

World Cup and Global Politics



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THE WORLD CUP AND GLOBAL POLITICS PROJECT

Thanks to generous support from the [Balsillie School of International Affairs](#) (BSIA) in Waterloo (Ontario, Canada), scholars from Wilfrid Laurier University’s Department of Kinesiology & Physical Education ([Tim Elcombe](#), [Alanna Harman](#)) in Canada and Cardiff Metropolitan University’s School of Sport & Health Sciences ([Alun Hardman](#)) in the United Kingdom have collaborated, along with students from the BSIA, to develop a World Cup and International Affairs resource to coincide with the 2022 event hosted by Qatar.

The 2022 Men’s World Cup has been riddled with sport governance and global political tensions since the naming of Qatar as 2010 host (the same day FIFA awarded Russia the 2018 edition). From state-sponsored bribery scandals to migrant worker deaths, questions about the feasibility of a tiny nation to stage such a massive sporting event in a desert climate with little football infrastructure, and ongoing criticisms regarding human rights, Qatar 2022 reveals deep intersections between mega-sport and global politics. With Russia hosting both the 2014 Winter Olympics and 2018 FIFA Men’s World Cup, as well as Beijing’s 2022 Winter Olympics and numerous examples of Arabian Peninsula state investment in mega-sport such as [Formula 1 racing](#), the new [LIV golf tour](#), and [purchases of high-profile football clubs](#) in France (Paris St. Germain) and England (Manchester City, Newcastle United), a new term – “sportswashing” – entered the public vernacular in the past decade. The popularity and commercial scale of mega-sport, as well as the passion and attachment it fosters amongst supporters and citizens, creates strategic opportunities for states to “[invest, engage, and present identities](#)” to the world; or for those taking a more cynical view, a space to spread the illusion of global development through “[bread and circus](#)” activities all the while [manipulating and selling inauthentic “images”](#).

The interconnection between mega-sport and global politics has a long and intricate history – particularly through the “world’s game”. Many fine academic and journalistic works explore these interconnections, including CLR James’ incomparable book on the West Indies and cricket ([Beyond a Boundary](#)) and Mark Dyreson’s exploration of the evolution of the American sporting empire ([Making the American Dream](#)). More football-specific works include multiple books by Jonathan Wilson (e.g. [Inverting the Pyramid](#), [Angels With Dirty Faces](#)), David Conn ([The Fall of the House of FIFA](#); [Richer Than God](#)), Franklin Foer ([How Soccer Explains the World](#)), Simon Kupfer ([Soccer Against the Enemy](#)), James Montague’s particularly relevant Middle East soccer analysis ([When Friday Comes](#)), and the all-encompassing [The Ball Is Round](#) by David Goldblatt – whose detailed and intricate political history of football serves as a resource for much of this background document.

As a pilot project, the World Cup and International Affairs Project aims to advance critical understanding of the political significance of football through examining issues that surround the game’s quadrennial global showpiece, the FIFA World Cup. The project is a platform for dialogue, discussion and research that fosters collaborative engagement throughout the BSIA network. Content will include this “primer” that outlines the history of the World Cup and intersections with global politics and highlights key events leading up to the Qatar World Cup, international affairs profiles of the 32 participating nations, comparisons and World Cup rankings through several social,

political, and sporting metrics of the competing states, and daily briefs that will highlight issues of global political interest relative to the day's fixtures.

This work only scratches the surface of the connections between mega-sport, particularly association football (soccer) and international affairs. As such, links to more detailed resources will be provided. And at the conclusion of the 2022 World Cup, all the materials generated prior to, and throughout the tournament will be compiled to create a "legacy document" exploring the interconnections between mega-sport and global politics.

We begin with an overview of the governance of the "world's game".

FIFA AND THE GOVERNANCE THE WORLD'S GAME

The history of ball games, including those prioritizing "kicking", date back to earliest civilizations. But the modern version of what Brazilian football legend Pelé called "the beautiful game" truly came into being at an 1863 [meeting of eleven clubs at the Freemasons' Tavern in London](#). This new Football Association (FA) formalized a set of rules to distinguish association football from other forms of the game, including rugby football. As gatekeepers of this modern (organized, rational) ball game, the FA also imposed its British sensibilities into football's institutional framework – particularly the amateur ideals fostered in British public school "gentleman" training through sport. But the game rapidly spread [from the elite schools to the working class](#). Soon teams representing factories and communities appeared, transforming the game into a [professionalized and ubiquitous presence in British society](#) – across all classes.

With British ambitions of empire building through colonization, trade, and military expansion in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the British version of game "followed the flag" and spread globally. Due to its simplicity football was a game even the poorest of the poor people could play and excel – and [South American teams](#) in particular began to develop strong national teams. Added to the second edition (1900) of the revived Olympics, British teams took gold in three of the first four Games. But emblematic of the FA's attitude towards international competition, no British teams competed in 1904 – opening the door for a [team from Galt, Canada](#) to win, with squads from the United States capturing both silver and bronze in St. Louis. The home nations of Great Britain – England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales – perceived international championships as less significant than their own competitions. In 1920, continental European nations dominated the Olympics, and in the 1924 and 1928 Games – again with no British participation – Uruguay captured gold.

Concurrent with the early years of Olympic (amateur) football competition, European nations created a body – *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) – to govern the increased interest in inter-nation competitions in 1904. British FAs did not join initially, but by 1914 the "home nations", as well as South Africa, Argentina, Chile, Canada, and the United States FAs were members. As organizers of the Olympic event starting in 1908, FIFA's control of international football quickly grew. With the 1932 Olympics planned for Los Angeles, the United States' relative

disinterest in the (non-American) game combined with restrictive amateur regulations pushed FIFA, [led by President Jules Rimet, to create their own world championship](#). Uruguay, the two-time reigning champion, offered to host (and financially reimburse European nations for travel expenses) the first World Cup against a bid from Spain. Not only would [Uruguay win the right to host](#), but the South American nation also emerge as victors at the inaugural World Cup – with only four European nations attending.

