame of friendly competition, sports aims to provide a space for peaceful interaction between states (Nygård and Gates 2013, 239), and facilitate cross-cultural communication. The first Olympiads imposed a truce on all participating peoples during the competition to ensure this (Murray and Pigman 2014, 1100). In practice, this provision of inter-state interaction often culminates in sports donning the appearance of a proxy of international relations. This implies that there is no real gap between sports and politics, as inter-state relations are mirrored through sports and, as will be highlighted shortly, sports often serve as a medium for these relations. From participation and engagement to boycotting and

sanctioning, states' stances vis-à-vis one another are reflected among others through their behavior in the context of international sports (Grix and Houlihan 2014, 574-575). In other words, there is an undeniable political arena overarching the sports arena, in which actors engage in a competition of their own. Sports are not neutral, contrary to the proclaimed neutrality embedded in the foundational charters and statutes of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA, 2018) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC, 2021).

Sports as a political instrument

Beyond not being neutral, sports have indeed been the subject of instrumentalization for political or diplomatic purposes time and again. They are a vehicle for politics and diplomacy and often fall prey to ulterior political motives. Both positively and negatively, sports have provided states with an arena in which to conduct both rapprochement and antagonization. On the pitch, interaction between athletes often reproduces relations between their respective states. A known example is that of the "Blood in the water" water polo match between Hungary and the Soviet Union. Set shortly after the 1956 Hungarian revolution in contestation of Soviet dominance, Soviet athletes assaulted their Hungarian opponents during the match (Grix and Houlihan 2014, 575). This arena for inter-state interaction has also been used for positive endeavors, however. Gradual rapprochement between the US and China in the early 1970s was facilitated through a series of table tennis matches. The competition functioned as a diplomatic ice-breaker and induced a normalization of relations between the two countries as the Cold War was still causing global turmoil (Grix and Brannagan 2016, 261). By instrumentalizing international sports, states invest in their mutual understanding by engaging in discussion aimed at improving their relations. But besides serving as a proxy and testing ground for inter-state relations, sports have also proven to be a tempting venue for self-serving purposes, including the pursuit of soft power.

More so than traditional forms of diplomacy, the sports-related niche of diplomacy is considered dynamic and inclusive; it is not elitist or restricted to discussions behind closed doors but rather engages global audiences and provides entertainment (Murray 2012, 581-582). Sports, the "figurehead" of this era (Redeker 2008, 494-495), act as a uniting factor by blurring dividing lines such as nationality, age, or background (Abdi et al 2018, 367), and instill a sense of "global community" (Freeman 2012, 1260). These positive connotations make international sports a fitting venue for soft power strategy. Both the athletes on the

pitch and the spectators in the audience are collectively placed in a sphere of positivity, healthy competitiveness, and above all, informality. In addition to uniting individuals in positive spheres, it also united them in considerable numbers. Courtesy of media coverage, international competition attracts global viewership. In this informal sphere in which the focus still resides on states' performances, audiences constitute a plethora of soft power targets, caught in the arena of "pursuit and exercise of soft power" (Brannagan and Giulianotti 2015, 706). A condition for this is the state's ability to capture the audience's attention, however (Grix and Lee 2013, 529).

Capturing the audience through performance

Athletes generally do not fail to capture this attention. Athletic prowess is indeed a manner through which a state can further its soft power agenda. Athletes perform a diplomat-like function when competing internationally: representing their state and promoting its values in contrast to those of other states. Converting soft power resources into practical action necessitates competence, benignity, and charisma; athletes often tick all three boxes and are therefore very fitting soft power "tools" (Abdi et al 2018, 367). Delivering a high performance as an athlete, besides earning a place on the medal table, also enhances a state's prestige. Perceptions about a state's athletic achievements will affect perceptions about the state's other competences, even if these are not necessarily sports-related. High performance reflects a state's investment in sports and may indicate similar investment in other domains, highlights the determination and discipline of the state's people, and enhances a state's prominence (Freeman 2012, 1263). This is reflected by how governments typically reward high performance by their athletes: they appropriate national pride and seek ownership over the achievement (Freeman 2012, 1260-1261). This goes to show the extent to which states invest in sports for their own benefit. This dimension appears relatively straight-forward and mainly pertains to a participating state's efforts at instrumentalizing sports during international competition.

The opportunity to take actual ownership over the competition itself is a next step in the use of sports for the purpose of soft power projection. As mentioned, international competitions unite considerable audiences, both physically and remote. Capturing these audiences' attention arguably becomes easier when the state looking to advance its soft power finds itself in the role of main protagonist in the competition, namely, the host.

SME hosting

Within the realm of sports non-neutrality and the use of sports for diplomatic purposes, hosting a Sports Mega-Event (SME) has emerged as a new trend for the wielding of soft power. Where the correspondence between hosting sports events and the projection of soft power was previously regarded as a mere "welcome consequence" (Grix and Houlihan 2014, 573), states now increasingly anticipate this opportunity.

The soft power value of SME hosting

SMEs are global events that attract audiences and athletes from multiple continents. Examples of events of such scale include FIFA World Cups and Olympic Games (Jackson 2013, 280). States heavily invest in claiming the right to host SMEs. These events are organized under the auspices of international bodies that dictate centralized rules and procedures, and states vying for the opportunity to host will seek to gain the favor of these bodies, more often than not through financial incentives (Postlethwaite and Grix 2016, 296). This goes to show how motivated states are to grasp the soft power opportunities SMEs offer. In the broadest sense, hosting an SME offers a state a *carte blanche* of sorts. By virtue of this free pass, the state can promulgate a narrative of its own making and dictate the organization and narrative of the event. An example illustrating this is Germany's hosting of the 2006 FIFA World Cup. Hosting this international event provided Germany with the opportunity to cast away any remaining connotations to its Nazi past and instead promote its cultural and historical heydays so as to stimulate tourism and investment (Grix and Brannagan 2016, 262). In this regard, sports initiatives directly contributed to the aforementioned soft power resources (Grix and Brannagan 2016, 260).

Sports play a key role in the field of soft power. They have the potential to raise awareness, attract, and promote. By extension and by virtue of their global scale, SMEs offer a stepping stone towards soft power harnessing. Through conversion strategies, it is argued, states have the opportunity to translate their sports diplomacy resources into diplomatic outcomes (Abdi et al 2018, 370). As an example of this, a successfully hosted SME, which sports diplomacy theorists characterize as *best management*, is a strategy that contributes to this translation

(Abdi et al 2018, 368). As such, SMEs constitute a vehicle within the medium-like role of sports for the purpose of diplomacy. Through SME hosting, states enjoy agency in crafting their appearance vis-à-vis the audience and when the SME in question is successfully organized, it can yield beneficial diplomatic outcomes. These outcomes apply to specific phenomena: cross-cultural communication, mutual understanding, and trust building (Abdi et 2018, 370).

This seemingly applies to all states hosting successful SMEs. In the context of empirical trends pointing to new first-time SME hosts, however, it pays to shed more light on differences between host states prior to researching the application of the conversion strategy mentioned above.

First-time and emerging hosts

In the wake of the investment to gain hosting rights, the investment in delivering a successful end product, namely the competition itself, follows. For certain countries, there is more at stake in achieving this than for others. In a recent trend of emerging powers bidding to host SMEs, ascension on the global stage is a key objective and hosting an SME is the medium through which this is undertaken (Cornelissen 2010, 523). By entering the cohort of host states, emerging powers aim to showcase their development and readiness for closer involvement in international affairs, both politically and economically (Grix and Lee 2013, 526). The aforementioned instrumentalization of sports for the sake of self-promotion becomes all the more relevant for states that are looking to prove themselves and gain substantially from these opportunities. Established economic and political powers see SME hosting as a "relatively cheap means" of projecting their national image and cultivating their outward appearance (Grix and Lee 2013, 522). Emerging states, on the contrary, perceive SME hosting as a stepping stone towards global integration and subsequent engagement with more influential actors; in other words, SME hosting enables the transfer from *developing* to *developed* (Cornelissen 2010, 3022). Additionally, it enables states with a tarnished public image to repair their reputation somewhat (Brannagan and Giulianotti 2015, 706). Relating back to the informal and positive connotations of sports, investing in this domain thus enhances states' perceived goodwill, expertise and trustworthiness, thereby enforcing their credibility and soft power (Gass and Seiter 2009, 158-160; Nygård and Gates 2013, 241).

First-time hosts thus appear to have more to gain from these soft power opportunities, as their integration is yet to be completed. Empirical examples depict the story of states benefiting from SME hosting as a step onto the global stage, followed by integration that renders further SME hosting a welcome addition rather than a groundbreaking soft power boost. China has for instance benefited greatly from its hosting of the 2008 Olympics, dubbed "China's coming out party" as they were the start of a more globally integrated China (Grix and Lee 2013, 532). Since this step was taken China has continuously projected itself as a power on the rise, appealing to foreign audiences with the advancement of its cultural and historical legacy, as mentioned (Bhatta 2019, 7). At its current status as an established economic and cultural powerhouse. China's influence reaches across the globe and it arguably has less to gain from hosting an SME than it did in 2008 (Zhao 2015, 52).

As such, first-time hosts and emerging powers in particular have a lot to gain from SME hosting. It can be their entry ticket to international relations and function as a point of transfer from a developing to a developed state. But states that have a lot to gain also run risks.

Potential risks

A winning bid to host an SME does not guarantee a free pass to soft power and surging popularity. The opportunities of hosting SMEs do not come without potential pitfalls, and when host states are caught in these pitfalls their soft power efforts may backfire. Instead of attracting an audience they repel it, and soft power turns into *soft disempowerment*, mitigating soft power ventures (Brannagan and Giulianotti 2015, 706).

Emerging states hosting SMEs for the first time have been known to be too eager in demonstrating their (economic) prowess. They invest considerable resources in the event and the sought-after soft power. Under the all-encompassing urge to indeed discard their status of "developing country," emerging states fall prey to their own motivation and exhaust their resources over organizing the event (Dowse and Fletcher 2018, 575). This may not only hold financial consequences set against little short-term soft power yields, but also incur protests and contestation by civilians who bear the brunt of this compulsive investment (Cornelissen 2010, 3022; Rookwood 2022, 848; 854). These remarks also presume the event was in fact successful. When host states fail to guarantee certain essential components such as a secure

and healthy environment due to a lack of resources or previous experience, this initiative to host backfires and repels audiences (Abdi et al 2018, 376).

Another more overarching pitfall refers to the aforementioned crux of wielding soft power. To function, soft power requires a state's behavior and appearance to be coherent with the values the target audience espouses. An environment that celebrates positive values and instills a sense of comradery cannot easily be hosted by an actor that embodies repression. Every regime type has, historically, been known to use sports as a petri dish of sorts to celebrate its ideology and promulgate its discourse (Jackson and Haigh 2008, 351). But in the current world order that bestows a high value on principles such as equality and imparts scrutiny on states that disregard this, hosts need to comply with these principles if they hope to gain from the occasion. Otherwise, their undemocratic tendencies will turn any moves towards soft power into soft disempowerment.

Concluding thoughts

In undertaking the development of soft power, states have numerous resources at their disposal, which they can deploy, among others, through sports. International sports unite peoples and create an environment of comradery while celebrating positive values. The hosting of international sports competitions in particular holds considerable soft power value. By successfully hosting an SME, a state can display its capacities and capture the attention of the audiences gathered for the competition. Sports resources are then, by the success of the event, translated into beneficial diplomatic outcomes, such as trust building.

There are risks to SME hosting, especially for first-time hosts. If they fall short of safeguarding certain essential components an SME demands (such as security or accessibility), their initiatives at attracting an audience and projecting soft power may falter. Similarly, a host that does not comply with the positive values international sports promote risks repelling its audience, and falling prey to soft disempowerment.

As mentioned, there is an apparent gap between soft power and authoritarian regimes. It is difficult to conceive of an authoritarian depicting an attractive image of itself towards audiences. And yet, empirical trends reflect that authoritarians are venturing into the sports domain, which offers a rich terrain for the wielding of soft power. This raises the question

whether international sports, and SME hosting in particular, offer authoritarian states to wield the soft power they generally struggle to leverage.

Theory

This section provides the theoretical framework in which this research strives to claim its place. An important conclusion of the previous section bore testament to the soft power opportunities international sports provide, most notably through SME hosting. It was observed that SME hosting constitutes a resource of sports diplomacy and induces, when successful, a conversion into beneficial diplomatic outcomes. Ascertaining whether this is an opportunity for authoritarian states to wield soft power is what this research sets out to determine. It aims to do so by investigating an empirical case and grounding it in a framework of sports diplomacy research.

