

POLITICAL RISKS AND THE 2018 AND 2022 WORLD CUPS: DEVELOPING AND APPLYING A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSING AND ASSESSING POLITICAL RISKS FOR SPORTS EVENTS

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analysis is developed which accesses secondary data, via a variety of open databases in order to identify the risks, analyse them and then develop a form of assessment. The work adopts a 4th age risk paradigm (Tarlow 2002), whereby risk is viewed as something which can create both opportunities and threats, along with seeing risks as being embedded in complex systems. An important part of the paper will be to illustrate how the framework developed can be used for assessing political risks for a variety of sporting events.

The preliminary findings show that whilst on many levels the political systems of Qatar and Russia have various elements which can create many conditions of stability, there are a number of areas of concern, where their political systems can potentially damage the FIFA brand, compromise some of its goals and generate various operational risks. It shows that in the decision making process, the assessment and consideration of political situations seems to be one based more on 'hope' that there will be a positive political environment for the event, rather than a deeper and critical analysis of the political situations, having the readymade, but trite fall-back position that sport and politics should not mix if things start to go wrong.

Abstract

The cancellation of the Bahrain Formula 1 Grand Prix event in February 2011 acts as a reminder of how sport events can be vulnerable to political change and turmoil. What was particularly notable was the speed of change in the region and how political events rippled beyond country borders, impacting and shaping events as they went. They also illustrated that whilst authoritarian political systems can have long periods of stability, when the pressure for change becomes so great, then it tends to be far more dramatic, explosive and sometimes violent in comparison with democratic countries.

These events in the region, along with the awarding of the Football World Cup to Russia and Qatar, raise some important questions as to what the political risks FIFA and the football event will be exposed to, particularly if one adopts the position that the events now take place in a global, interconnected world. A simple comparison with other large scale sporting events reveals many interesting potential risks and how the event can both help shape the political environment, or be shaped itself by political processes. For example, whilst it can be argued that the 1988 Olympics in South Korea helped nudge (not cause) the country to move from an authoritarian system to a democratic one, for the 2008 games in China, if anything, the reverse seemed true, whereby staging the Olympics helped strengthen the regime's authority and did more to erode, rather than improve people's human rights, with the risks of domestic and international terrorism being a key way to legitimise the increase in surveillance and security. The result, some argue, was to damage the Olympic brand and compromise many of the principles and roles which can be found in the Olympic Charter.

What this paper does is to look more deeply at the nature of the political risks that exist presently and for the future in Russia and Qatar and how these can impact on both FIFA and the actual football event itself. A practical framework of

References:

Tarlow, P. E. (2002), *Event risk management and safety*, John Wiley & Sons, New York.