Over the decades the game continued to flourish globally in terms of participation and commercial appeal, largely aided by evolutions in transportation and media technologies. Along the way, FIFA's power over the "world's game" simultaneously grew. With the ability of FIFA to beam its signature event into homes all over the world, combined with the marketability of global superstars including Pelé, Johan Cruyff, and Maradona, the Men's World Cup became a global (beyond sport) event every four years. To govern this global behemoth, FIFA's organizational structure expanded to include regional bodies to coordinate member FAs: the Asian Football Confederation ([AFC](#)); Confederation of African Football ([CAF](#)); Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football ([CONCACAF](#)); Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol ([CONMEBOL](#)); Oceania Football Confederation ([OFC](#)); and the Union of European Football Associations ([UEFA](#)). These six bodies work with the [211 national FAs](#) – more nations are recognized by FIFA than the United Nations identifies as sovereign states (193) – to [govern all aspects of association football](#), including men's and women's professional and international competitions on fields, beaches, and gaming systems in 2022. And in a larger sense, FIFA sees itself as a governing body that oversees "[more than a game](#)":

FIFA is working with governments, global and regional development agencies, human rights groups, international and local non-profit organisations and former players to promote a fairer, more equal society through football. FIFA is working with governments, global and regional development agencies, human rights groups, international and local non-profit organisations and former players to promote a fairer, more equal society through football.

-[FIFA.com](#)

But FIFA, despite its ambitious sporting and social agenda, has been rocked over the decades by scandal and geopolitical criticism. Bribery and financial impropriety charges against prominent FIFA executives and national FA members. Battles over control between powerful regional body UEFA and FIFA as well as overt commercialization has derailed confidence in the game's stewards; and the use of football as a tool for "sportswashing" in the past decades has led to criticisms from human rights groups. FIFA's attempts to ward off broader, geopolitical condemnations – while retaining "global impact" ambitions – tend to rely on a public "apolitical" stance: they are a sporting body that creates greater good through the promotion of the game and the beauty of peaceful international competition.

These issues come to a head with the 2022 World Cup in Qatar kicking off November 20, 2022. Awarding the World Cup to a tiny desert nation (a population less than 3 million) with no football history or infrastructure in 2010, generated an immediate backlash. Evidence of bid-related misdeeds, concerns over human rights in the Middle Eastern nation, as well as reports of migrant

worker abuse and death in the building of World Cup stadiums and transportation networks accumulated in the twelve years leading up to the 2022 opening match between host Qatar and Ecuador.

THE WORLD CUP AND GLOBAL POLITICS

Since the formation of FIFA in 1904, it has been involved – directly and quietly – in international affairs through and beyond the game. One way to conceptualize this intersection of geopolitics and football is through the [prism of the FIFA Presidency](#). Steering the ever-evolving governing body, nine men have served in the official role as FIFA President over its 118-year history. France’s Robert Guérin was first, with the British administrator Daniel Woolfall succeeding him in 1906. But it was the Frenchman, Jules Rimet, who took control of FIFA in 1921 and made plans to develop game’s own prestige event separate from the Olympics. Subsequent FIFA presidents, including Arthur Drewry and Stanley Rous, João Havelange, Sepp Blatter, and the present leader, Gianni Infantino have led the football organization through several phases of development, represented by the evolution of the World Cup to its 2022 iteration.

Jules Rimet (FIFA President: 1921-1954)

Rimet served as FIFA’s longest-serving President, with a tenure that began in the inter-war years and spanned into the post-war reconstruction era. During this time, Rimet sought to build a [“global football family”](#), yet resisted decentralization despite calls for the establishment of regional/continental associations. A European idealist ([colonist](#)) Rimet believed FIFA should control world football unilaterally and pushed for the increasingly powerful governing body to host its own world championship – separate from the Olympics. With growing concerns about Olympic soccer restrictions FIFA organized its first World Cup in **1930** hosted by, surprisingly, **Uruguay**.

Year	Host	Winner
1930	Uruguay	Uruguay
1934	Italy	Italy
1938	France	Italy
1942	Cancelled	
1946	Cancelled	
1950	Brazil	Uruguay
1954	Switzerland	West Germany

The first World Cup exemplifies the long-standing connection between international affairs and the global game. [Hosting FIFA’s new showpiece event offered Uruguay](#) a chance to celebrate its centennial anniversary on the “world stage”, as well as provided an opportunity for the South American nation to make a regional power play over neighbours Argentina and Brazil. However, despite promises to financially support European nations upon arrival to Montevideo, only France, Romania, Belgium, and Yugoslavia made the arduous trip across the Atlantic to [participate in FIFA’s inaugural world championship](#). British nations chose not to compete – seeing the tournament as less prestigious than the Home Nations championship. Other refused due to the presence of professional players; while some stayed home due to economic challenges exacerbated by the Great Depression. Spain, the other nation to apply to host the event, refused to compete due to FIFA’s decision to award the World Cup to Uruguay.

Mirroring the quadrennial format of the Olympics (and strategically scheduled to bisect Olympic offerings), the FIFA World Cup moved to **Italy** for a second installment in **1934** as the Great Depression raged on and global political tensions heightened. Into this political cauldron stepped [Benito “Il Duce” Mussolini, the leader of Italy’s fascist government](#). Alleged bribery and strong pressure by the Italians, it has been suggested, led to [FIFA’s decision to award them hosting duties](#) over a rival bid from Sweden. Mussolini viewed the World Cup as an opportunity to show the world the state of his fascist regime, particularly through football – a sport he felt represented the history of Italy through its game *calcio*. With the powerful independent United Kingdom football associations (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales) continuing to prioritize Home Nations (and amateur) competitions, as well as Uruguay refusing to participate in retaliation for European absences in 1930, Mussolini’s Italian squad took home the championship, defeating Czechoslovakia in the final. Angering Mussolini, the [Czechoslovakia government officially aligned with the Soviet Union](#) the day of the championship match.