The field behind the field: sports diplomacy

The field of sports diplomacy has borne the brunt of skeptics who warned against an "over-hyphenation" of the field of diplomacy (Murray 2012, 588-589). The rapidly emerging new subtypes of diplomacy are accused of weakening the umbrella term of diplomacy as they allegedly do little more than uncovering a niche within diplomacy unworthy of a name of its own. To this criticism insofar as it targets sports diplomacy, the response points to the historical legacy of sports in the field of diplomacy. The previous section detailed this and provided examples from both recent and long-past cases. This goes to show that the interplay of sports and diplomacy has been in effect for too long to be ignored or denied a term of its own. It has brought forth two different perspectives, which will feed this narrative.

The non-neutrality of sports has been underscored. Whether for rapprochement and normalization of inter-state ties or for the exacerbation of existing conflict, states have never shied away from employing sports for their own purpose. This is identified as *traditional sports diplomacy*, essentially, sports being leveraged for political and diplomatic benefit (Murray and Pigman 2014, 1099). Moving beyond mere instrumentalization of sports, so-called international *sports-as-diplomacy* is conceptualized in the context of a globalized

world, in which communication, representation, and negotiation involve state and non-state actors alike (Abdi et al 2018, 366). This dimension of sports diplomacy takes note of the effect of sports on diplomacy as well as specialized diplomacy of international sports. This research resonates with the dynamic underpinnings of international sports-as-diplomacy, as it seeks to shed more light on authoritarian states' use SME hosting as a manner of wielding soft power. The success of SME hosting here resides in how well it generates diplomatic outcomes of soft power (Abdi et al 2018, 370) in spite of the host's authoritarian traits and the inherent contrast with SME values.

Theoretical gaps

In addition to the research gap that has been underscored in the literature review, there are theoretical gaps that merit mentioning as this research aims to help fill them. Firstly, there is an apparent gap between theory and practice for sports diplomacy (Abdi et al 2018, 366; Murray and Pigman 2014, 1099). Without a bridge between the two, researchers struggle to establish and contribute to an evolving framework of sports diplomacy. As for practitioners, their actions and strategies cannot be interpreted accurately without a clear theoretical embeddedness. Bridging this gap will enable the contextualization of new empirical cases as an existing theoretical frame helps guide research. Practice, in turn, will enrich theory and enable it to track new developments. Secondly, another gap pertains to the habit of conducting case-specific research. Case studies of states hosting SMEs are often limited to that specific state. China's hosting of the 2008 Olympics was contextualized by scholars in China's aspiring outward appearance as a rising economic powerhouse and national threats posed to this by ethnic minorities' protests (Rawnsley 2020, 290). Another example is that of Russia's hosting of the 2014 Winter Olympics. Research into the case leaned heavily on local context detailing the plight of disposed peoples of Russia and their animosity towards the Putin regime, as well as Russia's Olympics-induced "great power myth" (Persson and Petersson 2014, 196; Grix and Kramareva 2017, 461). While insightful, research on both cases refrained from providing generalized insights to be applied to other cases.

This research aims to help fill both theoretical gaps. Firstly, it departs from the framework of soft power and international sports-as-diplomacy. Observations generated from this framework are then applied to an empirical case study. The research will thus borrow from existing theoretical foundations and base its design and variables on "real" events. This will

de facto bridge the gap between theory and practice. Secondly, the application of this research takes as its starting point authoritarian states and their behavior. These states, in the context of hosting SMEs, have been the subject of controversial accounts. Topics range from the (mis)treatment of ethnic minorities to the repression of dissidents. These accounts and the trend of authoritarian SME hosting, especially when taken together in their apparent irreconcilability, beg the question whether these states can successfully host an SME and reap the soft power benefits from it, despite the scrutiny. The theoretical foundation of this research focuses on the interplay of international sports and soft power, and seeks to shed more light on how authoritarian leverage the former for the sake of the latter. Despite approaching this through a within-case analysis, the research will reach beyond the case level and yield generalized observations.

The Sports Diplomacy Model

The article by Abdi et al. (2018) and its findings have been mentioned at multiple occasions thus far. This article sets out to shed more light on the translation from sports diplomacy to diplomatic outcomes for states. Framed in traditional sports diplomacy and international sports-as-diplomacy, the article resonates somewhat with the literary and theoretical foundations of this research. It adopts a different angle, however, in the sense that it seeks to uncover the "skillful strategies" through which states convert sports diplomacy resources into diplomatic outcomes. It finds that the two main strategies employed by states revolve around maintaining "official and sports diplomacy solidarity" and using sport figures as "competent cultural ambassadors" (Abdi et al 2018, 380). The "best management" strategy, which was also mentioned in the literature review and refers to successful SME hosting, is a strategy Abdi et al.'s analysis grants considerable significance (Abdi et al 2018, 376). It refrains from detailing how such best management is achieved however, nor does it provide empirical illustration of the concept. It does strongly resonate with this research in the sense that both focus on the role of sports in harnessing soft power.

This research will therefore depart from the so-called "Sports diplomacy model" Abdi et al. propose to map the conversion from sports diplomacy to diplomatic outcomes. The conversion strategy that is selected here is the "best management" strategy, the practical application of which applies to SME hosting. Strategies are said to contribute to selected

diplomatic outcomes, three of which are generated by state bodies. As this research also operates on the state-level, these are the outcomes that will be adopted for the analysis:

- Cross-cultural communication;
- Mutual understanding;
- Trust building.

All three have been mentioned in the context of soft power or sports diplomacy in the literature review, as they strongly relate to inter-state interaction, rapprochement and normalization of inter-state ties, and trustworthiness as a component of credibility.

Through these three outcomes, one can start to ascertain whether a states' sports diplomacy efforts have been successful. In the frame of this research, these outcomes will enable data collection and analysis in order to determine whether Qatar was able to harness soft power through its hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. All three outcomes will therefore be translated into practical variables, the application of which will be detailed in the design section. Departing from the empirical case that was mapped at the onset of this research, the hypothesis to which these outcomes and their corresponding variables will be subjected to is as follows: hosting Sports Mega-Events enables authoritarians to wield soft power.

Research design

On the case

December 2, 2010 saw the start of a new chapter for the State of Qatar. That day, a new milestone in its long-term strategy of erecting a prominent international position for itself was reached, as the FIFA granted it the hosting rights of the 2022 World Cup (Jackson 2010). The decision was met with skepticism, as Qatar had little to no football/soccer legacy and suspicions of bribery to win the bid to host had already surfaced (Walker 2022). Nevertheless, the prospect of hosting was set, and Qatar initiated preparations to receive spectators and political dignitaries alike. As mentioned, hosting the World Cup was part of a larger overarching strategy for Qatar. Since the early 2000s, Qatar has been actively involved in mediation and peacebuilding processes in the Middle East, the most recent of which

involved the US and the Taliban in the aftermath of the former's retreat from Afghanistan (Young Diplomat, 2022; Brannagan and Giulianotti 2015, 711). Regionally and internationally, Qatar is looking to foster integration and profile itself as an influential and competitive actor. Hosting the World Cup, it seemed, would facilitate this. Any remaining preconceived clichés about Arab states' lack of development would be neutralized by technological landmarks and impressive stadiums.

Through these very same stadiums, however, would come to erupt a flow of controversy and criticism that would play an important role in the initiation of this research. The Guardian captured worldwide attention with a headline detailing the 6,500 lives the development of World Cup-proof infrastructure in Qatar had cost by early 2021 (Pattinson and McIntyre 2021). The criticism, public debates, and subsequent appeals for boycotting notwithstanding, a relatively high turnout of dignitaries at the World Cup could not be overlooked. For instance, UN Secretary-General António Guterres made an appearance at the competition's opening ceremony (UN MCPR, 2022), and French president Emmanuel Macron was present for a number of matches involving France (Walker, 2022).

Qatari authoritarianism vs SME hosting

In the broader context of Qatar's global integration strategy and the literary and theoretical foundations treated thus far, it is interesting to determine whether Qatar has been able to profit from its hosting of the World Cup in terms of soft power. Soft power enables states to rise to international prominence, but authoritarian states struggle in this regard, as their behavior typically stands at odds with the act of attraction soft power is composed of. Their values, when placed in the context of soft power efforts, are "hard to export" (Grix and Lee 2013, 527). The case of mass casualties and mistreatment of labor migrants might be a single example, but it falls in line with Qatar's overall characterization, as is also reflected by its low score and classification as "Not free" by Freedom House (Freedom House, 2022).

Reflecting back on the opportunities international sports and SME hosting in particular offer in terms of soft power, empirical trends reflect increased authoritarian investment in this. As more SMEs are hosted by authoritarians, the question of whether such initiatives enable authoritarians to overcome their difficulty in wielding soft power is raised. The case study of

Qatar will be a step in determining this, and will confirm or reject the hypothesis that hosting Sports Mega-Events enables authoritarians to wield soft power.

Case relevance

This research is centered around a single case and will thus use within-case methodology. In addition to the dynamics detailed above, the case is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, its recent nature: Qatar's bid to host the competition won in 2010 and the competition itself took place approximately 6 months ago at the time of writing. The possible consequences of the event for Qatar are thus still unfolding. As they do, this research strives to provide a frame of reference in which future related developments may be grounded. Secondly, the inherent dichotomy between the notion of Qatar's objective of international prominence and the empirical facts that provoked this research, namely the fate of the labor migrants. The harnessing of soft power through SME hosting stands in stark contrast with the accounts that have characterized this competition and its preparatory stages. This dichotomy provoked a genuine curiosity in whether, despite such controversy, Qatar does indeed manage to harness soft power.

Methodology

This within-case research will adopt the method of process-tracing using qualitative data. Process-tracing refers to the analysis of empirical evidence framed by research questions and hypotheses posed by the researcher or "investigator" (Collier 2011, 823). This evidence serves to render causal mechanisms explicit. Process-tracing relies on certain prerequisites, including rigorous description of the observed mechanisms (Collier 2011, 824-825). For this, it is important to also disaggregate the expected (or predicted) causal mechanism into separate parts and detailing the transfer from one part to another (Beach 2016, 467). Rather than assuming minimal explanations will suffice and implied causality will speak for itself, successful process-tracing demands careful balancing of expected and observed evidence.

To orchestrate this correctly, a three-step plan is proposed (Beach 2016, 468-469). Firstly, predicting the empirical outcomes of the causal mechanism and assessing their certainty and relation to the established expectations. This is partly achieved by grounding the variables guiding the research into existing scholarly literature revolving around the same topic. This

will ensure the relevance of the variables and the corresponding empirical findings vis-à-vis the predicted mechanism. Secondly, collecting the empirical evidence and evaluating its coherence with the established predictions. The main pitfall to this step is the cherry-picking of data. Avoiding this will mainly be achieved through the use of publicly accessible sources and records that enforce a degree of accountability upon the author. By steering clear of obscure sources that make omitting inconvenient data possible, the author is bound to deliver a complete array of evidence, whether compliant with expectations or not. Finally, assessing the trustworthiness of observed evidence. This is to some extent linked to the previous step, as the provenance of evidence needs to be clear and legitimate. Avoiding unofficial data sources and potentially manipulated data will strengthen trustworthiness.

In striving to complement the process-tracing method, data analysis will also feature the use of chi square tests. This statistical method enhances the selected method of process-tracing as it, too, underscores causal mechanisms, albeit in a different manner. Where process-tracing uncovers causality based on qualitative elements, chi square tests such as a Pearson or Goodness of fit -test reflect dependence between observed and expected numerical data (Hess and Hess, 2014).

This is done based on the collected data, also referred to as *Observed values* (O). Through proportionality, so-called *Expected values* (E) are calculated. The simplified table (an excerpt from table 1 from the Analysis section) below illustrates this. Following the calculation of *expected values*, multiple calculations (O-E and $(O-E)^2/E$) are conducted so as to determine the *Test statistic*. This *test statistic* is then contextualized in a so-called chi square distribution table, which can be accessed online (Statology, 2018). This distribution table collates so-called *Critical values*, which determine the degree of certainty with which a pre-established null hypothesis, claiming no noteworthy relation between variables, can be rejected or confirmed. This depends on the size of the sample, which determines the degrees of freedom. This is calculated through (*number of rows - 1 * number of columns - 1)*. If the test statistic is higher than the critical value at the designated degrees of freedom and at a significance level of 0.05 (indicating a 5% fault margin, or conversely, a confidence level of 95%), the null hypothesis can be rejected.

	Inbound visits (O)	Total	Expected visits (E)	O-E	$(O-E)^2/E$
2014	12	19	(19/416)*222 = 10,14	12-10,14 = 1,86	$1,86^2/10,14$ = 0,341
2015	17	27	(27/416)*222 = 14,4	17-14,4 = 2,6	$2,6^2/14,4$ = 0,536
Total	222	416			

Using the values from the last column, the significance of observed data is thus assessed. Some of the tables assembling the aggregated data in the analysis section will be subjected to a chi square test, so as to strengthen and, at the very least, contextualize any gathered insight.

Variable selection and criteria

As argued in the theory section, the design of this research emanates from the sports diplomacy model as put forth by Abdi et al. (2018). This model identifies three state-based outcomes that stem from successfully conducted sports diplomacy. These outcomes, *cross-cultural communication, mutual understanding,* and *trust building* are realized through strategies that include SME hosting. As such, departing from these three outcomes, this research identifies three corresponding variables in hopes of reflecting observable implications in the case study of Qatar. It will then test these variables and the expected causal mechanisms linking Qatar's hosting of the World Cup to its ability to wield soft power.

The research should thus reveal, if the hypothesis is indeed correct, that Qatar has indeed been able to attain the three outcomes and by extension wield soft power, through its hosting of the World Cup. A pragmatic caveat that must be taken into account pertains to the recent nature of the case study. Given that the World Cup took place approximately 6 months ago at the time of writing, mapping observable implications of Qatar's soft power wielding as a result of the competition will be premature. As such, the scope of this research is directed at the years leading up to the event, after Qatar's bid to host won. Additionally, it must be noted

that the public's insight (including that of the author) into diplomatic processes is not optimal as certain practices take place behind closed doors. The selected variables are thus applicable to elements that are publicly accessible. These variables are as follows:

State visits

This variable is linked to the *cross-cultural communication* outcome. It takes as its scope state visits involving foreign and Qatari high-ranking government officials. State visits are a formal type of bilateral moment of interaction between heads of state and/or government (Leguey-Feilleux 2009, 295). Here, the term refers to the visit of one head of state or government to another, taking place in the latter's state. In the context of so-called summit diplomacy, such visits carry significant diplomatic weight as they cultivate inter-state relations and provide opportunities for direct exchanges between top-level political executives. Summit diplomacy maps the engagement of the highest echelons of political power and the significance of these moments of interaction.

Often, the direct involvement of high-ranking officials signals the importance or urgency of what is being discussed. It is for instance considered an important tool of conflict resolution or, at a less escalated level, rapprochement between states. Summit diplomacy, occasionally facilitated through sports (as the aforementioned US-China rapprochement example illustrates) fosters trust-building at the highest level, followed by a trickle down. This paves the way for improved inter-state relations (Wheeler 2013, 479). This traces back to diplomacy's relational nature, which sees interaction between practitioners (both formal and informal) as a driving force for reaching agreements, overcoming differences, and attaining strategic objectives (Adler-Nissen, 2015).

The other side of summit diplomacy that is of interest here refers to the implicit messages it sends. Both domestically and abroad, the visit of a head of state or governments or of another high-ranking official signals importance and prestige. Depending on the visit's topic, there may be an important ceremonial or symbolic function, revolving around the signing of a cooperation treaty or a peace agreement for example. Conversely, high-ranking officials that wish to avoid association with notorious or controversial foreign counterparts will refrain from visiting them in person (Malis and Smith 2021, 246). In the context of leadership and

survival, inbound state visits also imply a certain acknowledgement and unspoken trust in the host's stability in office (Malis and Smith 2021, 21). As such, the state visit (or lack thereof) has the potential to announce partnerships and alliances, and to herald the end of animosity and the beginning of cooperation (Leguey-Feilleux 2009, 295; 305; Wheeler 2013, 479).

Expectations

Departing from the argument that states can leverage soft power through SME hosting, it follows that this soft power affects other states' behavior vis-à-vis the host state. Especially in the case of first-time hosts and emerging powers, hosting an SME can serve to announce increased integration and ascension on the global stage. Other states' perception of this integration can translate itself into more inter-state interaction, through state visits among others. An observable implication of successfully wielded soft power would thus be an increase in state visits.

Data collection and criteria

State visits will thus provide interesting insight into Qatar's soft power. All visits undertaken and received by Qatar have been assembled, insofar as the data availability and thesis scope permitted it. Regarding data availability, the earliest data pertaining to state visits that was available, aggregated and trustworthy dates from 2012. Data was retrieved from the website of the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Qatar MOFA, n.d.(A)), which compiles all relevant government-related news, including state visits, from 2012 until the present day.

Data was collected according to criteria set by the author. Firstly, only visits involving heads of state or government (monarchs, presidents, and prime ministers) or foreign affairs ministers were included in the aggregated data. The reasoning behind this is related to the diplomatic weight of these actors and the fact these roles are typically involved in diplomatic state visits as opposed to, for instance, a minister for energy. This decision falls in line with the UN Protocol and Liaison Service policy, which documents the occupants of these three roles for each member state (UN DGACM, n.d.).

Secondly, only deliberate bilateral state visits are taken into account. Meetings occurring on the sidelines of other international meetings (such as a UN General Assembly) are thus not

included. The deliberate and planned nature of state visits is precisely what this variable attempts to highlight. Meetings occurring under the auspices of an overarching meeting may carry a different intent as they bear less of the aforementioned ceremonial weight. Additionally, not all side-meetings on the margins of other summits are necessarily documented. To generate observations that are as complete as possible, a single category of state visits that enables aggregation of data is preferable to the risk of overlooking data due to lacking information. Finally, the aforementioned signal an inbound state visit sends, namely of belief in the stability of the incumbent host, tailors the focus of this variable to inbound visits. Outbound visits are also included in the aggregated data, but mostly serve to complete the reference frame. Occasionally, outbound and inbound visits may be compared so as to enrich the overview, but the focus resides with inbound visits to Qatar.

Finally, the timeframe in which the aggregated state visits took place spans from 2012 to the final days before the World Cup, specifically to November 8, 2022. The reasoning behind this decision is solely pragmatic. The relatively short timeframe in which this research was conducted did not allow for a longer data collection process and the author prioritized correct data analysis within a clear-cut timeframe over brief and potentially misinterpreted data analysis due to a lack of time.

Bilateral treaties

This variable is linked to the *mutual understanding* outcome. It takes as its scope the engagement of bilateral treaties involving Qatar. As a theoretical perspective of international relations, liberalism sees cooperation as a key mechanism in fostering inter-state relations and mutually beneficial outcomes (Stein 2008, 204-205). Such cooperation often welcomes economic gains and therefore requires commitment and trust (Martin 2000, 3). If these elements are lacking, cooperation will likely remain shallow or be avoided altogether (Leeds 1999, 980). States' likelihood in engaging in cooperation is driven by mutual understanding of each other's commitment and values, and trust. Embedding this mutual understanding in agreements such as treaties will facilitate exchange, ensure commitment, and provide support in case of grievances (Büthe and Milner 2009, 172). Here, a particular interest is taken in bilateral investment treaties, or BITs.

BITs partly direct the flow of Foreign Direct Investment, or FDI. From the 1980s onwards, FDI has witnessed a sharp and unprecedented rise, partly due to the increased interconnectedness of markets (Guzman 2009, 73). BITs offered an institutionalized option to monitor FDI flows between specific countries and enrich them with advantages such as lower tariffs or preferential trade. Also individually, it is in states' benefit to sign BITs as they function as a mechanism for reputation enhancement and FDI attraction. They are a stepping stone for states towards economic liberalism (Busse, Königer and Nunnenkamp 2010, 150; Büthe and Milner 2009, 172). By engaging in BITs, the image is conveyed that a state is integrating into the market economy and is able to host and safeguard foreign investment. This signals a certain economic potency and trustworthiness to aspiring partner states. As such, states signing BITs would indicate their economic integration and their interaction with other (potentially larger) economies (Büthe and Milner 2009, 176).

Expectations

Presuming that SME hosting enables states to leverage soft power, it stands to reason that soft power's attraction also reaches economic and financial dimensions. In successfully hosting a global event such as an SME, a state emphasizes the economic resources that are at its disposal, thereby profiling itself as a reliable partner to others. Other states' perception of this reliability and stability as a partner would translate into more economic cooperation through the signing of BITs. An observable implication of successfully wielded soft power would thus be an increase in signed BITs.

Data collection and criteria

Bilateral investment treaties thus provide insight into Qatar's soft power; to determine whether there is indeed an observable implication of successfully wielded soft power, data relating to Qatar's BITs has been collected. This data originates from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, n.d.). Its country navigator provides an overview of any state's involvement in international investment, including which BITs have been signed and which countries were involved (UNCTAD, n.d.). To enrich insight into the UNCTAD data, its annual *World Economic Situation and Prospects* was also consulted, as it provides a useful country classification that enables between-country comparison (UNCTAD, 2023).

Data was retrieved according to relatively simple criteria set by the author. Firstly, the decision to investigate BITs in particular stems from pragmatic reasoning. Other types of bilateral treaties (providing diplomatic training, exchanging technology, etc.) are not as easily accessed as they are either confidential or applicable to a very specific domain and therefore not all documented by the same source. Taking into account the short timeframe in which this research was conducted, the author opted for a specific type of treaty from a single trustworthy source.

Secondly, the timeline of signed treaties is determined by the other two variables of this research. Both span from 2012 to 2022 or the present day. For consistency's sake, this variable will adopt the same timeframe.

International fora

This variable is linked to the *trust building* outcome. It takes as its scope the role of Qatari officials at international summits and conferences. The involvement of high-ranking officials in bi- or multilateral meetings is, as mentioned, contextualized through summit diplomacy. The involvement of the highest political echelons conveys the importance of what is discussed (Leguey-Feilleux 2009, 295).

Additionally, ceremonial or symbolic functions are fulfilled by the involvement of these officials and developments yielded by this involvement are intended to trickle down and pave the way for more beneficial international relations (Wheeler 2013, 479). While politics conducted in the well-known "corridors" of informal negotiation and communication are an important part of participation in international fora, the ceremonial passages of these events, too, carry diplomatic weight (Naylor 2020, 585-586). Through physical presence, leaders capture attention and have a stage to assert a chosen stance or decision. Dubbed "theatrical rationality," this practice enables officials to seize a present stage and stake their claim, regardless of its content (Day and Wedderburn 2022, 2).

Framed in diplomacy's relational nature, interaction between (in this case, top-level) practitioners play a determining role in overarching inter-state relations (Adler-Nissen, 2015).

As with state visits, the involvement of heads of state or government or other officials underscores the importance of the matter and builds trust between the two. Additionally, the interaction between these officials at international fora has multiple functions. Besides the ceremonial function that was previously highlighted, there is indeed a significant value to the so-called "inter-moments" between participants in international fora. The importance of these moments of informal interaction on the sidelines of international fora became all the clearer during the Covid-19 pandemic. As many summits and other meetings were transferred to a virtual environment, the possibility to negotiate or interact in the aforementioned infamous "corridors" was effectively eliminated (Naylor 2020, 584; 590). These moments see high-ranking officials coming together and conducting their diplomatic business, often sheltered away from the eye of the public.

Expectations

Assuming that the hosting of SMEs is a possible venue for states to wield soft power, it can be expected that the host's leadership, like the state, gains international prominence. Through SME hosting, especially in the case of first time hosting, states can assert their global position and profile their aim of heightened involvement in international affairs. Other states and international organizations that perceive this and are convinced through a successfully hosted SME will likely grant the state this involvement, for instance through participation in international fora. An observable implication of successfully wielded soft power would thus be an increase in participation in international fora.

Data collection and criteria

International fora (and Qatari participation in these) thus provide insight into Qatar's soft power. To reflect this, international fora in which Qatari officials have taken part have been collated, within the scope of data availability. Data was retrieved from the websites of the Emir of Qatar (Amiri Diwan, n.d.) and the Qatari Foreign Affairs Minister (Qatar MOFA, n.d.(B)). These websites compile speeches given by both officials. Including speeches given by the Deputy Emir or other officials would have been interesting but unfortunately rendered impossible by a lack of data.

The retrieved data was aggregated according to specific parameters set by the author. Firstly, data collection took the aforementioned source websites as its starting points, rather than the websites of the fora in question. The reasoning behind this is mainly pragmatic; instead of investigating known fora and filtering for Qatari participation, the author considers Qatari participation the starting point for research into said fora. The inherent risk of the former option lies in scouring sources of known fora and overlooking less-known fora in which Qatar did participate. The limited timeframe in which this research was conducted reinforces this decision.

Secondly, the term "participation" here refers to a specific role for Qatar at the fora. As mentioned in the research design, this variable focuses on planned interventions at fora, which are incorporated in a program or otherwise announced beforehand. Examples include keynote or opening speeches, and participation in panel discussions. Interventions on behalf of the state amidst similar interventions by other states, such as opening statements at the UNGA, are thus excluded. Additionally, a distinction is made between participation as it is defined here above and participation in the broadest sense. Participation in the context of this research is taken to mean the giving of a keynote/opening speech of taking part in a panel discussion. Similarly the research mentions first-time participation, it refers to the first time a Qatari official was invited to give a speech or take part in a panel discussion. This is regardless of previous attendance by Qatar to the forum.

Thirdly, the focus lies on fora gathering state and non-state actors around themes such as international relations, diplomacy, security, and economy. Participation in smaller events hosted by universities for instance are not included, for two reasons. Firstly, such events are not always documented and thus less accessible. Secondly, in the same spirit, awareness about such events is likely lower, and participation will therefore likely have a different angle than international wielding of soft power.