The World Cup remained in Europe for **1938**, with Rimet’s home nation, **France**, serving as hosts for the third edition. FIFA’s decision riled the South Americans, particularly Argentina, who felt the tournament should alternate continents. Consequently, both [Argentina and Uruguay](#) – for a second consecutive competition – refused to participate. Spain, in the meantime, was embroiled in a Civil War and similarly did not attend. Of the 14 teams, 11 were European – with the Italians again capturing the title over a great Hungarian side in the final. The Italian squad, [donned in black shirts and performing fascist salutes](#), continued to serve as a symbol of Mussolini’s nationalist project. Further reflecting the slow progression of Europe towards war, a qualified [Austrian team was dissolved after being annexed by Germany](#). Some Austrian players, in fact, played for Germany in the tournament as the qualification slot earned by their home nation was left unfilled.

With the outbreak of war, the **1942** and **1946** editions of the relatively new and fragile World Cup events were **cancelled** – as were the now-established 1940 and 1944 Olympic Games. And although London used the 1948 Olympics as a means to demonstrate its national resilience, albeit in a threadbare way following the devastation of World War II, European FIFA members expressed limited interest in organizing the 3rd World Cup. **Brazil**, [however, agreed to host the event](#) in **1950** – in large part based on a bid proposal previously expected to secure the 1942 World Cup, as well as with an evolving infrastructure enhanced by the global south nation’s war efforts. With a new world order in its infancy, former Axis powers Germany and Japan were forbidden from competing; only Yugoslavia from beyond the Iron Curtain participated; and other nations withdrew, including South American nations Argentina, Ecuador, and Peru due to regional disputes with Brazil. An estimated crowd of 200,000 crammed into the Estádio do Maracanã only for the [Brazilian nation crushed](#) to see their beloved Seleção [defeated by Uruguay](#) – their South American rivals second World Cup victory.

The final World Cup under Rimet’s leadership saw a return to Europe with Switzerland hosting the **1954** event. Nearly a decade after the end of World War II, by 1954 a new world order had mostly settled, with the relatively new [United Nations’ power growing](#) and globalization spreading through new alliances, as well as advancing media and transportation technologies – including [live television](#)

[feeds](#) of World Cup matches for the first time. At the same time, a renewed [emphasis on \(trans\)nationalism spread across Europe](#), while African nations began to assert themselves [as decolonization spread](#) across the continent. For the first time since the conclusion of WWII, former Axis powers East and West Germany, as well as Japan, were eligible to compete in the World Cup. West Germany qualified and went on to lift the Jules Rimet trophy to gloriously mark their return to international geopolitical relevance (and the significance of Cold War sport). The West Germans defeated the heavily favoured Hungarians in the final match. Hungary was considered amongst the world's best national sides for more than a decade and dominated the 1954 tournament prior to losing in the final. This was the last tournament before the [Hungarian Revolution](#) which ultimately re-affirmed Soviet control of Eastern Europe.

Arthur Drewry/Stanley Rous (FIFA Presidents: 1956-1961*-1974)

From 1956 until 1974, the FIFA Presidency was dominated by, first informally and then in an official capacity, by the British football administrator, Rous. Described as both innovative and traditional, Rous is credited with moving British football forward, as well as for encouraging the English FA to return to the FIFA fold in 1946 after leaving in 1928. Rous saw football as a tool for Britain to re-assert itself on the world stage following the devastation of war and the realities of a post-colonial future.

Year	Host	Winner
1958	Sweden	Brazil
1962	Chile	Brazil
1966	England	England
1970	Mexico	Brazil
1974	West Germany	West Germany

In his role as English FA General Secretary, Rous allegedly empowered his fellow Brit, Drewry, as FIFA President (until his death in 1961) to raise the international profile of the game, to modernize its rules, as well as secure the World Cup for their home nation in 1966. After Rous took over the Presidency himself following Drewry's death, he faced challenges from non-European nations – particularly African member associations upset with Rous' [continuous support for the South African Football Association](#).

During the collective British FIFA Presidents' reign, five World Cups took place. The first, hosted by **Sweden** in **1958**, marked the debut of the Soviet Union at the World Cup – in their initial attempt at qualification. The Soviets quietly built a [state-sponsored sporting empire](#) as the Cold War heated up, strategically avoiding international sport competition until ready to win – announcing their arrival at the 1952 Olympics by finishing a close second in the medal count to their post-war superpower rivals, the United States. They would top the medal table in 1956 in both the Summer and Winter Olympics, in the process making international sport a unique space for direct “combat” [between the Capitalists and the Eastern Bloc](#). The Soviets, after knocking England out in a playoff, lost in the quarter finals to host Sweden, who in turn lost in the final to Brazil. The Brazilians first of five World Cup wins, the tournament marked the debut of [seventeen-year-old Pelé](#) who, despite

growing up in poverty, emerged as a global superstar as the World Cup continued to grow commercially and the event widely accessible through television technology.

After two consecutive European World Cups, South American member associations threatened a full regional boycott if not selected to host the **1962** event. **Chile** [outmanoeuvred](#) the favoured Argentinian bid, citing FIFA's mandate to promote football in under-developed nations. Despite massive damage to the nation's infrastructure due to a 9.5 magnitude earthquake in 1960, the tournament began less than two years later in Chile's rebuilt stadiums. But quickly the event was marred by the violence in a match between Italy and the host Chileans – known as the [Battle of Santiago](#). Reacting to derogatory comments from British and European media outlets, primarily Italian journalists who emphasized the “backwardness” of Chile as a nation, tensions were high for the first-round match. Chilean media shot back, referencing Italy's fascist past, while threats against the Italian journalists forced them to flee the country. Italian players were attacked with stones in training, and during the game a string of violent clashes led to the police intervening on three occasions.