Fourth, only events that are organized under the auspices of international bodies or other states are included. Events organized by Qatar itself, such as the Doha Forum, are excluded. As Qatar initiated the organization of such an event, it stands to reason that Qatari officials will make an appearance and play a role in its organization. In similar fashion, regional summits initiated by Qatar, such as the Gas Exporting Countries Forum, are excluded.

Finally, the timeframe of public appearances that is included in the data collection spans from 2012 to 2023. This timeframe is dictated by the availability of data; while some of the fora that are featured among the aggregated data have been taking place for much longer, documentation about gatherings and participants prior to the 2010s is plagued by limited accessibility. Therefore, the author prioritized a smaller body of trustworthy data over a larger sample of potentially fragmented or inaccurate data.

Analysis

This section unites the literary and theoretical foundation of this research and applies them to the previously established research design. Following the three variables that emanated from the research by Abdi et al. (2018), criteria and procedures for the data collection were set. This section sets out to reflect the results of said data collection. Data from official sources such as Qatari governmental or UN websites have been compiled into tables, which can be found in the appendices. All three variables adopted similar and relatively narrow criteria that fit both the scope of this research and the practical circumstances under which it was conducted. As such, the samples that are provided are relatively small. This and other caveats to the results of this research are elaborated on in the "Limitations" part at the bottom. Nevertheless, the findings below provide a first stepping stone to determine whether or not Qatar has indeed been able to harness soft power through hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

State visits

The *State visits* variable departed from the assumption that a successfully hosted World Cup would enable Qatar to harness soft power and receive more state visits as a result. The reasoning behind this argued that as a result of its soft power efforts, other states' perceptions of Qatar would be directed to its global integration. In response to this, other states would seek increased interaction, through state visits. By focusing on inbound state visits, other officials' perception of the strength and stability of Qatari officials is captured. If the number of inbound visits indeed increases, this may constitute an indication of enhanced international appearance for Qatar and more acknowledgment by foreign counterparts. Therefore, it was

the expectation that in the years leading up to the World Cup, Qatar will have received more inbound state visits.

Total overview of visits

To ascertain this, the aggregated data has been the subject of multiple queries. Firstly, a total overview of the amount of visits per year was established. Such an overview grants a first insight into the data and enables a bird's eye view of increase or decrease in state visits spanning across multiple years. In this case, it maps the evolution of the amount of the state visits between 2014 and 2022. Given the low amount of visits documented prior to 2014, the timeframe is adjusted for this particular section. The aggregated list of visits can be found in appendix 1. The total amount of visits per year are reflected in the following table.

	Inbound	Outbound	Total
2014	12	7	19
2015	17	10	27
2016	15	23	38
2017	51	50	101
2018	18	27	45
2019	24	17	41
2020	18	12	30
2021	53	23	76
2022	14	25	39

Table 1.1 Annual amount of state visits to and from Qatar

In general, the table reflects trends of increasing visits, both in- and outbound. Between 2014 and 2016, the amount of visits increased by approximately 10 annually. A record of 101 visits in total was reached in 2017, followed by a somewhat sudden decrease in visits the next year.

Regional context provides clarity here. In 2017, an alliance of Gulf states led by the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia initiated an economic and diplomatic boycott against Qatar over the latter's alleged support for terrorist groups (Gardner 2021; Dorsey, 2018). The launched blockade would last until 2021, when a US-Kuwaiti brokered peace agreement was made. During the blockade, the aforementioned argument of avoiding association with a discredited or pariah state may cause the fall in state visits. The number of inbound visits was indeed considerably lower than that of outbound visits that year.

Balancing inbound and outbound visits in order to generate conclusions proves to be difficult from this sample. Between 2019 and 2021, the last years before the start of the World Cup, there is a consistent superiority of inbound visits over outbound visits. Even in 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic rendered in-person meetings difficult (which is indeed also reflected by a decrease in the "total" column of that year) (Malis and Smith, 2021), Qatar still received and paid 30 visits in total, with a slightly higher amount of inbound visits than outbound. In other words, Qatar has received more visits than it has paid in the years leading up to the World Cup. Nevertheless, it would be eager to conclude by arguing a clear-cut increase in inbound state visits at this stage. Before redirecting focus on other dimensions of the collected data, the narrative settles for the observation that in recent years Qatar has witnessed a general increase in visits and slight increase in inbound visits.

Strengthening this argument is the result of the conducted chi square test, the overview of which is reflected in the table below. As mentioned, chi square tests identify observed and expected data to assess categorical dependence between variables. In the case of the data in table 1, the conducted chi square test will reflect whether there is a relation between the amount of state visits and the years in which they took place. Given the time constraints of this research, a simple test was conducted that aimed primarily at confirming that there is indeed a relation between the two.

	Visits			O - E		$(O-E)^2/E$	
	Inbound	Outbound	Total	Inbound	Outbound	Inbound	Outbound
2014	12	7	19	1,86	-1,89	0,341	0,390

2015	17	10	27	2,6	-2,6	0,469	0,536
2016	15	23	38	5,28	-5,28	1,375	1,573
2017	51	50	101	-2,9	2,9	0,156	0,178
2018	18	27	45	-6	6	1,499	1,715
2019	24	17	41	2,12	-2,12	0,205	0,235
2020	18	12	30	2	-2	0,25	0,285
2021	53	23	76	12,45	-12,45	3,822	4,373
2022	14	25	39	6,8	-6,8	2,222	2,543

Table 1.2 Annual amount of state visits from and to Qatar, chi square test

The sum of the last two columns' values equals 22,167. This is the test statistic. At a significance level of 0,05, the critical value (with 8 degrees of freedom) is 15,507. The fact that the test statistic is higher than the critical value enables the rejection of a null hypothesis claiming there is no relation between the state visits and the timeframe, or that state visits thus do not evolve over time. While this does not provide strong evidence of progress, it does reject the argument that the noted increase in state visits is mere coincidence. It fails to indicate what the relation between state visits and the timeline does pertain to and whether it is one of progress as time passes, for instance. The interpretation of the data collected by this research argues this, nevertheless, as an initial observation. Caveats to this argument will be provided and accounted for in the Limitations section below.

Position of visitors/recipients

Having considered the amount of visits in absolute terms, it is also interesting to investigate the position of the officials received during inbound visits. While no distinction is made between the receiving Qatari officials (other than the aforementioned positions), the collected data specifies whether the visiting official is a monarch, president, prime minister, or foreign affairs minister. Rendering this explicit provides insight into which countries send their top-level executive officials to visit Qatar. As mentioned before, rulers may refrain from being

associated with unpopular or otherwise scrutinized regimes. It stands to reason that they will send a less prominent official in their stead. It therefore pays to investigate whether especially democratic countries have placed sufficient confidence in Qatar to send their monarchs or presidents. The table below specifies which top-level officials have visited or were visited by Qatar.

	Inbound	Outbound	Total
Monarch	2	9	11
President	12	69	81
Prime Minister	9	43	52

Table 2.1 State visits to and from Qatar sorted by position visitor/recipient

In each category, there were considerably more outbound than inbound visits. When investigating the timeline, there is no considerable stand-alone trend of increasing inbound visits in the years leading up to the World Cup. Rather, both the amount of in- and outbound visits appears to follow the trend of visits in general. As was previously observed, the amount of visits grew steadily until the high point in 2017. Visits to or by presidents similarly grew. While 2015 saw 6 such visits (1 inbound, 5 outbound), 2017 saw 23 (5 inbound, 18 outbound). The final year before the start of the World Cup, 2021, saw 10 visits to or by presidents (1 inbound, 9 outbound). Visits to or by prime ministers witnessed similar trends albeit on a smaller scale. Where 2015 saw 3 visits by or to prime ministers (0 inbound, 3 outbound), 2017 saw 12 (5 inbound, 7 outbound), and 2021 saw 7 (3 inbound, 4 outbound).

To test the significance of these results, a chi square test has been conducted. The aim of this test is to determine whether there is in fact a relation between the position of the official involved in the visit and whether the visit was in- or outbound. The values of this test are reflected in the table below.

	Visits			O - E		$(O-E)^2/E$	
	Inbound	Outboun	Total	Inbound	Outboun	Inbound	Outboun

		d			d		d
Monarch	2	9	11	0,25	-0,25	0,031	0,006
President	12	69	81	-0,9	0,9	0,062	0,011
Prime Minister	9	43	52	0,7	-0,7	0,059	0,011

Table 2.2 State visits to and from Qatar sorted by position visitor/recipient, chi square test

The test statistic, equal to the sum of the last two columns' values, is 0,175. At a significance level of 0,05, the corresponding critical value (with two degrees of freedom) is 5,991. The test statistic is lower than the critical value in this case. This implies that there is not enough evidence to confirm that there is a relation between the different variables in this case. As such, it cannot be affirmed that there is a distinct relation between the position of an official and the latter's inclination to conduct or to receive a state visit involving Qatar.

Visits by democracies/non-democracies

As a means of complementing observations made so far, it is interesting to note whether Qatar has received an increasing number of visits from officials of democratic states. The expectation of this research was that hosting the World Cup would render Qatar more attractive and prominent, and thus generate more incoming state visits by states that are not necessarily like-minded in their governance. And yet, when applying this expectation to the case, there is no notable increase in inbound visits by democratic leaders. Across the selected timeframe, approximately half of the visits involving democratic countries are inbound, as the table below featuring a few examples reflects.

	Inbound	Outbound	Total
France	6	8	14
Germany	5	6	11
Iran	6	6	12

Italy	6	7	13
USA	4	17	21

Table 3. In- and outbound visits by democratic officials

Concerning each of these countries, there does seem to be a slight upward trend of inbound visits in the years leading up to the World Cup. In the case of Italy, all inbound visits to Qatar took place from 2017 onwards and half of these visits occurred between 2020 and 2022. Similarly, the majority of inbound visits from France took place after 2017 and half of the visits occurred between 2019 and 2021. Outbound visits are similarly focused around recent years; Germany has received 5 out of 6 visits by Qatar from 2017 onwards. While the USA is an outlier with regards to the balance between in- and outbound visits, there is a similar concentration in visits involving the US around recent years. Approximately half of the visits Qatar has paid the USA occurred from 2018 onwards. To offer a balanced account of these observations, the table also includes a non-democratic state, namely Iran. The balance of visits involving Iran appears considerably similar to that of the other states. The total amount of visits is similar to that of France, Germany, and Italy, and so too is the concentration within the timeframe. 5 out of 6 inbound visits from Iran occurred from 2017 onwards, with the last visit occurring as recently as 2022. All outbound visits to Iran took place from 2020 onwards.

Concluding thoughts - State visits

While not of extensive magnitude, there is a confirmed trend in state visits. As the chi square test demonstrated, there is a relation between variables; the amount of state visits is not spread equally across the timeframe. Following the collection of data, the interpretation advances an increase in state visits. Contextual events such as the 2017-2021 regional diplomatic crisis that targeted Qatar and the Covid-19 pandemic have affected this, as table 1 reflects. Visits involving monarchs, presidents, and prime ministers appear to be outbound more often than inbound. As Qatar would harness soft power through its hosting of the World Cup and gain international prominence, it was expected that increasing inbound visits would feature more prominent leaders. Based on the collected data, this does not appear to be the case, however. A conducted chi square confirms that there is not enough evidence to affirm a relation between the position of the official and the undertaking of an in- or outbound visit.

Nevertheless, the spread of inbound visits in particular does seem to be concentrated more strongly around recent years and the 5 years leading up to the World Cup. A necessary addition to this is the observation that this does not only apply to democratic states. Non-democratic states, too, visited or received visits from Qatar more frequently in recent years.

Bilateral treaties

The *Bilateral treaties* variable stemmed from the expectation that Qatar would, by virtue of its hosting of the 2022 World Cup, be able to harness soft power and attract other states for the benefit of economic cooperation. If soft power is indeed successfully harnessed through hosting, this will affect other states' perception of the host state. Especially economically, hosting an expensive global event such as a World Cup will reflect a certain prowess and resources. It will, if successful, signal a state's ability to mobilize said resources and to become more involved in the global economy. Other states would be invited to consider the host as a new partner with an own market that tailored agreements would make more accessible. As such, an increase in signed investment treaties would be an indication of states' acknowledgment of Qatar's resources and subsequent integration in the global market.

Total overview of BITs

To determine this, signing of BITs by Qatar between 2012 and 2022 was mapped. The complete assembled results can be found in appendix 2. Between 2012 and 2022, Qatar has signed a total of 17 new BITs. The table below details in which years these were signed.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
BITs	3	0	2	0	2	2	6	0	0	0	2

*Table 4.*1 Amount of BITs signed by Qatar, per year

On average, Qatar has signed almost 2 treaties per year in the selected timeframe. Across the timeline, there is a slight upward trend in signed BITs, with more than half of the BITs having been signed from 2017 onwards. In this small sample of data this does not yield hard conclusions, however.