The **1966** edition of the [World Cup was the realization of Rous](#) and Drewry's vision with their home nation, **England**, serving as global hosts for the first time. By this point a committed member of FIFA, hosting offered the fading football (and political) power a chance to re-assert itself (in colour on tv!) on the world stage. It also marked the first appearance of North Korea as a sovereign football nation – previous participation of Korean players was as members of Japanese teams. At the same time, 31 African nations boycotted World Cup, upset both with the lack of spots allocated to their confederation (AFC), [as well as the readmittance of South Africa to FIFA](#). With England's eventual win, a divided nation revelled in the glory of the victory. However other nations, particularly South American squads, chided the organization, media coverage and officiating of the event as disrespectful and problematically pro-English.

In a slight alteration to the traditional European-South American rotation, the World Cup moved to **Mexico** for the first North American event in **1970**. Controversy began in the qualifying rounds for the ninth edition, including the expulsion of North Korea for refusing to play Israel – who would qualify for their first and only World Cup as the Asian Football Confederation representative. Furthermore, during CONCACAF qualifications military conflict between El Salvador and Honduras broke out in what is known as the “[Football War](#)”. Over the course of three games in the summer of 1969, tensions between the Central American nations due to immigration and land claim disagreements boiled over. After Honduras won the first game at home, an 18-year-old El Salvadorian woman committed suicide and was declared a martyr – the nation's president and football team followed her casket at the funeral broadcast on state TV. The second game resulted in rioting and travelling Honduras fans beaten, as well as their flag burned and replaced by a dirty rag inside the stadium. On the day of the final match, played in neutral Mexico City, the El Salvadorian government announced the severing of diplomatic ties with Honduras. This led to a 100-hour war after El Salvador launched an attack against Honduras.

Returning to Europe for **1974**, West Germany hosted for the first time, emerging as winners of the tournament as well. World Cup champions in 1954 and Summer Olympic hosts in 1972, West

[Germany regularly used international sport](#) to both demonstrate world order significance as well as reaffirm a new, gentler Germany globally. In large part this “friendly Germany”, reflected through lax security measures, was [blamed for the Munich Massacre](#) two years earlier, as 11 Israeli Olympic team members were killed after taken hostage in the Olympic Village by the Palestinian terrorist group Black September. The 1974 World Cup also marked the qualification of the first sub-Saharan African nation: Zaire. However, after losing their first two games by a combined score of 0-11, Zaire’s president, Mobutu Sese Seko, after revoking their bonuses, told the national team players [to not return home if they lost by more than 4 goals](#). Down 0-3 late in the game, the Zaire team employed unorthodox time-wasting measures against their Brazilian opponents.

João Havelange (FIFA President: 1974-1998)

Running on a campaign promising to [reform a British/Euro-centric FIFA](#), former Brazilian Olympic swimmer and lawyer Havelange aggressively campaigned, often with compatriot Pelé by his side, for the Presidency. Havelange’s defeat of Rous marked not only the first time a non-European occupied the role of FIFA President, but also signalled a sharp shift towards the overt

Year	Host	Winner
1978	Argentina	Argentina
1982	Spain	Italy
1986	Mexico	Argentina
1990	Italy	West Germany
1994	United States	Brazil
1998	France	France

commercialization of the World Cup. Havelange is often credited as being the [most influential FIFA president](#), transforming the organization into a massive corporate (non-profit!) entity by enlisting sponsorship from Coca-Cola and Adidas, while simultaneously increasing revenues from television rights. During his tenure, FIFA also doubled the World Cup tournament field from 16 to 32 nations, initiated U-17 and U-20 World Cups, as well as the Women’s World Cup first hosted in China in 1991, and transformed the Zurich headquartered governing body into a fully professional organization. However, his Presidency was also marked with accusations of corruption and “shady” associations – eventually resulting in his resignation in 1998.

The first World Cup overseen by Havelange was the **1978** event held in **Argentina**, where football had long been a [source of national identity](#). Only two years after Argentina’s “[Dirty War](#)”, which saw a military coup oust President Isabel Perón, the South American football power hosted and won the event for the first time. The military junta tried unsuccessfully to change the World Cup [logo which represented Perón’s two-armed salute](#), however the widespread (commercial) use of the image forced the Argentinian organizers to keep it. To suppress potential protests, the new regime [imprisoned political opponents in the shadow of the Monumental Stadium](#), and were accused of fixing matches through [intimidation tactics and financial incentives](#). Significantly during group stage, Tunisia overcame a 0-1 deficit to defeat Mexico 3-1 and earn the [African continent its first win](#) at the World Cup.

In **1982**, **Spain** debuted as hosts with an expanded field of 24 teams and a desire to showcase its [post-authoritarian rebirth](#). But since Spain was an ally of Argentina, and with the South American team's qualification confirmed, [British FAs considered withdrawing from the tournament](#) in response to the Falkland War. After FIFA made it clear Argentina's participation would not be revoked, England, Northern Ireland, and Scotland all chose to continue in the competition – with strict instructions not to interact with Argentine officials. The 1982 event also provided one of the strangest moments in World Cup history when [Sheikh Fahad Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah](#) (president of the Kuwait Football Association) left the stands to confront the match official after a controversial goal. His pitch invasion led to the referee reversing the original call, angering the opposing French team and officials – although France would eventually defeat the World Cup debutants 4-1.

Mexico became the first two-time host of the World Cup in **1986**. [Originally awarded to Columbia](#), economic challenges as well as allegations of drug cartel involvement in the national football program, led to their withdrawal in 1982. Both [Canada and the United States submitted bids](#) as well, with both left angered by the selection process that favoured Mexico. Featuring one of the most famous games in football history, Argentina defeated England in the quarter finals on the back of two – one brilliant (“Goal of the Century”), one controversial (“[Hand of God](#)”) – goals by Diego Maradona. The game was ripe with [political tensions after the Falkland War](#), despite FIFA's collaboration with the United Nations to celebrate the International Year of Peace with joint logos and a “Football for Peace – Peace Year” slogan. Even the tournament's motto – “The World United by a Ball” reinforced the FIFA's self-image as a non-political, yet global influencer, of peace and unity.