In order to complement this first insight, a chi square test was conducted. It departs from the null hypothesis that the amount of signed BITs is more or less the same each year and that there is no special relation between the amount of signed BITs and the timeline. The table below reflects the findings of the test.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
O	3	0	2	0	2	2	6	0	0	0	2
E	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5
O-E	1,5	-1,5	0,5	-1,5	0,5	0,5	4,5	-1,5	-1,5	-1,5	0,5
$(O-E)^2/E$	1,5	1,5	0,16	1,5	0,16	0,16	13,5	1,5	1,5	1,5	0,16

*Table 4.*2 Amount of BITs signed by Qatar, per year, chi square test

The test statistic, here calculated as the sum of the last row's values, is 23,14. At a significance level of 0,05, the critical value (with 10 degrees of freedom) is 18,307. Here too, the test statistic appears to be higher than the critical value. This enables the rejection of the null hypothesis that signed BITs are generally equally spread across the selected timeline and that there is no distinct relation between the two elements. As with the first table of the *state visits* variable, there is mainly a proof that the signing of BITs is not a stand-alone phenomenon for Qatar. The test does not point to an undeniable progression as time passes, however. Rather, it settles for stating that there is a relation between the signing of BITs and the timeline. Whether this relation is one of progression is an observation this research makes based on an interpretation of the aggregated data. The necessary nuances to this interpretation will follow in the Limitations section below.

Country comparison

In hopes of balancing this account and enlarging the frame of reference, data from other states has been retrieved for a rudimentary comparison. In the aforementioned *World Economic Situation and Prospects*, Qatar is classified as a *Developing economy* (UNCTAD, 2023) along with many neighboring states including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United

Arab Emirates (UAE). Within the same development and regional category, other states have signed less BITs than Qatar within the selected timeframe. Bahrain and Jordan have both signed 6, and Saudi Arabia has signed 3. The UAE, a neighbor and political rival for Qatar, is an outlier by all accounts; between 2012 and 2022, the states have signed 66 BITs. This is extreme when compared to states classified as *Developed* too. Taking an example from the *Major developed economies*, owing their "major" status to G7 membership, Canada has signed 15 BITs in the selected timeframe. France has signed only 1, and Japan has signed 22.

It is also interesting to study this value in absolute terms; in other words, the total amount of signed BITs. One might expect developed countries to have already signed BITs with most states at an earlier stage, as their integration into the global liberal economy is an apparent *fait accompli*. This would explain why certain states, such as France, have signed very few BITs in recent years. And for some, this is indeed the case; France already detains a total of 91 BITs. Similarly, the UK has not signed any new BITs in the selected timeframe, but already has signed 96 in total. This does not apply to all developed countries, however. Canada's 14 newly signed BITs bring its total to 39, and Japan has a total of 36. Qatar, on the other hand, detains 66 BITs in total. As such, developed states do not necessarily benefit from an advantage in terms of signed bilateral treaties. While some do enjoy established bilateral investment relations, this is not de facto determined on the basis of their developed nature; developing states can potentially wield more BITs. In the global ranking of the amount of BITs signed Qatar holds the 22nd place, and the amount of BITs signed in the selected timeframe makes up for approximately 25% of its total amount of signed BITs.

Concluding thoughts - Bilateral treaties

It would be eager to proclaim an extensive rise in bilateral treaties for Qatar leading up to its hosting of the World Cup. Regardless, there is a notable increase in the amount of treaties signed between 2012 and 2022 and a slight concentration of these treaties from 2017 onwards. The conducted chi square test confirms that there is indeed a relation between the amount of treaties signed and the timeline; the interpretation of the data collection sees this relation as one of increase. Additionally, the comparison between Qatar's signed BITs to those of other states in absolute terms does reflect considerable investment by Qatar. It outranks major developed states such as Canada or Japan in terms of total number of BITs signed.

International fora

The *International fora* stemmed from the expectation that Qatar's success in hosting the 2022 World Cup would play a role in its international prominence and that of its officials. In similar fashion as the *state visits* variable, this variable contemplates if and how Qatar has been able to harness soft power by virtue of its hosting. A practical application of this is the invitation of Qatari officials to participate in international fora. To ascertain whether there is any "progress" in this regard (i.e. if Qatar is invited to more fora), first-time participation in each featured forum is depicted. In other words, if an official has given a keynote speech at one particular forum, the research specifies whether it is the first time a Qatari official participates in such a way in said forum. Following the expectations of this research, occasions of first-time participation should be concentrated around the last years leading up to the World Cup.

Overview of first-time participation

To determine whether this expectation holds, participation in international fora by the Emir and the minister of foreign affairs between 2012 and 2023 has been collected. The table reflecting this participation can be found in appendix 3. A special green color code indicates whether it is the first occasion at which the official in question participates in that particular forum. The table below reflects each first occasion at which an official has taken part in an international forum on behalf of Qatar.

	Official	Forum
2012 (February 5)	Foreign Minister	Munich Security Conference
2015 (December 10)	Foreign Minister	Rome Med
2016 (May 24)	Foreign Minister	World Humanitarian Forum
2016 (November 20)	Prime Minister	World Policy Conference

2017 (November 23)	Foreign Minister	Westminster Counterterrorism Conference
2018 (January 23)	Foreign Minister	World Economic Forum
2019 (September 23)	Foreign Minister	Concordia Summit
2021 (June 4)	Emir/Foreign Minister	St. Petersburg International Economic Forum
2023 (March 5)	Emir	UN Conference on Least Developed Countries

Table 4. First-time participations by Qatari officials

At first glance, this table seems relatively concise. And indeed, it showcases a total of 7 occasions of first-time participation in international fora. While the sample is admittedly limited, there is a slight upward trend of appearances in the final years leading up to the World Cup. As with the two previous variables, most appearances in this case have occurred after 2017.

First-time participation vs forum foundation

In hopes of grounding this last observation more strongly, the history of each of these fora is also mapped. If a forum has existed for multiple decades before Qatar's first time participating, this reinforces the earlier observation. It would indicate that Qatar has recently become an attractive actor to involve in the forum. While the scope of this research does not permit a more thorough analysis in light of time constraints, this comparison contributes to a first indication of successfully wielded soft power. The table below depicts when each of the featured fora were founded and how this relates to Qatar's first time participating.

	First edition	First Qatari participation
Concordia Summit	2011	2019
Munich Security Conference	1963	2012

Rome Med	2015	2015
St. Petersburg International Economic Forum	1997	2021
UN Conference on Least Developed Countries	1981	2023
Westminster Counterterrorism Conference	2017	2017
World Economic Forum	1971	2018
World Humanitarian Forum	2016	2016
World Policy Conference	2008	2016

Table 5. First editions of international fora

The Munich Security Conference, St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, UN Conference on Least Developed Countries, and World Economic Forum are particularly telling components in this table. All have been in place since the second half of the previous century, and almost all have featured a first-time Qatari participation within the last decade. Except for the Rome Med and the Westminster Counterterrorism Conference, all participation by Qatar has occurred when the forum in question had already taken place at least 8 times before. A necessary addition to this is the fact that the Westminster Counterrorism Conference constitutes a somewhat obscure forum of which little to no documentation is available, except for a broad description by a logistical provider (White light, 2017). It is nevertheless included here for completeness' sake, but does not permit a deeper analysis.

Concluding thoughts - International fora

In observing this relatively small sample, there is a slight upward trend of Qatari participation in international fora. Occurrences of first-time participation by Qatari officials are concentrated in the last 5 years. In other words, Qatari officials such as the foreign affairs minister and the Emir have been invited to give speeches and participate in panels more often in the last years leading up to the World Cup. The themes of the fora in which Qatar has

participated across this timeline is also diverse. From global security challenges at the Munich Security Conference to economic cooperation at the Davos forum. There is thus an increase in Qatari participation in international fora concerning diverse topics.

Limitations

Each variable has yielded considerable results, especially when taking into account the existing limitations and obstacles with which this research was confronted. As a general rule, diplomatic procedures are occasionally veiled in mystery. Infamous "corridor" politics take place behind closed doors, sheltered from the public and, by extension, the author's eyes. As such, setting out to uncover diplomatic outcomes is an ambitious endeavor. In striving to overcome the challenge of diplomacy's confidentiality, the author has attempted to identify variables and corresponding observable implications that are publicly visible. This is both the strength and inherent weakness of the research. The scope of the research focuses on official data that carries a certain ceremonial and prestige function; official *state visits*, for instance, reflect inter-state relations and acknowledgement from one head of state towards another. And yet, the very same corridor politics that carries mystery, also carries substantial diplomatic content. It is these interactions that are the scene for negotiation and interaction. As such, the aim of this research to reveal the official diplomatic outcomes Qatar has reaped, it forgoes the actual content-rich diplomatic interactions that contain the core processes of diplomacy.

In similar fashion, this research falls short in capturing the overarching strategy Qatar has been undertaking since the start of the century. Its "2030 national vision" is aimed at boosting its international integration and competitiveness, as was mentioned in the research design (Brannagan and Giulianotti 2015, 707). Its hosting of the World Cup falls in line with this general strategy, which is directed at a multitude of domains, including technology and economy. As such, observed phenomena are here linked to Qatar's hosting of the World Cup while they should in fact potentially be attributed to other elements of this overarching strategy. Nevertheless, even with more thoroughly contextualized insights, it would be difficult to link specific elements to distinct facets of a same strategy, as it is an organic endeavor. In other words, facets of the same strategy reinforce one another and collectively

yield outcomes.

As phenomena here are attributed to Qatar's hosting of the 2022 World Cup, the recent nature of the event is another limiting factor of this research. All variables adopt a timeline that generally spans from 2012 to 2022. In a timeline of a decade, it is difficult to identify trends. Establishing the ideal length of a timeline enabling trend identification is arguably arbitrary, as decisions may be based on what is more convenient for a researcher. In this research, the concentration of data in a set of years within the selected timeframe serves as a rule of thumb to identify a trend. If the majority of data is concentrated in the last five years of a timeframe, this is deemed sufficient to remark upon an upward trend. The strength of this trend has been nuanced throughout the data analysis section, however. Also in the case of chi square tests where the test statistic was larger than a corresponding critical value, conclusions were careful in interpreting this as a full-fledged confirmation of expectations. Rather, the interpretation of the tests, like the undertaking of the tests themselves, settled for a mere confirmation of a relation between variables.

The prudence with which results were interpreted was also related to the lack of data availability which this research encountered. The aforementioned recent nature of the World Cup and the timeframe of data collection had an impact on the availability of data. In the case of *state visits*, data from visits prior to 2012 was unavailable, and data between 2012 and 2014 was fragmented. Other sources, such as websites of the states involved in visits prior to 2012, might have been able to complement this gap. The tight timeframe in which the research was conducted made investigating this impossible, however. As with the *international fora* variable, data from Qatari sources was the starting point here. While this implicates a lack of earlier data, it did aid the author in collating data more swiftly.

Conclusion

Summary of research

This research began with the statement that regardless of the actual winner of the 2022 World Cup, Qatar had *won*. In the midst of controversial news stories and set against the context of Qatar's authoritarian character, the research was positively triggered to determine if and how Qatar could, in fact, *win*. In order to determine this, it was first necessary to specify what winning entailed here. To this purpose, research took soft power as its starting point. Conceptualizing this made an inherent mismatch between soft power and authoritarianism apparent. Soft power relies on credibility, trust, and confidence. Actors practicing soft power seek not to overrule rivals through forceful coercion, but rather attract them to their cause and enjoy their support. Authoritarianism, conversely, relies on repression and control over others. As such, it is hard to conceive of authoritarians effectively emitting soft power. The controversy and notoriety that surrounds them arguably impairs their attractiveness. Sports offer an interesting venue to overcome this authoritarian handicap. Whether for the improvement of inter-state relations or for self-serving purposes, sports are a familiar domain for the pursuit of political objectives. Within international sports, hosting Sports Mega-Events or SMEs are a particularly interesting vehicle for self-promotion. As host, a state can signal its upcoming integration on the global scene and portray itself as an attractive ally.

It was suggested, both through the possibilities offered by SME hosting and the empirical trends that seemingly confirm this, that hosting allowed authoritarians to overcome their struggle in wielding soft power. By hosting an SME, authoritarians could deploy their soft power and attract others. To ascertain whether this hypothesis was right, a case study about the World Cup in Qatar was conducted. Using the model by Abdi et al. (2018), diplomatic outcomes generated by SME hosting, *cross-cultural communication*, *mutual understanding* and *trust building*, were translated into practical variables that were subsequently applied to the case study. Data collection and analysis followed the method of process-tracing and were partly complemented by the realization of chi square tests.