Italy joined Mexico in **1990** as a two-time host, overcoming a bid from the Soviet Union – with the vote held the day after the Soviets announced a boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. The Italia '90 event occurred as major world order changes were percolating, with the unification of Germany, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union and split of Czechoslovakia, [impacting the face of global football](#) for the coming decades. Also, of note from the 1984 tournament was the return of the United States after a 40-year absence, as well as the [success of Cameroon](#) – reaching the quarter finals before losing to England 2-3. Some anticipated this as the start of future African success in the tournament – and led to FIFA granting the AFC an extra qualification spot for the next World Cup. [A monumental commercial success](#), FIFA estimated that just under 27 billion non-unique viewers tuned in to watch the 1990 World Cup, with the visibility of the tournament through satellite television distribution suggested to be a prompt for the [creation of the English Premier League](#) – the most successful club football league in the world – in 1992.

In **1994**, the World Cup moved back across the Atlantic to an avowed non-association football nation – the powerful **United States**. Despite a relative lack of interest in “soccer” as a mega-sport in comparison to “American” sports like gridiron football, basketball, and baseball, [the tournament ended up setting attendance and revenue generation records](#). USA'94 also led to the formation of Major League Soccer – a North American professional league that continues to grow today. This success was exactly what FIFA hoped for when selecting the Americans over Brazil as host. The USA tournament also marked the first with 32 teams – completing the doubling of the field under

Havelange's reign. This expansion was a [strategic ploy apparently used by the Brazilian](#) to retain control of FIFA, appealing to developing nation football associations in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean for their support in return for increased World Cup qualification opportunities. The political manoeuvring kept Havelange in charge, but ultimately led to a breakdown in relations (and [future power plays between](#)) FIFA and UEFA (Europe).

The **1998** World Cup, hosted by **France**, served as Havelange's last as FIFA President. One game scheduled early in the tournament in particular raised interest from a non-sporting perspective: [USA vs Iran](#) – a match-up to be repeated in 2022. With tensions expected to be high considering the longstanding political hostilities between the two nations, many tuned in to see a repeat of the Battle of Santiago from 1962 in what was described as the "[most politically charged game in World Cup history](#)". Despite World Cup protocol, Ayatollah Khamenei instructed the "visitor" Iranians to not walk over to the Americans to initiate pre-game handshakes – with the process reversed to avoid further issues. Protests, potentially violent ones, were expected from the crowd, with political banners and threats of pitch invasions monitored by French riot police. But in a gesture of peace, each Iranian player walked on the field with a white rose to present to the Americans prior to kickoff. In a deeply symbolic moment of "football diplomacy", the two teams intermingled for a photo, before the Iranians went on to win their first World Cup match over their political foes 2-1. The victory was celebrated across Iran with dancing and drinking in the street (including Revolutionary Guards) – apparently frightening the Iranian leadership. The 1998 event also saw the first appearance of a post-Apartheid South Africa, as well as a modified Federal Republic Yugoslavia team (Serbia and Montenegro) and sovereign Croatia amid a decades long war. Croatia [advanced to the semi-finals](#), eventually settling for third place, wearing their now famous red and white check shirts. The Croatian national football team became an [important symbol of national independence](#), with political tensions between former Yugoslavia republics continuing to escalate during international matches.

Sepp Blatter (FIFA President: 1998-2015)

Blatter, the long-time General Secretary of FIFA, [ascended to the Presidency](#) in the wake of Havelange's resignation and led the now omnipresent football governing body into the 21st century. The Swiss administrator furthered Havelange's commercialization agenda, while also

Year	Host	Winner
2002	South Korea/Japan	Brazil
2006	Germany	Italy
2010	South Africa	Spain
2014	Brazil	Germany

seeking to globalize the game by continuing to empower the collective (voting) power of regional football "minnows" in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. Blatter extended this "globalization" of football influence by increasingly engaging with emerging global powers including [BRICS nations](#) (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) as well as Arabian Peninsula regimes – particularly Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar.

Blatter's first World Cup in **2002**, decided in 1996 prior to his ascendancy, represented the first edition in Asia, as well as the inaugural event hosted by multiple nations: **South Korea and Japan**. Co-hosting was not the original plan for Japan and South Korea, but the threat of splitting the vote (Havelange supported Japan, UEFA South Korea) and both losing out to Mexico, the [two nations reluctantly agreed to join bids](#). Both nations organized their matches separately, and through negotiations South Korea was listed first – in turn Japan was awarded the tournament's final game. [Acrimony remained](#) between the neighbours from Japan's 35-year occupation and talk of North Korea possibly hosting games furthered tensions. South Korea realized far greater success from the 2002 World Cup, advancing to the semi-finals and using the infrastructure developed to build its football system. Japan, in contrast, lost in the Round of 16 and was [left with "white elephant" stadiums](#).

The 18th World Cup returned to Europe, and to a unified **Germany** for the first time (West Germany hosted in 1974), in **2006**. Allegations of [voter fraud and bribery](#) again arose, with Germany narrowly defeating Blatter's preferred choice, South Africa, by one vote. In the days leading up to the 2016 edition [Montenegro narrowly voted to become a sovereign nation](#), separating from Serbia yet [competed as a unified team](#). Italy won the 2006 tournament against France – a game that featured the [famous "headbutt"](#). In extra time French star Zinedine Zidane angrily drove his head into the chest of Italian Marco Materazzi, reacting to an insult allegedly directed toward his sister and mother. Zidane, the son of Algerian immigrants to France, was sent off and his side lost in a penalty shootout. It was the final act of the global football star's playing career.

In **2010**, one of Blatter's ambitions were realized when the World Cup moved to the African continent for the first time. **South Africa**, internationally recognized as a rugby and cricket power, required massive investments in stadium building and reconstruction to meet the needs of the football tournament. But with [Nelson Mandela a vocal supporter of the bid](#), as well as (again) allegations of bid bribery from South African officials, the country readied itself for the world's biggest stage. Unfortunately, South Africa's national team became the first host not to advance past the group stage, and the US\$1 billion [spent on stadiums became a state burden](#). Critics in South Africa from the outset rallied against the use of state funds on football stadiums instead for those desperately in need of adequate housing and living wages, particularly poorer black citizens still disadvantaged from years of Apartheid policies. And controversy occurred in the qualifying rounds as well, with Thierry Henry's unsanctioned handball leading to France eliminating Ireland from advancing to South Africa. This led to a diplomatic spat with [Irish officials demanding a replay](#), with Taoiseach Brian Cowen [confronting an apologetic French President Nicolas Sarkozy](#) when the two met at an EU summit. And in another qualifying match, Turkish President Abdullah Gül and Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan met in Yerevan to engage in ["football diplomacy"](#) as their respective national sides played. Despite crowd dissent, the meeting represented the first diplomatic exchange between Armenia and Turkey for 15 years.

The **2014** World Cup in **Brazil** would be Blatter's last at the helm. For the first time, since World War II cancelled the World Cup, a Europe would go more than eight years without hosting, with Brazil awarded the event unopposed. With the World Cup again in the Global South, [the full globalization project of Blatter appeared successful](#). Brazil was actively seeking to use both the World Cup and

Summer Olympics in 2016 as a tool for international recognition, and, along with other BRICS (Russia, India, China, and South Africa), a way to elevate its place in the global order. Citizens, like in South Africa, protested the [massive investment made by the state](#) in the tournament (an estimated USD\$46 billion) rather than [attending to more pressing social issues](#) including affordable housing. Police were accused of heavy-handed crackdowns on protesters, as well as using [militarized methods](#) to ensure Brazil showed itself to the world in its best light by “cleaning up the streets” in places like Rio de Janeiro – issues that would again arise for the 2016 Olympics.

Blatter intended to keep the FIFA presidency; however, [scandal eventually pressured him to step down](#). But the next two World Cups, in Russia and Qatar, were selected under his watch in 2010 – his vision to expand the event to non-Western world powers.

Gianni Infantino (FIFA President: 2016-present)

After [scandal forced Blatter out](#), Swiss-Italian Gianni Infantino emerged victorious over Sheik Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa – a member of the royal family of Bahrain [questioned for his role in the torture of Arab Spring athlete](#)

[protesters](#) – in the contest for the FIFA Presidency. Infantino, elected in large part due to promises to expand the World Cup to 40 teams and increase payments to each nation’s football associations, [also pledged to rid FIFA of corruption](#).

Year	Host	Winner
2018	Russia	France
2022	Qatar	???

Russia 2018 marked the third consecutive World Cup hosted by a BRICS nation. The first World Cup in Eastern Europe, concerns from the West about Russia’s declining democratic standards, human rights violations, and use of cyber-attacks and misinformation campaigns globally created pre-tournament tensions. Suspicions that the [Russian government was responsible](#) for the poisoning of a former spy, Sergei Skripal (and his daughter), in England prompted British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to warn English fans not to attend the 2018 event. Johnson [compared Putin to Hitler](#), and suggested the Russian leader would revel in World Cup propaganda similar to the Nazis at the Berlin Olympics in 1936. But the Russia presented to the world in the summer of 2018 defied expectations, with a [friendly and happy atmosphere cultivated](#) in World Cup locales.

The 2018 World Cup cost an estimated USD\$11.8 billion and succeeded for a short time to present Russia as a “normal country” despite political tensions with the West. But underlying the positive atmosphere were significant political issues. The opening game, for instance, featured Russia against Saudi Arabia, with a smiling Infantino sitting between Putin and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman as they shared a handshake following the game’s first goal. And as rain poured down at the conclusion of France’s victory over Croatia in the tournament final, drenching Infantino, Croatian President Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic, and French President Emmanuel Macron [Putin stood dryly under an umbrella](#) held by a Russian official. A [Talking Politics podcast](#), released near the end of the tournament, seamlessly covered a range of global and domestic political issues including: Russian propaganda and sportswashing, bread and circus, regional development through

sport mega-event hosting, the cost to Russian citizens, soft power, international diplomacy and domestic affairs, the World Cup as cosmopolitan dream, football's alternative world order (not dominated by USA or China), Balkan politics, migration and athlete mining, the German team as representative of the state of the nation, and the changing face of English nationalism. One of the most overt political moments in the tournament, Swiss players Granit Xhaka and Xherdan Shaqiri each performed a "[two eagles](#)" salute after scoring against Serbia. Of Albanian descent, Xhaka and Shaqiri's gesture enraged Serbian supporters (and the state more widely). [FIFA fined both players](#), citing a ban on political symbols.

In 2022 the World Cup moves to Qatar, a Middle Eastern nation enriched through gas exports on the Arabian Peninsula. A controversial choice, Qatar – like South Africa, Brazil, and Russia before it – sees the hosting of the World Cup as opportunity to improve its standing in the world order – through enhanced image and understanding of the Arab nation, increased tourism, and diversified economy. Many argue the [Middle East deserves the opportunity](#) to host the World Cup.

QATAR AND THE 2022 FIFA MEN'S WORLD CUP

As noted, controversy and criticism dominate analyses of the decision by FIFA to select Qatar as host of the 2022 Men's World Cup. With the tournament scheduled to kickoff November 20, this will likely continue until a champion is crowned on December 18. Below is a timeline of significant events highlighting political moments in the lead up to the first match between host Qatar and Ecuador in the Al Bayt Stadium.