Conclusions per variable

Concerning the *state visits* variable, linked to the cross-cultural *communication* outcome, a slight upward trend has been identified. A chi square test confirmed the significance of the amount of state visits involving Qatar between 2012 and 2022, and the amount of inbound visits is concentrated in the last 5 years leading up to the World Cup. This would indicate an increase in acknowledgement of Qatar as a diplomatic partner, and these visits would

translate into tightened inter-state relations. A few nuances to this conclusion pertain to the position of those involved in the state visits, which plays no significant role in the decision to conduct an inbound rather than outbound visit. Another nuance pertains to the applicability of the increase of state visits to democracies and non-democracies alike. In other words, there is no discernible increase in visits to Qatar by democracies at the expense of visits by non-democracies.

Regarding the *bilateral treaties* variable, linked to *mutual understanding* outcome, there is, too, a slight increase in the amount of bilateral investment treaties signed by Qatar between 2012 and 2022. This increase seems to be concentrated, similarly, to the last 5 years leading to the World Cup. A chi square test confirms the significance of this data. In an effort to complement these observations, comparison with other states was undertaken, the result of which reflects a prominent global position for Qatar regarding these bilateral treaties. This implies a progress in how Qatar is assessed as a potential treaty partner and host of national investment.

Finally, the *international fora* variable, linked to the *trust building* outcome, also reflects a slight upward trend in participation by Qatari officials in international fora. First-time participation in the form of opening/keynote speeches and panel discussions are, too, concentrated in the last 5 years leading up to the World Cup. In a number of cases, the forum in question has been taking place for multiple decades prior to Qatar's first time participating, indicating a clear evolution in how Qatar is perceived internationally.

General conclusions, limitations, and future research opportunities

These first observations would contribute to a confirmation of the hypothesis that Qatar has successfully wielded soft power during the timeframe leading up to its hosting of the World Cup. The fact that each of these variables witnesses an increase in observable implications in the last 5 years of the selected timeframe reinforces the assumption that Qatar's soft power deployment has taken root in preparation of its hosting of the World Cup. Based on the insights of this research, the hypothesis appears, for the time being, to be confirmed. Through its hosting of the World Cup, as the model by Abdi et al. (2018) suggests, Qatar has been able to translate its hosting efforts into diplomatic outcomes and, by extension, into harnessed soft power.

Naturally, there are limitations that add necessary nuance to this conclusion, which are treated more thoroughly at the end of the analysis section but are summarized here for clarity's sake. Firstly, results of this research might either be reinforced or weakened if a full account of Qatar's diplomatic efforts and interactions were publicly accessible. Undocumented meetings, confidential agreements, or diplomatic failures would complement the findings of this research and provide new insight that might impact this conclusion. Secondly, the full extent of Qatar's overarching "2030 national vision" strategy is yet to be realized and merits research in its own right. Hosting the 2022 World Cup forms a part of this strategy, which may yield additional benefits and culminate in a more substantial soft power deployment. Finally, the recent nature of the World Cup and Qatar's preparation for this global event impair this narrative's completeness. As the dust of the competition starts to settle, new insights may be gathered concerning the durability of the results generated thus far.

This offers interesting venues for future research. When a number of years will have passed since the competition, new consequences to Qatar's hosting of the World Cup will have become apparent. Whether positive or negative, it would pay to investigate the subject and contextualize new findings. Additionally, it must be noted that this research is but a modest stepping stone in researching authoritarians' ability to wield soft power through sports and, more specifically, through SME hosting. As mentioned, this is an empirical trend that merits more research. As more cases of this occur, so too do authoritarians' strategies evolve and does the field of sports diplomacy demand new contributions so as to better interpret this trend. While this research gratefully grasped the opportunity to play a role in this, the timeframe in which it was conducted merely enabled a relatively superficial interpretation of the situation. Each variable could be researched separately, and new variables could be identified. In short, future researchers have a multitude of paths to walk in uncovering who, eventually, *wins*.

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Appendix 1. State visits

2012 (June 5)	Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle	Germany Inbound
2012 (June 7)	Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius	France Outbound
2013 (August 29)	President Mahmoud Abbas	Palestine Inbound
2014 (March 28)	Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier	Germany Outbound
2014 (April 6)	Foreign Minister Zlatko Lagumdžija	Bosnia-Herzegovina Inbound
2014 (April 22)	Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah	Kuwait Outbound
2014 (May 20)	Foreign Minister Mohamed Bazoum	Nigeria Inbound
2014 (May 23)	Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov	Russia Outbound
2014 (May 27)	Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida	Japan Outbound
2014 (May 31)	Foreign Minister Dr. George W. Vella	Malta Inbound
2014 (June 1)	Foreign Minister Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier	Germany Inbound
2014 (June 4)	Foreign Minister Wang Yi	China Outbound
2014 (July 8)	Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa	Uganda Outbound
2014 (July 21)	Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah	Oman Inbound
2014 (July 25)	Foreign Minister Mohamed Abdelaziz	Libya Inbound
2014 (July 25)	Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu	Turkey Inbound
2014 (August 20)	President Mahmoud Abbas	Palestine Inbound
2014	Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu	Turkey

(September 11)		Inbound
2014 (October 21)	President Rafael Correa	Ecuador Inbound
2014 (November 5)	Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah	Kuwait Outbound
2014 (November 18)	Foreign Minister Monji Hamdi	Tunisia Inbound
2014 (November 26)	Foreign Minister Ali Karti	Sudan Inbound
2015 (January 4)	Foreign Minister Mohammed al-Dairi	Libya Inbound
2015 (January 20)	Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu.	Turkey Inbound
2015 (February 3)	Secretary of State John Kerry	USA Outbound
2015 (February 9)	Foreign Minister Dr Nassirou Bako Arifari	Benin Inbound
2015 (March 8)	President Park Geun-hye	South Korea Inbound
2015 March 16	Foreign Minister Mankeur Ndiaye	Senegal Inbound
2015 (April 8)	Foreign Minister Riyadh Yaseen Abdullah	Yemen Inbound
2015 (May 2)	Foreign Minister Riyadh Yaseen Abdullah	Yemen Inbound
2015 (May 20)	President Yoweri Museveni	Uganda Outbound
2015 (May 28)	Foreign Minister Ibrahim Al Jaafari, Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi, President Dr. Fuad Masum	Iraq Outbound
2015 (June 4)	Prime Minister Habib Essid	Tunisia Outbound
2015 (June 9)	Foreign Minister Dr. Riyadh Yaseen Abdullah	Yemen Inbound
2015 (June 16)	Foreign Minister Raşit Meredow	Turkmenistan Outbound
2015 (June 17)	President Nursultan Nazarbayev	Kazakhstan Outbound

2015 (July 5)	Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki	Palestine Outbound
2015 (July 25)	Foreign Minister Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir	Saudi Arabia Inbound
2015 (July 26)	Foreign Minister Dr. Mohammad Javad Zarif	Iran Inbound
2015 (July 28)	Prime Minister Yahya Ould Hademine and Foreign Minister Fatma Vall bint Soueinae	Mauritania Outbound
2015 (August 1)	Minister of Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah	Oman Inbound
2015 (August 2)	Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov	Russia Inbound
2015 (August 4)		Yemen Inbound
2015 (September 4)	President Dr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai	Afghanistan Outbound
2015 (September 6)	Foreign Minister Mohamed El-Ghirani	Libya Inbound
2015 (October 10)	Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlioğlu	Turkey Inbound
2015 (October 13)	Foreign Minister Igor Crnadak	Bosnia Herzegovina Inbound
2015 (October 14)	Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida	Japan Inbound
2015 (November 25)	President Nicolas Maduro	Venezuela Outbound
2016 (January 18)	Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov	Russia Outbound
2016 (February 15)	Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah	Kuwait Outbound
2016 (February 17)	Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah	Oman Outbound
2016 (February 17)	Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan	Abu Dhabi Outbound
2016 (February 18)	Foreign Minister Abdulmalik Al-Mekhlafi	Yemen Inbound
2016	Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa and	Bahrain

(February 24)	Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa	Outbound
2016 (March 3)	Foreign Minister Eladio Loizaga	Paraguay Inbound
2016 (March 8)	Prime Minister Artur Rəsizadə and President Ilham Aliyev	Azerbaijan Outbound
2016 (March 18)	Foreign Minister of Djibouti Mahmoud Ali Youssouf	Djibouti Outbound
2016 (March 28)	Foreign Minister Khemaies Jhinaoui	Tunisia Outbound
2016 (March 31)	Foreign Minister Stephane Dion	Canada Outbound
2016 (April 27)	Crown Prince Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan	Abu Dhabi Outbound
2016 (May 1)	Crown Prince and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan	Abu Dhabi Inbound
2016 (May 11)	Foreign Minister Wang Yi	China Inbound
2016 (June 22)	Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah	Oman Inbound
2016 (July 26)	Foreign Minister Maria Angela Holguin	Colombia Outbound
2016 (July 28)	President Mauricio Macri	Argentina Outbound
2016 (July 30)	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, and Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu	Turkey Outbound
2016 (August 28)	Prime Minister Erna Solberg and Foreign Minister Børge Brende	Norway Outbound
2016 (September 1)	President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow and Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov	Turkmenistan Outbound
2016 (September 4)	Foreign Minister Kentaro Sonoura	Japan Inbound
2016 (September 5)	Foreign Minister Vijay Kumar Singh	India Inbound
2016 (October 5)	President Tony Tan Keng and Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan	Singapore Outbound
2016 (October 7)	Prime Minister Mohammad Najib Tun Abdul Razak	Malaysia Outbound

2016 (October 29)	Crown Prince and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan	Abu Dhabi Outbound
2016 (November 1)	Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu	Turkey Inbound
2016 (November 3)	Foreign Minister Rasit Meredow	Turkmenistan Inbound
2016 (November 4)	Foreign Minister Abdulmalik Al-Mekhlafi	Yemen Inbound
2016 (November 11)	President Beji Caid Essebsi	Algeria Outbound
2016 (November 12)	Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal and Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra	Algeria Outbound
2016 (November 17)	Foreign Minister Julie Bishop	Australia Inbound
2016 (November 19)	Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault	France Inbound
2016 (November 23)	Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez	Cuba Inbound
2016 (November 22)	Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra	Algeria Inbound
2016 (November 23)	Prime Minister-designate Saad Al Hariri and Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil	Lebanon Outbound
2016 (November 30)	Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni	Italy Outbound
2016 (December 20)	Foreign Minister Workneh Gebeyehu and President Mulatu Teshome	Ethiopia Outbound
2016 (December 26)	Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu	Turkey Inbound
2017 (January 9)	Foreign Affairs Minister Nasser Judeh	Jordan Inbound
2017 (January 11)	Foreign Minister Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat	Nepal Inbound
2017 (January 19)	Prime Minister Dato' Sri Mohammad Najib Tun Abdul Razak and Foreign Minister Dato' Sri Anifah Aman	Malaysia Outbound
2017 (January 30)	Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić and President Tomislav Nikolić	Serbia Outbound
2017 (January 30)	President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi	Yemen Inbound

2017 (January 31)	President Ilham Aliyev	Azerbaijan Outbound
2017 (February 4)	Foreign Minister Angelino Alfano	Italy Outbound
2017 (February 6)	Foreign Minister Børge Brende	Norway Inbound
2017 (February 6)	Foreign Minister Sirodjidin Aslov	Tajikistan Inbound
2017 (February 13)	Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson	UK Outbound
2017 (February 15)	Secretary of State Rex Tillerson	USA Outbound
2017 (February 27)	Foreign Minister Abdulmalik Al Mekhlafi	Yemen Inbound
2017 (March 5)	Foreign Minister Murray McCully	New Zealand Inbound
2017 (March 8)	Foreign Minister Mohammad-Javad Zarif	Iran Inbound
2017 (March 8)	Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi and King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein	Jordan Inbound
2017 (March 9)	Foreign Minister Amina Mohamed Jibril	Kenya Outbound
2017 (March 10)	President Jacob Zuma and Foreign Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane	South Africa Outbound
2017 (March 14)	Minister of Foreign Affairs Rasit Meredow	Turkmenistan Inbound
2017 (March 18)	President Mahmoud Abbas	Palestine Inbound
2017 (March 25)	Foreign Minister Ayman Al Safadi	Jordan Inbound
2017 (March 25)	Foreign Minister Salaheddine Mezouar	Morocco Inbound
2017 (March 26)	Prime Minister Fayez Al Sarraj	Libya Inbound
2017 (March 27)	Foreign State Secretary Pascale Baeriswyl	Switzerland Outbound
2017	Prime Minister Umaro Sissoco Embalo	Guinea-Bissau