TIMELINE: LEAD UP TO THE 2022 FIFA MEN'S WORLD CUP - QATAR	
1950	Kafala system adopted by oil-rich Gulf countries sought foreign laborers to work on large-scale infrastructure projects. Given their relatively small populations, they needed additional temporary workers who could come during periods of booming growth and return home when the economy weakened.
Dec. 2010	FIFA, soccer's governing body, awards Russia the 2018 World Cup and Qatar the 2022 World Cup. Qatar clinched the rights to the World Cup after winning a ballot of Fifa's 22 executive members, beating bids from the US, South Korea, Japan and Australia. Of the 22 people who decided to award the World Cup to the desert state, 16 have either been suspended, charged, or jailed
Jan. 2010	2010 Confederation of African Football Congress in Angola Qatar exclusively sponsors the event with \$1.3 million. Whistleblower and former head of international media for the Qatar 2022 Phaedra Al-Majid witnesses, witnesses FIFA members, Issa Hayatou, Jacques Anouma and Amos Adamu receive \$1.5 million in cash in Hassan Al-Thawadi's Luanda Hotel suite

May 2011	FIFA suspends presidential candidate Mohamed Bin Hammam and Vice President Jack Warner pending an investigation into claims they offered financial incentives to members of the Caribbean Football Union. The organisation drops a complaint against President Sepp Blatter.
June 2011	Former FIFA executive committee member Mohamed bin Hammam is found guilty of bribery and banned from international football activity for life by FIFA's ethics committee. Warner resigns from his position but is not investigated.
July 2011	Phaedra Al-Majid retracts her claims of FIFA bribes.
July 2012	FIFA appoint former United States prosecutor Michael Garcia to head FIFA's ethics committee investigation on the legality of Russia and Qatar's World Cup bids
Nov. 2013	Amnesty International finds Qatar's construction sector rife with abuse, with workers employed on multimillion-dollar projects suffering serious exploitation.
Sept. 2014	Garcia completes his 430-page report into corruption allegations and sends it to FIFA.
Nov. 2014	Hans-Joachim Eckert, chairman of the adjudicatory chamber of FIFA's independent ethics committee, publishes a 42-page summary of Garcia's investigation, effectively confirming Russia and Qatar as World Cup hosts after finding breaches by them were "of very limited scope". FIFA lodges a criminal complaint with the Swiss attorney general over "possible misconduct" by individuals in connection with the awarding of the 2018 and 2022 World Cups but declare the investigation into the bidding process for the two World Cups concluded. Garcia calls the summary "incomplete and erroneous" and launches an appeal against it.
Nov. 2014	Phaedra Almajid announces she is FIFA whistleblower claiming that her evidence to the original Garcia report into World Cup bid corruption was manipulated in the 42-page summary and that it effectively identified her though she only agreed to give evidence under guarantee of anonymity Phaedra Almajid admits she fears for her life and is under FBI protection
Dec. 2014	Garcia loses his appeal against Eckert's review of his report and resigns as FIFA's independent ethics investigator. The US lawyer issues a statement criticising FIFA's "lack of leadership", saying he cannot change the culture of the world governing body.
Feb. 2015	The 2022 World Cup moves to Qatar's winter season due to concerns over extreme temperatures in the country during the summer.

May 2015	<p><u>Sepp Blatter refuses to resign as FIFA congress opens</u></p> <p>Dawn raids in Zurich see six FIFA officials arrested. They are later charged by US authorities along with three other FIFA officials over allegations of racketeering, wire fraud and money laundering conspiracies spanning 24 years. They are accused of breeding decades of "rampant, systemic, and deep-rooted" corruption within Fifa by the US Justice Department.</p> <p>FIFA indicates the upcoming presidential elections will go ahead.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the Swiss authorities raid FIFA headquarters, gathering data and documents for their separate investigation in to allegations of criminal mismanagement and money laundering in connection with the allocation of the 2018 and 2022 World Cup bids.</p> <p>FIFA says there will be no redraw of the World Cup bids.</p>
May 27, 2015	<p>U.S. Atty. Gen. Loretta Lynch announces a lengthy investigation into FIFA that has uncovered decades of bribery totalling more than \$150 million. Federal racketeering charges are unveiled against 14 people, including nine current and former FIFA executives; seven are arrested near the organization's headquarters in Zurich, Switzerland. Officials are charged with buying and selling votes to deliver the 2010 World Cup to South Africa and soliciting kickbacks from sports marketers.</p> <p>Swiss authorities seize documents from FIFA offices as part of a separate criminal investigation into the 2018 and 2022 World Cup bids. FIFA President Sepp Blatter, who is not named in either legal case, says: "Such misconduct has no place in football and we will ensure that those who engage in it are put out of the game."</p>
May 28, 2015	<p>A FIFA election in which Blatter, 79, is pitted against the candidate Prince Ali bin al Hussein of Jordan for the presidency, will go ahead as planned. "I can't monitor everyone all of the time. If people want to do wrong, they will also try to hide it," Blatter states.</p> <p>British Prime Minister David Cameron calls on Blatter to step down. Russian President Vladimir Putin describes the criminal investigations as "yet another evident attempt to derail Mr. Blatter's re-election" and says the U.S.-led arrests had an ulterior motive – to throw into question Russia's 2018 World Cup.</p> <p>South African Sports Minister Fikile Mbalula vehemently denies charges his government may have won the right to host the World Cup by paying at least \$10 million in bribes. Mbalula accuses the U.S. of reaching "beyond its borders."</p>
May 29, 2015	<p>Blatter is elected to a fifth four-year term as FIFA president. "I take the responsibility to bring back FIFA," Blatter says. Blatter outpolls rival, Ali 133-73 in the first round of voting. Ali withdraws from a mandated second round in which he was nearly certain to lose.</p>
May 31, 2015	<p>Blatter suggests why the criminal investigations were launched. "The Americans were the candidates for the World Cup of 2022 and they lost," Blatter says. "The English were the candidates for 2018 and they lost, so it was really with the English media and the American movement that came down."</p>

June 1, 2015	FIFA announces that its secretary general, Jerome Valcke – Blatter’s top lieutenant – won’t attend the women’s World Cup in Canada. A few hours later, the New York Times reports federal authorities believe Valcke was behind the \$10 million in bank transactions that are at the centre of FIFA’s corruption scandal.
June 2, 2015	Four days after his re-election, Blatter announces he will resign and calls for new elections to choose his successor. “This mandate does not seem to be supported by everybody in the world of football,” Blatter says at a hastily arranged news conference in Zurich. “FIFA needs a profound restructuring.”
April 2016	Workers in Qatar renovating a stadium for the 2022 World Cup suffered rights abuses two years after the tournament’s organisers drafted worker welfare standards, Amnesty International reported.
April 2016	FIFA’s new president Gianni Infantino announces plans to set up an independent committee to monitor conditions for labourers working at Qatar’s World Cup 2022 stadiums.
May 2017	Khalifa International Stadium becomes the first tournament-ready venue for Qatar 2022.
June 2017	Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain cut off diplomatic ties with Qatar and impose a land, sea and air blockade after accusing it of supporting terrorism. Qatar strongly denies the allegations.
June 2017	FIFA releases the full report on an investigation it conducted into allegations of corruption over the awarding of the 2018 and 2022 World Cups. The dossier provided a picture of a flawless voting process and no hard evidence that the committees used bribes to secure the rights.
Oct. 2017	Qatar’s government approves a draft bill to support a fund for its two-million-strong foreign workforce.
Oct. 2017	Qatar enters into an agreement with the International Labour Organization (ILO), aimed at extensively reforming migrant workers’ conditions, including by reforming the kafala (sponsorship) system.
May 2019	The first metro service opens to the public in Qatar’s capital, Doha.
May 2019	Al Janoub Stadium is inaugurated. It is the first Qatar 2022 tournament venue to be built from scratch.
Sept. 2019	Qatar reveals the official emblem of the tournament in synchronised display in Doha and 24 other major cities across the world.
Sept. 2019	Amnesty International report revealed that “hundreds of migrant workers” have been forced to give up on “justice” and return home “penniless” since March 2018.
Oct. 2019	Qatar moves to announce the abolishment of the kafala system, enabling workers to change employers.

Jan. 2020	Qatar announces that most migrant workers previously prevented from leaving the country without their employer's permission will no longer need an exit permit.
April 2020	UN report on racism in Qatar found that foreign workers of all income levels reported that their salaries depended on their countries of origin,
June 2020	Education City Stadium is inaugurated . It will host matches up to and including the quarter-final stage during Qatar 2022.
Aug. 2020	A Human Rights Watch report finds that employers across Qatar frequently violated workers' right to wages and that efforts to improve the work environment have largely failed.
Sept. 2020	Significant Labor and Kafala reforms adopted Qatar becomes first Arab Gulf country to allow migrant workers to change jobs without requiring a " No Objection Certificate " (NOC) from their employer. Reforms also set a higher minimum wage for all workers, regardless of nationality.
Dec. 2020	Qatar announces that it would comply with FIFA rules of promoting tolerance and rainbow flags will be allowed in stadiums at the 2022 World Cup.
Dec. 2020	Al Rayyan Stadium, the fourth Qatar 2022 World Cup venue, is inaugurated .
Feb. 2021	An investigative report published in The Guardian (UK) claims more than 6500 migrant workers have died in Qatar since awarded the World Cup.
Oct. 2021	Al Thumama Stadium inaugurated - the fifth tournament stadium,
Oct. 2021	Former England captain and globally-recognized celebrity David Beckham signs a £150 deal to serve as an ambassador for Qatar
Nov. 2021	A 48-page report by Amnesty, Reality Check 2021, said that practices such as withholding salaries and charging workers to change jobs were still rife, despite labour reforms.
Nov. 2021	Ras Abu Aboud Stadium, also known as Stadium 974 , is inaugurated.
Jan. 2022	Tickets for the Qatar 2022 World Cup go on sale with prices for residents wanting to attend the games starting at 40 riyals (\$11), the cheapest for locals since the 1986 World Cup in Mexico.
April 2022	The draw for the Qatar 2022 World Cup is held in the capital, Doha.
May 2022	Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, along with eight other human rights organizations, sent a letter to Infantino calling for FIFA and Qatar to compensate families of workers who died in the build-up to the World Cup.
June 2022	Former FIFA president Blatter and former UEFA chief Platini are both cleared of corruption charges by a Swiss court.

Aug. 2022	FIFA announces the World Cup to start a day earlier than scheduled . The opening game, between Qatar and Ecuador, will take place on November 20.
Nov. 3, 2022	FIFA President Infantino issues a letter to all competing Football Associations asking them to “focus on the football...not ideological or political battles that exist”.
Nov. 6, 2022	The 11 Member FA’s of UEFA’s Working Group on Human and Labour Rights (Belgium, Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Wales) issue a joint statement challenging FIFA and Qatar to uphold promises regarding diversity and worker rights.
Nov. 8, 2022	Former FIFA President Sepp Blatter claims that awarding the 2022 World Cup to Qatar was a mistake - primarily due to the size of the nation.
Nov. 13, 2022	After their last Premier League match before heading to Qatar to compete for Portugal and Denmark, respectively, Manchester United FC stars Bruno Fernandes and Christian Eriksen express concerns about Qatar as World Cup host.
Nov. 18, 2022	In a last-minute reversal, FIFA announces a ban on alcohol sales at stadiums in Qatar. World Cup sponsor Budweiser tweets on its official account “ Well, this is awkward... ”. The tweet is quickly deleted and FIFA emphasizes that non-alcoholic Bud Zero will still be sold at Qatari stadiums.
Nov. 19, 2022	In a press conference on the eve before the 2022 World Cup kicks off, FIFA President Infantino delivers a scathing condemnation of Western “hypocrisy” in its criticism of Qatar. Infantino calls on Europe to apologize for “3000 years before starting to give moral lessons to people”.
Nov. 20, 2022	UEFA’s Working Group on Human and Labour Rights issues a second statement , welcoming FIFA’s promises to support migrant workers and to create a fund for migrant workers: “[We] can confirm that substantial progress has been made on key issues”.
Nov. 20, 2022	The 2022 World Cup begins at the Al Bayt Stadium following an opening ceremony that emphasized tolerance and understanding (and featured American actor Morgan Freeman , Qatari YouTuber Ghanim al Mufta , and South Korean pop singer Jung Kook). The BBC chooses not to show the multimillion-dollar extravaganza on BBC One , instead broadcasting an hour of critical analysis of Qatar and FIFA on their flagship platform.