(April 1)		Inbound
2017 (April 10)	President Dr. Mulatu Teshome	Ethiopia Outbound
2017 (April 11)	President Uhuru Kenyatta	Kenya Outbound
2017 (April 11)	President Jacob Zuma	South Africa Outbound
2017 (April 15)	Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov	Russia Outbound
2017 (April 18)	Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa	Uganda Inbound
2017 (April 23)	Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov	Kazakhstan Inbound
2017 (April 25)	Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu	Turkey Inbound
2017 (May 1)	King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud	Saudi Arabia Outbound
2017 (May 5)	President Andrzej Duda	Poland Outbound
2017 (May 7)	Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali	Bangladesh Inbound
2017 (May 8)	Secretary of State Rex Tillerson	USA Outbound
2017 (May 13)	Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre	Somalia Inbound
2017 (May 13)	Foreign Minister Sirodjidin Aslov	Tajikistan Inbound
2017 (May 13)	Foreign Minister Dato' Sri Anifah Aman of Malaysia	Malaysia Inbound
2017 (May 16)	Foreign Minister Adel bin Ahmed Al Jubeir	Saudi Arabia Inbound
2017 (May 18)	Foreign Minister Barry Mamadou Alpha	Burkina Faso Inbound
2017 (May 25)	President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo	Somalia Inbound
2017 (June 5)	Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah	Oman Inbound

2017 (June 7)	Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah	Kuwait Inbound
2017 (June 9)	Foreign Minister Sigmar Hartmut Gabriel	Germany Inbound
2017 (June 11)	Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre	Somalia Outbound
2017 (June 12)	Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian	France Outbound
2017 (June 12)	Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson	UK Outbound
2017 (June 12)	Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn	Ethiopia Outbound
2017 (June 13)	President Omar Hassan Ahmed Al Bashir	Sudan Outbound
2017 (June 14)	Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu	Turkey Inbound
2017 (June 14)	President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa	Uganda Outbound
2017 (June 15)	Foreign Minister Abdelkader Messahel	Algeria Outbound
2017 (June 16)	President Beji Caid Essebsi	Tunisia Outbound
2017 (June 18)	Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian	Armenia Inbound
2017 (June 27)	Secretary of State Rex Tillerson	USA Outbound
2017 (June 30)	President Alpha Condé	Guinea Outbound
2017 (July 1)	Foreign Minister Angelino Alfano	Italy Outbound
2017 (July 3)	Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah	Kuwait Outbound
2017 (July 4)	Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel	Germany Inbound
2017 (July 8)	Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson	UK Inbound
2017 (July 9)	Foreign Minister Ravi Karunanayake	Sri Lanka Inbound

2017 (July 10)	Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah	Oman Outbound
2017 (July 11)	Secretary of State Rex Tillerson	USA Inbound
2017 (July 11)	Foreign Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane	South Africa Inbound
2017 (July 14)	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu	Turkey Outbound
2017 (July 15)	Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian	France Inbound
2017 (July 18)	Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif	Pakistan Outbound
2017 (July 20)	Foreign Minister Wang Yi	China Outbound
2017 (July 26)	Secretary of State Rex Tillerson	USA Outbound
2017 (August 2)	Foreign Minister Angelino Alfano	Italy Inbound
2017 (August 4)	Prime Minister Ana Brnabić	Serbia Outbound
2017 (August 5)	President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic	Croatia Outbound
2017 (August 6)	Foreign Minister Abdelkader Messahel	Algeria Inbound
2017 (August 9)	Foreign Minister Teodor Melescanu	Romania Outbound
2017 (August 17)	Foreign Minister Margot Wallström	Sweden Outbound
2017 (August 18)	Foreign Minister Børge Brende	Norway Outbound
2017 (August 30)	Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov	Russia Inbound
2017 (September 3)	Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian	France Inbound
2017 (September 9)	Foreign Minister Taro Kono	Japan Inbound
2017 (September 12)	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu	Turkey Outbound

2017 (September 15)	Chancellor Angela Merkel	Germany Outbound
2017 (September 15)	President Emmanuel Macron	France Outbound
2017 (October 3)	Foreign Minister Dr Mohammad Javad Zarif	Iran Inbound
2017 (October 4)	Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin	Ukraine Inbound
2017 (October 22)	Secretary of State Rex Tillerson	USA Inbound
2017 (October 23)	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	Turkey Outbound
2017 (October 25)	President Maithripala Sirisena	Sri Lanka Inbound
2017 (November 1)	Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni	Italy Inbound
2017 (November 7)	Foreign Minister Dr. Ibrahim Al Jaafari	Iraq Inbound
2017 (November 7)	Foreign Minister Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey	Ghana Inbound
2017 (November 9)	Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah	Kuwait Outbound
2017 (November 11)	Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah	Oman Outbound
2017 (November 9)	Foreign Minister George Katrougalos	Greece Outbound
2017 (November 13)	Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn	Ethiopia Inbound
2017 (November 20)	Secretary of State Rex Tillerson	USA Outbound
2017 (November 21)	Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel	Germany Outbound
2017 (November 23)	Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson	UK Outbound
2017 (November 28)	Foreign Minister Masahisa Sato	Japan Inbound
2017 (December 10)	President Beji Caid Essebsi and Foreign Minister Khemaies Jhinaoui	Tunisia Outbound

2017 (December 11)	Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh	Vietnam Oubound
2017 (December 16)	President Mahmoud Abbas	Palestine Inbound
2017 (December 19)	Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia and Foreign Minister Abdelkader Messahel	Algeria Outbound
2018 (January 16)	Foreign Minister Hugo Martinez	El Salvador Inbound
2018 (February 14)	Foreign Minister Ciarán Cannon	Republic of Ireland Inbound
2018 (February 25)	Foreign Minister of Togo Robert Dussey	Togo Inbound
2018 (March 1)	Foreign Minister Angelino Alfano	Italy Inbound
2018 (March 4)	Prime Minister Boyko Borissov	Bulgaria Outbound
2018 (March 11)	Foreign Minister Prof. Ibrahim Ghandour	Sudan Outbound
2018 (March 22)	Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian	France Outbound
2018 (March 26)	President Vladimir Putin	Russia Outbound
2018 (March 27)	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	Turkey Outbound
2018 (April 2)	Foreign Minister Antonio Rodrigue	Haiti Inbound
2018 (April 10)	President Donald Trump	USA Outbound
2018 (April 10)	Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov	Russia Outbound
2018 (April 15)	Foreign Minister Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan	Singapore Inbound
2018 (April 15)	Foreign Minister M. J. Akbar	India Inbound
2018 (April 29)	Foreign Minister Robert Dussey	Togo Inbound

2018 (May 3)	President Lenin Moreno	Ecuador Outbound
2018 (May 7)	Foreign Minister Aurélien Agbenonci	Benin Inbound
2018 (May 8)	President-elect Mario Abdo Benitez and president Horacio Cartes	Paraguay Outbound
2018 (May 12)	Foreign Minister Workneh Gebeyehu	Ethiopia Inbound
2018 (May 13)	President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo	Somalia Inbound
2018 (May 13)	Foreign Minister Jorge Faure	Argentina Outbound
2018 (May 14)	Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah	Kuwait Inbound
2018 (June 3)	Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov	Uzbekistan Inbound
2018 (June 5)	Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah	Oman Inbound
2018 (June 8)	Foreign Minister Al Dirdiri Mohamed Ahmed	Sudan Inbound
2018 (June 22)	Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte	Italy Outbound
2018 (June 26)	Secretary of State Mike Pompeo	USA Outbound
2018 (July 5)	Foreign Minister Stef Blok	Netherlands Outbound
2018 (July 5)	President Khaltmaagiin Battulga	Mongolia Outbound
2018 (July 9)	Foreign Minister Wang Yi	China Outbound
2018 (August 8)	President Mahmoud Abbas	Palestine Inbound
2018 (August 15)	President Rodrigo Duterte	Philippines Outbound
2018 (August 17)	Prime Minister Lee Nak-yeon and Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha	South Korea Outbound
2018 (August 22)	Secretary of State Mike Pompeo	USA Outbound

2018 (September 12)	Foreign Minister Karin Kneissl	Austria Outbound
2018 (September 13)	Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and Foreign Minister Josep Borrell	Spain Outbound
2018 (September 19)	President Prokopis Pavlopoulos, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, and Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias	Greece Outbound
2018 (October 12)	President Cyril Ramaphosa	South Africa Outbound
2018 (October 19)	Prime Minister Imran Khan and Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi	Pakistan Outbound
2018 (October 22)	Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov	Uzbekistan Outbound
2018 (October 24)	Prime Minister Kokhir Rasulzoda and Foreign Minister Sirodjiddin Muhriddin	Tajikistan Outbound
2018 (October 27)	President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo and Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre	Somalia Outbound
2018 (November 7)	President Barham Salih, Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi and Foreign Minister Mohammed Ali Al-Hakim	Iraq Outbound
2018 (December 13)	Foreign Minister Jorge Faure	Argentina Inbound
2018 (December 30)	Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi	Pakistan Inbound
2019 (January 7)	Foreign Minister Khemaies Jhinaoui	Tunisia Inbound
2019 (January 12)	Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani	Oman Inbound
2019 (January 10)	Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Al Hakim	Iraq Inbound
2019 (January 13)	Secretary of State Mike Pompeo	USA Inbound
2019 (January 15)	Foreign Minister Mamadou Tangara	Gambia Inbound
2019 (February 11)	Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian	France Inbound
2019 (February 28)	Foreign Minister Manuel Domingos Augusto	Angola Inbound
2019 (March 4)	Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov	Russia Inbound

2019 (March 4)	Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov	Uzbekistan Inbound
2019 (March 8)	Foreign Minister Dr Mohamad Maliki bin Osman	Singapore Outbound
2019 (March 17)	Foreign Minister Bocchit Edmond	Haiti Inbound
2019 (March 20)	President Mauricio Macri and Foreign Minister Jorge Faure	Argentina Outbound
2019 (March 20)	Foreign Minister Dr. Dardari Mohammed Ahmed	Sudan Inbound
2019 (March 21)	President John Pombe Magufuli	Tanzania Outbound
2019 (March 22)	President Paul Kagame and Prime Minister Edouard Ngirente	Rwanda Outbound
2019 (April 10)	Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu	Turkey Outbound
2019 (April 11)	Foreign Minister Heiko Maas	Germany Outbound
2019 (April 12)	Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian	France Outbound
2019 (April 15)	Prime Minister Giuseppe Conti and Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi	Italy Outbound
2019 (April 24)	Foreign Minister Lesego Makgothi	Lesotho Inbound
2019 (April 25)	Secretary of State Mike Pompeo	USA Outbound
2019 (April 28)	Foreign Minister Ahmed Isse Awad	Somalia Inbound
2019 (May 2)	Foreign Minister George Katrougalos	Greece Inbound
2019 (June 11)	Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah	Oman Inbound
2019 (June 20)	Prime Minister Viorica Dancila	Romania Outbound
2019 (August 11)	Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif	Iran Inbound
2019 (August 19)	President Sahle-Work Zewde and Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre	Ethiopia Outbound

2019 (August 20)	President Uhuru Kenyatta and Foreign Minister Monica Juma	Kenya Outbound
2019 (August 28)	President Halimah Yacob and Foreign Minister Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan	Singapore Outbound
2019 (August 30)	Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai	Thailand Outbound
2019 (September 1)	Foreign Minister Saifuddin bin Abdullah	Malaysia Inbound
2019 (September 2)	Foreign Minister Mamadou Tangara	Gambia Inbound
2019 (September 4)	Foreign Minister Denis Moncada Colindres	Nicaragua Inbound
2019 (September 12)	Foreign Minister Stef Blok	Netherlands Inbound
2019 (October 4)	Foreign Minister Paul Greene	Barbuda and Antigua Inbound
2019 (October 19)	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	Turkey Outbound
2019 (October 22)	Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto	Hungary Inbound
2019 (October 27)	Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah	Oman Inbound
2019 (October 30)	Foreign Minister Tomáš Petříček	Czechia Inbound
2019 (November 5)	King Al-Sultan Abdullah Riayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah	Malaysia Outbound
2019 (November 12)	Secretary of State Mike Pompeo	USA Outbound
2020 (January 4)	President Dr. Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif	Iran Outbound
2020 (January 15)	President Dr. Barham Salih and Foreign Minister Mohammed Ali Karim	Iraq Outbound
2020 (January 18)	Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi	Pakistan Inbound
2020 (January 18)	Foreign Minister Ezechiel Nibigira	Burundi Inbound
2020 (January	Foreign Minister Mamadou Tangara	Gambia

19)		Inbound
2020 (January 20)	Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Foreign Minister Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah	Kuwait Outbound
2020 (January 29)	Foreign Minister Mohammed Shahriar Alam	Bangladesh Inbound
2020 (January 4)	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu	Turkey Outbound
2020 (February 9)	Foreign Minister Dr Bisera Turković	Bosnia-Herzegovina Inbound
2020 (February 17)	Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed and Foreign Minister Dr. Abdul Kalam Abdul Momen	Bangladesh Outbound
2020 (February 18)	Foreign Minister Philippe Goffin	Belgium Outbound
2020 (March 1)	Vice-president Dr. Delcy Rodriguez Gomes	Venezuela Inbound
2020 (March 4)	Foreign Minister Heiko Maas	Germany Outbound
2020 (March 8)	Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa	Uganda Inbound
2020 (March 4)	Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian	France Outbound
2020 (May 10)	Foreign Minister Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al Mohammad Al Sabah	Kuwait Inbound
2020 (May 18)	Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah	Oman Inbound
2020 (August 23)	Foreign Minister Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al Mohammad Al Sabah	Kuwait Outbound
2020 (August 25)	President Michel Aoun and Foreign Minister Charbel Wehbe	Lebanon Outbound
2020 (September 23)	Foreign Minister Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah	Kuwait Inbound
2020 (September 24)	Foreign Minister Ally Coulibaly	Côte d'Ivoire Inbound
2020 (October 14)	Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Foreign Minister Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah	Kuwait Outbound
2020 (October	Foreign Minister Dr Bisera Turković	Bosnia-Herzegovina

18)		Inbound
2020 (October 26)	Foreign Minister Mohamed Al-Taher Siala	Libya Inbound
2020 (October 28)	Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto	Finland Inbound
2020 (November 15)	Foreign Minister Othman Jerandi	Tunisia Inbound
2020 (December 10)	Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian	France Inbound
2020 (December 20)	Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio	Italy Inbound
2020 (December 23)	Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov	Russia Outbound
2020 (December 28)	Foreign Minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar	India Inbound
2021 (January 4)	Foreign Minister Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah	Kuwait Inbound
2021 (January 20)	Foreign Minister Evarist Bartolo	Malta Inbound
2021 (February 1)	Foreign Minister-designate Omar Gamar Aldin Ismail	Sudan Inbound
2021 (February 9)	President Michel Aoun and (Caretaker) Prime Minister Dr. Hassan Diab	Lebanon Outbound
2021 (February 10)	Foreign Minister Arancha Gonzalez Laya	Spain Inbound
2021 (February 11)	Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu	Turkey Inbound
2021 (February 11)	Foreign Minister Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi	Indonesia Inbound
2021 (February 15)	Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif	Iran Outbound
2021 (February 17)	Prime Minister-designate Saad Al Hariri	Lebanon Inbound
2021 (February 22)	Foreign Minister Dr. Ayman Al-Safadi	Jordan Inbound
2021 (February 25)	Foreign Minister Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah	Kuwait Inbound

2021 (March 7)	Foreign Minister Ahmad Awad bin Mubarak	Yemen Inbound
2021 (March 8)	Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah Al-Saud	Saudi Arabia Inbound
2021 (March 11)	Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu	Turkey Inbound
2021 (March 11)	Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov	Russia Inbound
2021 (March 15)	Foreign Minister Abdullah Shahid	Maldives Inbound
2021 (March 16)	Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein	Iraq Inbound
2021 (March 21)	Foreign Minister Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed	Mauritania Inbound
2021 (March 24)	Foreign Minister Mustafa Al Kadhimi	Iraq Outbound
2021 (March 27)	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	Turkey Outbound
2021 (March 29)	Foreign Minister Dr Bisera Turković	Bosnia-Herzegovina Inbound
2021 (April 5)	Foreign Minister Amine Abba Sidick	Chad Inbound
2021 (April 8)	Foreign Minister Evarist Bartolo	Malta Inbound
2021 (April 11)	Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov	Uzbekistan Inbound
2021 (April 25)	Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif	Iran Inbound
2021 (April 26)	Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah Al Saud	Saudi Arabia Inbound
2021 (May 23)	Head of government Abdul Hamid Al Dbeiba	Libya Outbound
2021 (May 24)	Prime Minister of Sudan Dr. Abdalla Hamdok	Sudan Outbound
2021 (May 25)	Foreign Minister Sameh Shokri	Egypt Outbound
2021 (May 26)	Foreign Minister Redwan Hussien	Ethiopia Inbound

2021 (May 31)	President Hichem Mechichi	Tunisia Inbound
2021 (June 9)	President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov	Uzbekistan Outbound
2021 (June 10)	President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tleuberdi	Kazakhstan Outbound
2021 (June 14)	Foreign Minister Sameh Shokri	Egypt Inbound
2021 (June 15)	Foreign Minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar	India Inbound
2021 (June 16)	Foreign Minister Najla El Mangoush	Libya Inbound
2021 (June 16)	Foreign Minister Mohammed Abdul Razzaq	Somalia Inbound
2021 (June 27)	Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio	Italy Outbound
2021 (July 4)	Foreign Minister Robert Dussey	Togo Inbound
2021 (July 6)	President Michel Aoun	Lebanon Outbound
2021 (July 11)	Foreign Minister Mahamat Zene Cherif	Chad Inbound
2021 (July 22)	Secretary of State Anthony Blinken	USA Outbound
2021 (July 25)	President-elect Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif	Iran Outbound
2021 (August 8)	Foreign Minister Mohammed Shahriar Alam	Bangladesh Inbound
2021 (August 16)	King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein and Foreign Minister Dr. Ayman Al-Safadi	Jordan Outbound
2021 (August 19)	Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah	Kuwait Inbound
2021 (August 20)	Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar	India Inbound
2021 (August 26)	Foreign Minister Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi	Indonesia Inbound
2021 (August 25)	Acting Foreign Minister Dr. Musaed bin Mohammed Al Aiban	Saudi Arabia Outbound

2021 (August 31)	Foreign Minister Heiko Maas	Germany Inbound
2021 (September 1)	Foreign Minister Sigrid Kaag	Netherlands Inbound
2021 (September 2)	Foreign State Secretary Dominic Raab	UK Inbound
2021 (September 5)	Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio	Italy Inbound
2021 (September 7)	Secretary of State Anthony Blinken	USA Inbound
2021 (September 9)	Prime Minister Imran Khan	Pakistan Outbound
2021 (September 9)	Foreign Minister Dr. Hossein Amir Abdollahian	Iran Outbound
2021 (September 10)	Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu	Turkey Outbound
2021 (September 11)	Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov	Russia Outbound
2021 (September 13)	Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian	France Inbound
2021 (September 14)	Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares Bueno	Spain Inbound
2021 (October 4)	Foreign Minister Abdirizak Mohamud	Somalia Inbound
2021 (October 6)	Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Al Dbeiba	Libya Inbound
2021 (October 6)	Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan	Abu Dhabi Outbound
2021 (October 12)	Foreign Minister Ayman Al Safadi	Jordan Inbound
2021 (October 18)	President Ilham Aliyev and Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov	Azerbaijan Outbound
2021 (October 19)	President Luis Lacalle Pou	Uruguay Outbound
2021 (October 21)	Foreign Secretary Liz Truss	UK Inbound
2021 (October 24)	Prime Minister Fadil Novalić and Foreign Minister Dr. Bisera Turković	Bosnia-Herzegovina Inbound

2021 (October 26)	Foreign Minister Wang Yi	China Inbound
2021 (October 27)	Foreign Minister Michael Linhart	Austria Inbound
2021 (November 4)	President Borut Pahor, Prime Minister Janez Jansa and Foreign Minister Dr. Anze Logar	Slovenia Outbound
2021 (November 8)	Foreign Minister Batmunkh Battsetseg	Mongolia Inbound
2021 (November 17)	Vice-president Raquel Peña de Antuña	Dominican Republic Inbound
2021 (November 20)	Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta	New Zealand Inbound
2021 (November 23)	Foreign Minister Mamadou Tangara	Gambia Inbound
2021 (December 17)	Foreign Minister Evarist Bartolo	Malta Inbound
2022 (January 14)	Foreign Minister Dr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian	Iran Inbound
2022 (January 14)	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	Turkey Outbound
2022 (January 16)	Foreign Minister Mahamat Zene Cherif	Chad Inbound
2022 (January 18)	Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra	Algeria Inbound
2022 (January 19)	Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Foreign Minister Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah	Kuwait Outbound
2022 (January 24)	Foreign Minister Erika Mouynes	Panama Outbound
2022 (January 26)	President Luis Abinader and Vice-president Raquel Peña de Antuña	Dominican Republic Outbound
2022 (January 27)	President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Dr. Hossein Amir Abdollahian	Iran Outbound
2022 (February 6)	Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto	Finland Inbound
2022 (February 9)	Foreign Minister Dr. Anze Logar	Slovenia Inbound

2022 (February 9)	Foreign Minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar	India Inbound
2022 (February 14)	Prime Minister Mario Draghi	Italy Outbound
2022 (February 24)	Foreign Ministers Thomas Byrne and Simon Coveney	Republic of Ireland Outbound
2022 (February 25)	Foreign Minister Dr. David J. Francis	Sierra Leone Inbound
2022 (March 5)	Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio	Italy Inbound
2022 (March 9)	Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock	Germany Outbound
2022 (March 10)	Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian	France Outbound
2022 (March 14)	Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov	Russia Outbound
2022 (May 28)	President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi and Foreign Minister Sameh Shokri	Egypt Outbound
2022 (May 12)	Foreign Minister João Cravinho	Portugal Outbound
2022 (June 6)	Secretary of State Anthony Blinken	USA Outbound
2022 (June 22)	Foreign Minister Najla El Mangoush	Libya Inbound
2022 (June 28)	Foreign Minister Dr. Ayman Al Safadi	Jordan Inbound
2022 (July 6)	Foreign Minister Dr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian	Iran Outbound
2022 (July 11)	Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna	France Outbound
2022 (July 25)	President Luis Abinader and Vice-president Raquel Peña de Antuña	Dominican Republic Outbound
2022 (July 26)	Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard Casaubon	Mexico Outbound
2022 (July 27)	President Nicolas Maduro and Vice-president Dr. Delcy Rodriguez	Venezuela Outbound

2022 (August 11)	President Halimah Yacob	Singapore Outbound
2022 (August 12)	King Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah and Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah	Malaysia Outbound
2022 (August 15)	Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son	Vietnam Outbound
2022 (August 18)	President Yoon Suk-yeol and Foreign Minister Park Jin	South Korea Outbound
2022 (August 23)	Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah	Kuwait Outbound
2022 (August 31)	President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev	Kazakhstan Outbound
2022 (September 5)	Foreign Minister Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah	Kuwait Inbound
2022 (October 3)	Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides	Cyprus Inbound
2022 (October 9)	Foreign Minister Zheenbek Kulubaev	Kyrgyzstan Inbound
2022 (October 27)	Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky	Czechia Inbound
2022 (November 8)	Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi	Japan Outbound

Appendix 2. Bilateral treaties

2022 (October 12)	Kazakhstan
2022 (June 21)	Georgia
2018 (December 13)	Somalia
2018 (November 15)	Rwanda
2018 (September 17)	Côte d'Ivoire
2018 (April 30)	Togo
2018 (March 20)	Ukraine
2018 (February 11)	Paraguay
2017 (November 14)	Ethiopia
2017 (October 17)	Singapore
2016 (November 7)	Serbia
2016 (November 6)	Argentina
2014 (December 8)	Kyrgyzstan
2014 (April 13)	Kenya
2012 (December 10)	Moldova
2012 (May 22)	Sri Lanka
2012 (January 21)	Timor-Leste

Appendix 3. International fora

Date	Official	Forum
2012 (February 5)	Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah	Munich Security Conference
2013 (February 3)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Munich Security Conference
2014 (February 2)	Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah	Munich Security Conference
2015 (February 8)	Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah	Munich Security Conference
2015 (December 10)	Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammad Al-Attiyah	Rome Med/Mediterranean Dialogue
2016 (February 14)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Munich Security Conference
2016 (May 24)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	World Humanitarian Forum
2016 (November 20)	Prime Minister Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani	World Policy Conference
2016 (November 29)	Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani	International Conference on Supporting the Economy and Investment
2016 (December 1)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Rome Med/Mediterranean Dialogue
2017 (January 15)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Informal Retreat on Security Council Reform of the UN
2017 (November 3)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	World Policy Conference
2017 (November 23)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Westminster Counterterrorism Conference
2017 (December 2)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Rome Med/Mediterranean Dialogue

2018 (January 23)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	World Economic Forum
2018 (February 16)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Munich Security Conference
2018 (October 28)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	World Policy Conference
2019 (January 22)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	World Economic Forum
2019 (February 17)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Munich Security Conference
2019 (April 6)	Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani	Inter-parliamentary Union
2019 (September 23)	Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani	UN Climate Action Summit
2019 (September 23)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Concordia Summit
2019 (October 12)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	World Policy Conference
2019 (December 6)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Rome Med/Mediterranean Dialogue
2019 (December 19)	Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani	Kuala Lumpur Summit
2020 (February 20)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Munich Security Conference
2020 (June 4)	Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani	Global Vaccine Summit
2020 (November 25)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Rome Med/Mediterranean Dialogue
2021 (June 4)	Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani	St. Petersburg International Economic Forum
2021 (June 4)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign	St. Petersburg International

	Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Economic Forum
2021 (October 12)	Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani	G20 Extraordinary meeting on Afghanistan
2021 (December 2)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Rome Med/Mediterranean Dialogue
2022 (May 23)	Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani	World Economic Forum
2022 (December 1)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani	Rome Med/Mediterranean Dialogue
2023 (March 5)	Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani	UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries