

# Global Dreams, Local Nightmares: Migrant Workers and the cost of the 2022 Qatar World Cup

## Abstract

The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar sent shockwaves around the world as global media reported on the plethora of human rights abuses that had taken place since November 2015. Yet, despite initial public outrage, the voices of objectors were quickly muffled by the dazzling bright lights of Stadiums Lusail, Al Janoub, 974, Ahmad Bin Ali, Al Thumama, Education City, Khalifa International, and Al Bayt. This article explores the impact the 2022 Qatar World Cup had on the inequalities of migrant labourers in a globalised economy. I draw on World Systems Theory to argue that the 2022 Qatar World Cup was not merely an anomaly, but a systematic form of labour extraction that occurred within the microcosm of Qatar 2022. This will show that (1) the case of Qatar should be viewed as a microcosm of World Systems Theory, and (2) the globalised economy allowed for the exploitation of migrants through complicity and lack of regulatory oversight.

## Keywords

Mega sporting events(MSEs), global south, labour, exploitation, Kafala, World Systems Theory(WST), Microcosm

## Introduction: Migrant labour, structural dynamics, and World Systems Theory

The 2022 Qatar World Cup will forever be immortalised as one of the greatest successes of FIFA, namely with the Final being one of the most riveting footballing events of all time through the final penalties and Leo Messi's 'fairytale ending'. Despite this, grabbing the attention of the media around the world, the untold story of thousands of migrant workers was unfolding, hidden away from the rosy lights of the World Cup festivities. As Qatar embarked on the gargantuan effort to construct 7 new stadiums for its hosting of the World Cup, and 1 city, Lusail, it relied almost entirely on the estimated figure of "500,000 to 1.5 million" migrant workers employed in construction who built the tournament from the ground up. (Ganji, 2016) These same migrant workers mostly came from Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines - countries of the Global South that provided an estimated "1.5 million labourers" over the course of the 2022 World Cup, since its inception in 2010. (Unison, 2015) The criticisms of global media fell mainly on the *Kafala* system of employment in Qatar, which legally bound workers to their employers, restricted their movement, and denied them basic protections. Furthermore, reports of unsafe working conditions and inadequate protection against exposure to toxic chemicals provoked significant controversy. Despite the claims of the Qatari Government in 2017 to reform labour rights, work done by independent media suggested that the reforms undertaken by the Qatari government were "woefully inadequate and poorly enforced". (Human Rights Watch, 2021) Similarly, research into Qatar (Hughes, 2025) found that attempts at reforming the minimum wage proved unsuccessful; a combination of lack of responsibility, delay in issuing payments, and

complicity of employers made it entirely unsustainable for the average worker to sustain their own standard of living and support a family at home.

The significant size of migrant workers in Qatar has much to do not only with Qatar's domestic construction needs, but also with Qatar being an important destination for migrant workers from the Global South who seek to improve their standard of living. A report into the events of 2019 in Qatar (Human Rights Watch, 2020) found that the "2 million" strong migrant labour force of Qatar comprised around "95%" of all labour workers in Qatar. This is a deep-rooted issue, not just related to Qatar's domestic needs in construction, but more significantly due to broader global structures that dictate the movement of migrant workers. Insights into Nepal (The Global Economy, 2025) showed that remittances accounted for 26.89% of Nepal's GDP in 2023; remittances (non-commercial money transfers by foreign workers) in Nepal were significantly higher compared to the world average of "5.13% based on data from 174 countries". Similarly, in Bangladesh, Farhana and Mannan (2024) state that "21.9 billion" dollars were officially recorded as being sent through remittance channels, highlighting the dependency on the outsourcing of migrant labour. Thus, it becomes key to highlight the importance of private agencies that link foreign workers with their potential employers in Qatar. In the case of the 2022 Qatar World Cup, thousands of migrant workers were recruited through private recruitment agencies, with many paying "illegal recruitment fees". (Jackson, 2023) In the past few decades, several migratory flows have emerged, one of which Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003) suggest is the major route involving the migration from "Southeast Asia to the oil-rich Middle and Far East" (p. 6). This has led overall to a structural dependency on Global South countries to supply labour to countries such as Qatar, with remittances in the case of Nepal and Bangladesh being key contributors to GDP; furthermore, the specific migratory flow from Southeast Asia to the Middle East has opened up opportunities for recruitment agencies to act as "middlemen" and profit off migrant workers.

Research into the Qatar World Cup has mainly explored the facets of migrant exploitation that took place under the Qatari Government. Scholars such as Ganji (2016) posed the question of reform to the World Cup, viewing the event as both high risk and opportunity; while there was a significant chance of reform, there was an equally likely chance of the event turning into a human rights disaster. Data from *The Global Economy* (2025) and Migration Policy Institute (Farhanna & Mannan, 2014) highlight the remittance-based economies of Nepal and Bangladesh, key actors in the Periphery who contributed significantly to the World Cup project. Reports from *Gulf Labour Markets and Migration* (2017, 2023) went further in exposing the ethnic disparity between workers who undertake physical labour. Furthermore, the data exposes the dominance of non-Qatari workers in the labour force, which reveals the stark demographic imbalance and the structural reliance on foreign labour. While existing literature has looked at imbalances between migrants and Qatar citizens in the context of the World Cup, this paper serves to add to existing literature by situating the 2022 World Cup as a

microcosm of WST. By exploring the World Cup in this way, the hierarchical economy of Wallerstein's WST becomes apparent in its exposition of global power imbalances.

## **Methodology**

Intending to examine migrant labour in today's globalised economy, I draw on Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Analysis to explore the dynamic between semi-periphery nations (in this case, Qatar) and Periphery nations (who supplied labour to Qatar for the 2022 FIFA World Cup). Resting on the premise that Peripheral countries were being exploited by those in the Semi-Periphery and Core, Wallerstein suggests that wealthy countries benefit by taking advantage of labour from the latter two types of countries (Wikipedia, 2025). However, it is important to note that Wallerstein recognised the minimal benefits to Periphery and Semi-Periphery nations provided by participating in this form of economy. In this type of global economy, multinational corporations such as FIFA and host nations (in the case of Qatar) can extract the most value out of the system. I argue that the migrant exploitation exposed in the 2022 Qatar World Cup was not merely an anomaly, but a deep-rooted and systemic pattern of global labour extraction, sustained, namely, by the unequal relationships between the Core, Semi-Periphery, and Periphery nations.

## **Organisation**

The rest of the article will be organised as follows: The section titled "The Role of Migrant Labour in Building the 2022 FIFA World Cup" will analyse the trends of migrant workers who built the World Cup. The "Understanding World Systems Analysis" aims to explore the relationship between the so-called 'feeder' states of Southeast Asia and Qatar, as well as the role of the multinational body, FIFA, regarding the migrant labour market and the dependency of Periphery nations on Semi-periphery nations like Qatar. Moreover, the section will aim to explore the role of the 2022 Qatar World Cup as a case study within the broader dynamics of labour market globalisation. The "Mechanisms of Exploitation in Qatar" will elaborate on the *Kafala* system and its role in migrant labour during the 2022 Qatar World Cup. Furthermore, this section will analyse the methods of migrant exploitation, including but not limited to: passport seizure, unsafe working environments and international complicity. Finally, the "Conclusion" section will summarise the key discussions within the article and outline potential research areas for the future.

## **The Role of Migrant Labour in Building the 2022 Qatar World Cup**

This section aims to build on the existing literature surrounding the demography of migrant workers in Qatar's construction industry, with a central focus on the 2022 Qatar World Cup in particular. The project was a result of not only a decade of planning and meticulous city design, but also one of hard labour by the thousands of migrant workers

who moved to Qatar in the hopes of finding a better life for themselves and their families. I aim to delve into the infrastructure demands that were required in the construction of the 2022 Qatar World Cup, and how this directly correlates with the role of migrant workers in Qatar. This issue is especially prevalent, as will be shown, since Qatar itself had nowhere near the capacity to undertake such a huge project from its own population.

The 2022 Qatar World Cup led to an unprecedented infrastructure boom, with workers needed for the construction of hotels, stadiums, roads, restaurants and the like. The role of migrant labour in building the Qatar World Cup can be traced back to the period 2012-2015, shortly after the announcement of Qatar's winning bid in 2010. Already a key destination for migrant workers (predominantly male labourers), research into the demography of Qatar (Gulf Research Center, 2017) found that Qatar's population increased by an astounding "35% between 2010 and 2015". The gargantuan project, which was estimated by Standard Chartered Bank (Gulf News, 2018) at "up to 72.5 billion dollars", called for a dramatic influx of labour, which Qatar did not possess among its own workforce. Given the limitations of Qatar's own population in extracting workers, the Qatari Government turned to the countries of the Global South to source labour. It came as no surprise that the migratory flow of these same workers came predominantly from countries in the Global South in Southeast Asia, including Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines. This reliance on foreign labour was not coincidental; rather, it underpinned the key method of Qatar's preparation strategy for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The intentional selection of countries whose economies were predominantly remittance-based (as in the case of Nepal and Bangladesh) led to foreign workers who would be incentivised to work harder to send remittance packages home. Furthermore, this subsequently led to workers from the Global South playing a key role in the core of Qatar's development model. If anything, the 2022 Qatar World Cup can be seen as a case study within broader global dynamics as an event that proved the success of relying on migrant labour to complete massive infrastructure projects despite international concern over human rights abuses. Qatar's migrant labourers were responsible for the building of seven new stadiums and one city, Lusail. Research into Qatar's working demography (Gulf Migration, 2023) found that of the labourers in Qatar who worked under the sector title "Craft and Related Trades Workers", only 0.47% were Qatari; of the total 551868 workers, only 2634 were Qatari (with 0 Qatari women, compared to the 826 non-Qatari women). Based on this empirical evidence, it is clear that the construction sector of Qatar at the time was not only made up almost fully by migrant men, but also fully dominated by migrant women when examining the work done by women in this sector.

This trend of migrant workers in Qatar is hardly surprising. Since the late 1960s and 1970s, the construction industry within the wealthy Arab nation's oil sector has been predominantly made up of migrant male workers. To put this into perspective, by the numbers, people from the same aforementioned countries make up just over 50% of

Qatar's total population. When examining the demographics of Qatar, it is clear that the population is dominated by migrants from South-East Asia and North Africa, comprising around 78% of the population. With the rapid expansion of the Gulf states, migration to Qatar has become increasingly attractive for young workers in the construction industry to attempt to better their living conditions. A report into the migrant workers controversy (Moodie, 2025) found that the 2022 Qatar World Cup alone brought a 40% increase to the population of Qatar; faced with the immediate need for migrant workers to construct the infrastructure required for hosting the tournament, migrants from Southeast Asia flocked to the Arab state. While publicly available sources for the precise demography of construction workers concerning their age ranges or education are limited, they would likely have been young to middle-aged men. Due to the harsh working conditions, older men would likely have struggled significantly.

The countries from which the majority of the migrant workers for the 2022 Qatar World Cup came were limited to Southeast Asia or North Africa. This paper focuses on the migratory flow from Southeast Asia to Qatar, namely, with the countries of India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines.

### **Understanding World Systems Theory**

This section outlines the key concepts associated with World Systems Theory and develops this into an analysis specifically for the 2022 Qatar World Cup. Originally introduced as a concept in 1974, Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory argued that the world should be viewed as a single hierarchical economy. Within this said economy, countries would be divided into the 'core', 'semi-periphery' and 'periphery'. The role of the multinational organisation FIFA is somewhat ambiguous within this theory, so this paper considers that FIFA is a detached body responsible for the oversight of its own events.

Critics of WST often consider the lack of empirical evidence as a basis for attacking the hierarchical macroeconomic model. However, in the specific case of Qatar's relation to the Global South (namely Southeast Asia), there is strong evidence pertaining to the fact that we should analyse the case of the 2022 World Cup through WST. Furthermore, WST has often been criticised by humanists as being insufficiently attentive to values of knowledge, such as culture and local customs. In the case of Qatar, *Kafala* is the main system of employment under which migrant workers fall; thus, the use of WST becomes even more pertinent due to its ability to analyse the impact of *Kafala* specifically on the migratory flow from Southeast Asia to Qatar. We should not view WST as a barrier to analysing the local impacts of migration to Qatar, but rather as a tool which serves primarily to highlight the imbalances of power between migrants from the Periphery and Semi-Periphery and ethnic-Qataris.

Core countries in WST are characterised by their domination over the rest of the world, whether it be in economic activity, technological development, or trading power. Notable examples of Core countries include the United States of America, Japan, and Germany. Typically, Core countries are heavily industrialised and do not have to rely on exports as heavily as those in the Semi-periphery and Periphery. Semi-Periphery countries are those countries that are less developed than Core countries, yet are more developed than those in the Periphery. Semi-periphery countries can be seen as countries that are either declining Core countries, or rapidly industrialising Periphery countries. Typical examples of Semi-periphery countries often include South Korea, Brazil, and South Africa. In the case of the 2022 Qatar World Cup, it was the exploitation of migrants from Periphery and Semi-Periphery countries that highlighted the imbalances in power as explained by Wallerstein's World Systems Theory. Periphery countries are often underdeveloped, lack strong political power, and rely heavily on the export of natural resources (or, in this case, human labour). Periphery countries include Nepal, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka. These four countries were all important expatriate nations when considering the population of Qatar; combined, research into specific expatriate countries (Snoj, 2014, as cited by Ganji, 2016), found that they make up 36.77% of the total population of Qatar. Following the rapid growth of Qatar in the period 2010-2022 during its World Cup campaign, it is likely that this number has risen. Although India is not currently classified as a Periphery country, and classified as a Semi-Periphery country, and the nation makes up "23.58%" of the total population of Qatar (Snoj, 2014, as cited by Ganji, 2016)

The case of Qatar is particularly interesting, as highlighted during the 2022 World Cup, the Semi-Periphery country was the host of a range of human rights violations of its migrant workers from Southeast Asia and abroad. Qatar's hosting of the World Cup illustrates a striking image of the immensely wealthy hydrocarbon economy being fuelled almost completely by the import of labour from peripheral countries in Southeast Asia. The 2022 World Cup highlighted a structural dynamic and dependency between countries; while countries like Nepal and Bangladesh rely heavily on remittances as an essential component of their GDP, Qatar was equally reliant on migrant labour due to the nature of its small population. Qatar, while being immensely resource-rich, was and still is labour poor. Semi-periphery countries (like Qatar) occupy a middle ground where they benefit from global capital flows, like exports or trade, but are still dependent on external input of labour to sustain their economy.

The dynamic created by the migration of workers from Southeast Asia to Qatar closely mimics the vision of the relationship between the periphery and core as outlined by Wallerstein. While official estimates put the number of migrant workers for the World Cup at "over 30,000" (Workers' Welfare & Labour Rights, 2022), there can be no doubt that the number falls somewhere within the boundaries of "500,000 and 1.5 million" as per outside estimates (Ganji, 2016). Of course, it would be unfeasible and unreasonable

to expect the construction of the World Cup to have been done primarily by domestic workers, as the numbers tell a revealing story that this would have been impossible. However, we should attribute the reasoning behind labour importation in Qatar not only to the limitations of the Qatari population, but also to Qatar's status as a rentier state. A report into Qatar's economy (Milipol Qatar, 2025) saw that the reliance on the exporting of oil and gas makes up around 70% of the total national income of Qatar, which enables Qatar to form a social contract where citizens are generally taxed less, and benefit from state employment and a strong welfare system. However, what this allows is for the proliferation of physically demanding jobs (such as those involved in the World Cup) to be undertaken primarily by migrant workers.

Thus, migrant workers form a "buffer state", where manual work is essential to Qatar's global ambitions, yet those same workers are hardly recognised and protected by government reform. Throughout the Gulf nation's history, Qatar has always remained a hub for migrants from Asia and Africa. The 20th century saw Qatar develop as a fishing and pearling port, whereas the discovery of oil in the 1940s catapulted the country to a state where it would no longer be able to rely on the trickle of migrants. What remains key to note is that Qatar has now transitioned to the reliance on a globalised migrant labour market to sustain the development of its own infrastructure.

The route from Southeast Asia to Qatar is the primary channel for low-skilled migrant workers to enter the Gulf and find work in Qatar, as on a macroeconomic level, a trend has emerged wherein expatriate countries are 'locked' into a relationship with Qatar. The emergence of the 'globalised economy' has led to what Richard E. Lee calls "a hierarchical ordering of multiple centres of power that can unilaterally impose resolutions to struggles among competing interests, but, with maximum legitimacy and efficacy, only within their exclusive geographic confines" (Lee, 2011, p.33). Such is the case of Qatar, where the employment system of *Kafala* is exclusive to the Middle East. In many ways, the intense expansion of the migrant labour pool after the announcement of Qatar's winning bid in 2010 can ultimately be attributed to not only the necessity of migrant labour but also to the structural hierarchy that was formed between Qatar and Southeast Asian expatriate countries. Lee (2011) notes that the expansion of this form of economy has consistently evolved in the past, and is what is happening right now. "The world economy has expanded (a fundamental process in the reproduction of the system) to incorporate fresh pools of cheap labor at the bottom of the wage scale to make up at the system level what has been conceded in local struggles" (p. 34). The 'local struggles' in the case of Qatar, amount to an extensive list of benefits which would be a rarity in the West. Qatari citizens benefit from a range of "concessions" made by the government, including being tax free in personal income and property, as well as substantial benefits such as free healthcare, education, housing assistance, and preferential government jobs.

In many ways, the World Cup can be seen to have compressed the concept of WST into one event. The so-called 'core' components of WST included the multinational body FIFA, sponsors (such as Coca Cola and Adidas); the Semi-Periphery was the host country, Qatar, and the Periphery included the migrant workers who constructed the project.

The 2022 Qatar World Cup provided a lens through which to examine the event as a microcosm within broader WST dynamics. A publication of the annual report of FIFA (FIFA, 2022) found that, typical of the WST model, it was FIFA who extracted a record high total revenue of "7.56 billion USD" in the period 2019-2022. Comparatively, Qatar received only "1.56 billion USD" (FIFA, 2022) despite (Lyjak, 2023) finding that Qatar spent around "220 billion" on the mega project. Moreover, the sales of sponsorship rights amounted to a "1.795 billion USD" profit for FIFA (FIFA, 2022); with the exception of Qatar Airways, almost all sponsors were headquartered within the Core nations: Coca-Cola, Hyundai, Kia, Visa, and McDonald's. This case represents not only the domination of the Core economies over the Periphery, but also highlights the intrusion of what are essentially core capitalist businesses into the Semi-Periphery. In a sense, the firms are just another facet of WST within the World Cup; while they shouldered no cost in investing in infrastructure for the event, the global visibility of the tournament allowed for the quick pay-back of costs that were spent on buying sponsorship rights for the event.

The compression of WST into the World Cup allows for the event to be viewed as a showcase of hierarchical patterns of economic power. In all cases, it was the Core (sponsors and FIFA) who benefited the most from a historic revenue increase, and the Periphery (migrant workers) who suffered intensely under the toil of constructing the event.

### **How the Globalised Economy allowed for Migrant Exploitation during the 2022 Qatar World Cup**

The idea of WST assumes that the Core extrapolates as much profit as possible from the Periphery. The rapid expansion over the past few decades of the global economy should be seen as a contributing factor for the exploitation that occurred during Qatar 2022; the exploitation that happened during the World Cup is not a mere anomaly to the *Kafala* system, but a systemic system of exploitation that has been made possible by Globalisation.

Research into the World Cup (Galily, 2025) found that Qatar's bid for the World Cup can be viewed as a soft power play intended to project the nation's image into the Global Core. The World Cup was an event intended to expose Qatar to the world; in this sense, WST can be applied in viewing the exploitation of Migrant Labour as the extraction of labour from the Periphery (Southeast Asia) to the Semi-Periphery (Qatar).

The mechanisms of exploitation imposed on migrants during the World Cup mirror the exchange that occurs within WST. While migrants were exploited for maximal value, it was the Core and Semi-Periphery who stood to benefit the most from exploitation. Wallerstein argued that globalisation had allowed for the exploitation of the Global South by the Global North, and as previously explored in the 'microcosm' of Qatar 2022, this was certainly the case. Despite reforms promised by the Qatari government to change labour dynamics in the run-up to the World Cup, there was little done, suggesting that the promised reforms were all illusory. *Kafala*, overseen by Qatar's internal ministries, as opposed to labour ministries, effectively tied workers directly to their employers with no chance of presenting litigation against their working environments. By viewing the World Cup through WST, we see the migrants as the Periphery; *Kafala* all but enabled exploitation to occur, and despite promised reforms, there was little done to solve the exploitation crisis.

The relationship between Core actors and the Periphery during the World Cup highlighted the hierarchical relationship between different facets of WST. As previously argued, Sponsors headquartered in the Core (such as the USA and Japan) benefited hugely from the World Cup at the expense of the migrant workers who laboured from the bottom to build the mega project. The position of sponsors as a third-party group detached from the building of the World Cup allowed them to dodge criticism from global media, as well as distance themselves from the exploitation that occurred in the construction of the event. There is no doubt that sponsors were able to extract brand value from the record "5 billion viewers" of the duration of the World Cup, more than 50% of Earth's population (FIFA, 2022). International complicity from sponsors and FIFA made it all the more easy for exploitation to happen on the ground for the sake of finishing the project in time. The combination of a lack of regulatory oversight from the Qatari government and international complicity should be seen as ultimately the root cause of the exploitation crisis in Qatar.

## **Conclusions**

As demonstrated by the previous sections, the concept of WST is still very much alive today, if not more than ever. The unbalanced relationship between the Core, Semi-Periphery and Periphery was highlighted by the 2022 Qatar World Cup, where Qatar became a microcosm for WST to play out. Migration to Qatar has long been a contentious issue, and the rich Gulf nation has profited hugely from the work of migrants in the past. From its inception as a small fishing and pearling town to the ultra-luxury heart of the Gulf today, migration has and will continue to play a huge role in the development of Qatar. In viewing the World Cup through the lens of Wallerstein's WST, it quickly becomes clear that the Qatari Government is not singularly at fault for the exploitation in the build-up to the World Cup. Bodies of the Core (such as sponsors)

extracted maximal value through brand deals with the Semi-Periphery(Qatar), who exploited the Periphery(migrant workers). As outlined above, a combination of International Complicity and lack of oversight were all contributing factors for the crisis that occurred before and during the World Cup.

While many criticise the use of WST as both a model and a form of analysis, it becomes ever clearer that the concepts of WST, which Wallerstein set out in the 1960's are very prevalent today. Examining the world through this lens allows analysis of specific migratory flows(such as the route from Southeast Asia to Qatar) and the analysis of the primary actors within the World Cup. This article's empirical section outlines the remittance-based economies of Nepal and Bangladesh, and the systematic extraction of value that occurs within the migration route from Southeast Asia to Qatar.

This article provides only an introduction to Qatar's need to maintain migration, and argues that not only is the population too small to sustain such a high capacity of work, but that the work of migrants is essential to maintain the 'buffer state' between migrants and ethnic-Qatari citizens. The section 'How the Globalised Economy allows for Migrant Exploitation during the 2022 Qatar World Cup' explores not only the main method of exploitation(in *Kafala*), but also how this exploitation is consistently ignored and profited from by actors in the Core.

Further critical work on WST should investigate the 2014 Brazil World Cup or the upcoming 2026 North American World Cup. In the wake of using WST as a form of analysis, it may be interesting to investigate the difference between the events of Qatar(as a Semi-Periphery country) and North America(as a Core country). Such research could explain the difference between the use of migrants in a deregulated country like Qatar and an area with stricter legislation(in the case of North America). In examining the views of critics who believe WST ignores cultural and local customs, further examination of the 2026 World Cup could test the limits of WST, and possibly amalgamate WST with other concepts, such as the Global Commodity Chain(GCC). By examining the 2026 World Cup in relation to the 2022 World Cup, we may see a difference emerge in the hierarchy of the global economy, where WST exposes how a host in the Global North relies far less on migrant exploitation, but possibly still produces inequalities in the form of corporate dominance and consumption patterns.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank [REDACTED]. I would like to give a special thank you to [REDACTED] for reading and commenting on the drafts of this article, as well as inspiring me to consider different schools of thought to approach the issue.

## Bibliography

1. Ehrenreich, B. & Hochschild, R.H. (2003). *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. Granta Books.
2. Farhanna. K.M, Mannan. K.A (2024, April 19) *Bangladesh's Economic Vitality Owes in Part to Migration and Remittances*. Migration Policy Institute  
<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/bangladesh-migration-remittances-profile?>
3. FIFA. (2022), *2019 - 2022 Revenue*  
<https://publications.fifa.com/en/annual-report-2022/finances/2019-2022-cycle-in-review/2019-2022-revenue/>
4. Galily, Y. (2023). Beyond the Goalposts: Decoding Qatar's Soft Power Puzzle and Its Paradox. *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, 12(2), 197-208.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/23477989251325622>
5. Ganji, S. K. (2016) Leveraging the World Cup: Mega-Sporting Events, Human Rights Risk, and Worker Welfare Reform in Qatar. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 4(4) pp. 221-223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241600400403>
6. Gulf Labour Markets and Migration. (2017). *Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in Qatar* (No.3/2017). Gulf Research Centre.  
[https://gulfmigration.grc.net/media/pubs/exno/GLMM\\_EN\\_2017\\_03.pdf](https://gulfmigration.grc.net/media/pubs/exno/GLMM_EN_2017_03.pdf)
7. Gulf Labour Markets and Migration. Labour Force Survey 2023 (2023), *Qatar: Economically active population(aged 15 and above) by nationality(Qatari/non-Qatari), sex and occupation(2023)*. Gulf Research Centre
8. Hughes, E(2025, February 10) *The True Cost of the 2022 World Cup*. Sussex Centre for Migration Research Blog.  
<https://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/sussex-centre-for-migration-research/2025/02/10/2022worldcup/>
9. Human Rights Watch. (2021, December 18). Q&A: *Migrant Worker Abuses in Qatar and FIFA World Cup 2022*. Human Rights Watch
10. Human Rights Watch. (2025) *Qatar Events of 2019. In World Report 2020*. Human Rights Watch <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/qatar>
11. Jackson. B, (2023, June 15) *World Cup 2022: Amnesty claims migrant workers paid 'unlawful recruitment fees'*. BBC.  
<https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/65916552#:~:text=Thousands%20of%20migrants%20paid%20%22illegal,Fifa%20to%20recompense%20the%20workers.>
12. Lee, Richard. E. (2011). *The Modern World-System: Its Structures, Its Geoculture, Its Crisis and Transformation*. In Palumbo-Liu. D, Robbins. B, & Tanoukhi, N. (Eds.) *Immanuel Wallerstein and the Problem of the World*(pp. 33-34) Duke University Press.
13. Lyjak, A. (2023, January 10). *The Finances Behind the 2022 World Cup*. Michigan Journal of Economics.  
<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/mje/2023/01/10/the-finances-behind-the-2022-world-cup/>
14. Milipol (n.d.), *Economy of Qatar*.  
[https://www.milipolqatar.com/en/useful-information/discover-qatar/economy#:~:text=Qatar's%20main%20sources%20of%20revenue,\(LNG\)%20in%20the%20world.](https://www.milipolqatar.com/en/useful-information/discover-qatar/economy#:~:text=Qatar's%20main%20sources%20of%20revenue,(LNG)%20in%20the%20world.)
15. Moodie. A, (2025, March 7) *Migrant Workers Controversy Behind the Scenes of Qatar's World Cup*. Boundless.  
<https://www.boundless.com/blog/qatar-world-cup-migrant-workers/>

16. Rahman. S, (2018, September 15) *Qatar football projects will benefit Gulf*. Gulf News.  
<https://gulfnews.com/business/property/qatar-football-projects-will-benefit-gulf-1.730210>
17. The Global Economy. (2025). *Nepal Remittances, percent of GDP*. The Global Economy  
[https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Nepal/remittances\\_percent\\_GDP/#:~:text=Remittances%20as%20percent%20of%20GDP&text=The%20latest%20value%20from%202023.from%202022.56%20percent%20in%202022.](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Nepal/remittances_percent_GDP/#:~:text=Remittances%20as%20percent%20of%20GDP&text=The%20latest%20value%20from%202023.from%202022.56%20percent%20in%202022.)
18. Unison(2022, March). Qatar 2022 and the World Cup of Shame. *Unison*  
[https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/05/TowebQatar\\_briefing\\_2015.pdf?](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/05/TowebQatar_briefing_2015.pdf?)
19. Wikipedia, (2025, August 18) *World-systems theory*. Wikipedia.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World-systems\\_theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World-systems_theory)
20. Workers' Welfare and Labour Rights. (2022, December 31). *Workers' Welfare*.  
<https://www.workerswelfare.qa/en/workers-welfare.html>

## **Review for Submission “Global Dreams, Local Nightmares: Migrant Workers and the cost of the 2022 Qatar World Cup”**

Thank you for submitting your paper to Convergence Journal. Your examination of the 2022 Qatar World Cup’s impact on migrant workers through the lens of World Systems Theory is a significant and thought-provoking contribution. As an early-career researcher, your focus on labor exploitation in a globalised context is commendable, and this review aims to support your scholarly development.

### **Evaluation Based on Criteria:**

- **Originality & Significance:** The paper offers a unique perspective by framing the Qatar World Cup as a microcosm of World Systems Theory, linking migrant exploitation to global economic structures. Its focus on the Kafala system and remittance economies adds substantial relevance to discussions on labor rights and global inequalities.
- **Clarity & Structure:** The argument is well-organised, with a clear introduction and logical progression from the event’s spectacle to underlying labor issues. However, the transition between historical data and theoretical application could be smoother—consider adding a brief paragraph to connect these sections more seamlessly.
- **Use of Evidence & Research Methods:** Sources are appropriately cited, with references like Ganji (2016) and Human Rights Watch (2021) providing a solid evidence base. The methodology relies on secondary data and theoretical analysis, but it lacks explicit detail—please specify the selection process for data sources (e.g., reports, statistics) to enhance transparency and rigour.
- **Engagement with Literature:** The paper demonstrates a strong understanding of relevant research, citing World Systems Theory and studies on migrant labor (e.g., Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003). However, deeper engagement with recent literature on mega sporting events or labor reforms could better connect findings to current debates.
- **Grammar & Language:** The writing is clear and professional, with minor stylistic issues (e.g., inconsistent tense in “will forever be immortalised” vs. “was unfolding”). These are noted but should not overshadow content improvements.

**Recommendations:** I recommend accepting the paper with major revisions. To proceed, improve transitions for better flow, elaborate on the methodology with specific data selection details, and expand the literature review with recent studies on mega events or labor reforms. These changes will enhance clarity and depth. Send the revised version to Jonas Katona ([j.katona@indigoresearch.org](mailto:j.katona@indigoresearch.org)) or [convergencejournal@indigoresearch.org](mailto:convergencejournal@indigoresearch.org).



# Review for Global Dreams, Local Nightmares: Migrant Workers and the Cost of the 2022 Qatar World Cup

## Approach to Reviewing

This paper takes on an ambitious and timely subject, applying World Systems Theory to the case of Qatar 2022. The author shows strong conceptual thinking and a clear passion for the topic. The work is promising, but revisions are needed to sharpen the methodology, reduce repetition, and strengthen the scholarly rigor. My comments aim to help the author refine this paper into something publishable and impactful.

## Key Evaluation Criteria

- **Originality & Significance**

The framing of Qatar 2022 as a microcosm of World Systems Theory is original and effective. It makes a meaningful contribution by linking a global sporting event to structural exploitation and labor migration.

- **Clarity & Structure**

The paper is logically structured, but certain sections are too long and repetitive, especially the World Systems Theory and Mechanisms of Exploitation sections. The argument is clear but can be tightened for greater impact.

- **Use of Evidence & Research Methods**

The paper relies heavily on secondary sources but lacks a transparent methodology. The “Methodology” section reads more like theoretical framing than a research design. Clarifying how sources were chosen and what kind of evidence is prioritized would strengthen credibility.

- **Engagement with Literature**

The author engages widely with literature, from academic work to NGO reports. However, reliance on Wikipedia undermines the paper’s academic weight and should be replaced with peer-reviewed or authoritative sources. The paper could also acknowledge alternative frameworks such as political economy of sport or migration studies to show awareness of broader debates.

- **Grammar & Language**

The writing is clear and persuasive, though sometimes wordy. Sentences should be tightened to maintain an academic tone.

## Providing Feedback

- Clarify the research question and methodology. State clearly whether this is primarily a theoretical essay, a case study, or both.
- Reduce repetition of the microcosm argument. Make the case strongly once, then use it without restating it.
- Present numerical data (remittances, labor force, FIFA revenue) in tables or figures to improve readability.
- Reframe the Conclusion so it not only summarizes but also reflects critically on what the WST lens adds and where its limits lie.
- Standardize citations and replace weaker sources with stronger academic references.
- Consider adding a short discussion of alternative frameworks to acknowledge scholarly debates.

### **Ethical and Logistical Considerations**

No ethical concerns arise here. The paper is original, and the topic is highly relevant. Confidentiality is respected.

### **Final Recommendation: Accept with major revisions**

This is a promising and original paper, but it requires revisions to clarify its methodology, strengthen evidence use, and streamline the argument. With these changes, it can make a valuable contribution to the journal.

## Decision: Revise and resubmit

This paper is ambitious in framing the Qatar World Cup as a microcosm of World Systems Theory (WST), which is a mature and intellectually astute angle. The structure is clear, with an abstract, intro, theory section, case study, mechanisms of exploitation, and conclusions. The rhetoric is clear, accessible, and uses a good balance between jargon and theory.

While conceptually strong, the paper in its current state is executionally weak. In particular, while I believe this paper is promising in its scope, aims, and content, some revisions should be taken care of before the paper can be conditionally accepted, particularly in *Convergence Journal*. I do not think the paper should be outright rejected by any means.

In particular:

- The paper does not rely on many peer-reviewed papers and rigorous scholarship. Many of the citations are highly questionable and objectionable, e.g., relying on “Wikipedia (2025)” as a source for World Systems Theory. These must be changed to peer-reviewed, stronger scholarship (e.g., academic papers, policy papers, etc.)
  - Even NGO reports (e.g., Amnesty) are *okay* but should be supplemented with more reliable and rigorous sources.
- The literature review throughout is rather thin. In particular, the WST application requires a bit more depth and nuance, and I wonder if that would be gleaned by using a deeper AND more broad overview of WST in more academically rigorous literature.
  - Particularly, the author should more clearly acknowledge and address both sides of the debate on whether or not Qatar belongs in “semi-periphery” instead of accepting this as fact. After all, Qatar is highly wealthy in terms of GDP per capita, even if poor in terms of labor. This argument isn’t necessarily wrong, (and is certainly defensible), but the author needs to address the fact that this is a bit debatable.
  - Similarly, some statistics (e.g., the claim that the 2022 WC increased Qatar’s population by “40%”) might be imprecise or otherwise need to have stronger, more precise sources.
- The paper needs to be cut down. Some sections are unnecessarily long, dense, or repetitive, and seem a bit too rambly. Being concise, precise, and straightforward is generally preferred for academic writing.
  - Fix redundancies and awkward phrasing. I would carefully reconsider what your paper is about, what main points you want to emphasize, and make sure that you stay laser focused and carefully structured. This will require a careful read-through.
- The tone occasionally slips into journalistic or emotive phrasing (e.g., “the untold story of thousands of migrant workers” or “the dazzling bright lights of stadiums”). Keep things academic neutral, analytic, and precise. Think Spock rather than The Atlantic (although, I’m a big fan of The Atlantic!)

All in all, the paper has sections that both need to be expanded in greater detail *and* sections that need to be cut down and made more concise. I am confident that the author is capable of making these changes.

# **Global Dreams, Local Nightmares: Migrant Workers and the cost of the 2022 Qatar World Cup**

## **Abstract**

The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar sent shockwaves around the world as global media reported on the plethora of human rights abuses that had taken place since November 2015. Yet, despite initial public outrage, the voices of objectors were quickly muffled by the lights of Stadiums Lusail, Al Janoub, 974, Ahmad Bin Ali, Al Thumama, Education City, Khalifa International, and Al Bayt. This article explores the impact the 2022 Qatar World Cup had on the inequalities of migrant labourers in a globalised economy primarily as a theoretical essay. I endeavour to draw on World Systems Theory to argue that the 2022 Qatar World Cup was not merely an anomaly, but a systematic form of labour extraction that occurred within the microcosm of Qatar 2022. This will show that (1) the case of Qatar should be viewed as a microcosm of World Systems Theory, and (2) the globalised economy allowed for the exploitation of migrants through complicity and lack of regulatory oversight.

## **Keywords**

Mega sporting events(MSEs), global south, labour, exploitation, Kafala, World Systems Theory(WST), Microcosm

## **Introduction: Migrant labour, structural dynamics, and World Systems Theory**

The 2022 FIFA World Cup will be remembered for generations as one of, if not FIFA's greatest success; namely with the Final being one of the most riveting footballing events of all time through the final penalties and Leo Messi's 'fairytale ending'. Despite this grabbing the attention of the media around the world, the untold story of thousands of migrant workers was quietly unfolding, hidden away from the rosy lights of the World Cup festivities. As Qatar embarked on the gargantuan effort to construct 7 new stadiums for its hosting of the World Cup, and 1 city, Lusail, it relied almost entirely on the estimated figure of "500,000 to 1.5 million" migrant workers employed in construction who built the tournament from the ground up. (Ganji, 2016) These same migrant workers mostly came from Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines - countries of the Global South that provided an estimated "1.5 million labourers" over the course of the 2022 World Cup, since its inception in 2010. (Unison, 2015) The criticisms of global media fell mainly on the *Kafala* system of employment in Qatar, which legally bound workers to their employers, restricted their movement, and denied them basic protections. Furthermore, reports of unsafe working conditions and inadequate protection against exposure to toxic chemicals provoked significant controversy. Despite the claims of the Qatari Government in 2017 to reform labour

rights, work done by independent media suggested that the reforms undertaken by the Qatari government were “woefully inadequate and poorly enforced”. (Human Rights Watch, 2021) Similarly, research into Qatar (Hughes, 2025) found that attempts at reforming the minimum wage proved unsuccessful; a combination of lack of responsibility, delay in issuing payments, and complicity of employers made it entirely unsustainable for the average worker to sustain their own standard of living and support a family at home.

The significant size of the migrant worker population in Qatar has much to do not only with Qatar’s domestic construction needs, but also with Qatar being an important destination for migrant workers from the Global South who seek to improve their standard of living. A report into the events of 2019 in Qatar (Human Rights Watch, 2020) found that the “2 million” strong migrant labour force of Qatar comprised around “95%” of all labour workers in Qatar. This is a deep-rooted issue, not just related to Qatar’s domestic needs in construction, but more significantly due to broader global structures that dictate the movement of migrant workers. With third-world countries frequently relying on remittances to subsidise a percentage of GDP, Qatar’s attractive destination led to a mass influx of workers from a combination of agencies in home countries, and a need for low skilled laborers. Insights into Nepal’s GDP (The Global Economy, 2025) showed that remittances accounted for 26.89% of Nepal’s GDP in 2023; remittances(non-commercial money transfers by foreign workers) in Nepal were significantly higher compared to the world average of “5.13% based on data from 174 countries”. Similarly, in Bangladesh, Farhana and Mannan (2024) state that “21.9 billion” dollars were officially recorded as being sent through remittance channels, highlighting the dependency on the outsourcing of migrant labour. Thus, one should note the importance of private agencies that link foreign workers with their potential employers in Qatar. In the case of the 2022 Qatar World Cup, thousands of migrant workers were recruited through private recruitment agencies, with many paying “illegal recruitment fees”. (Jackson, 2023) In the past few decades, several migratory flows have emerged, one of which Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003) suggest is the major route involving the migration from “Southeast Asia to the oil-rich Middle and Far East” (p. 6).

## **Literature Review**

Research into the Qatar World Cup has mainly explored the facets of migrant exploitation that took place under the Qatari Government. Scholars such as Ganji (2016) posed the question of reform to the World Cup, viewing the event as both high risk and opportunity; while there was a significant chance of reform, there was an equally likely chance of the event turning into a human rights disaster. Data from *The Global Economy* (2025) and Migration Policy Institute (Farhanna & Mannan, 2014) highlight the remittance-based economies of Nepal and Bangladesh, key actors in the Periphery who contributed significantly to the World Cup project. Data taken from *WorldoMeters*(2024) helps strengthen the argument that Qatar should be considered a Semi-Periphery

nation as in Wallerstein's WST. Reports from *Gulf Labour Markets and Migration* (2017, 2023) went further in exposing the ethnic disparity between workers who undertake physical labour. Furthermore, the data exposes the dominance of non-Qatari workers in the labour force, which reveals the stark demographic imbalance and the structural reliance on foreign labour. Interestingly enough, research from 2015 had already raised warnings about the potential for human rights abuses in the Qatar World Cup, with the "migrant workers...highly vulnerable to trafficking and forced labor" (Worden, 2015, p.40). As confirmed by NGO reports, attempts to reform the labor system in Qatar were minimal, and despite supposed government intervention, a view in hindsight makes clear that such reforms did not take place. On the other hand, findings from 2017 made clear that "both IOC and FIFA...do not require that host countries have reputable human rights records". (Henderson, 2017, p.369).

In recent times, FIFA has come out with the "FIFA Peace Prize", and since the process of determining the winner remains shrouded in mystery, one can only assume that the prize is simply a scapegoat for advancements in human rights action. Similarly, with the kickoff for the 2026 World Cup being less than 300 days away, it remains to be seen whether FIFA can uphold their promise of effective human rights policy, as in line with their 'mission statements'.

Grosfoguel(2002) highlighted the utility of analysis by WST: "Independent republics in the periphery live the crude exploitation of the capitalist world-system". While existing literature has looked at imbalances between migrants and Qatari citizens in the context of the World Cup, this paper serves to add to existing literature by analysing the 2022 World Cup through the lens of WST, providing Qatar 2022 as a case study for potential future MSE's.

Thus, the literature review maintains relevance by allowing the paper to explore the nuances of understanding Qatar 2022's impact on both the economy, and the people actively contributing to the building of the event. By exploring the World Cup in this way, the hierarchical economy of Wallerstein's WST becomes apparent in its exposition of both global and local power imbalances.

## **Methodology**

Intending to examine migrant labour in today's globalised economy, I draw on Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Analysis to explore the dynamic between semi-periphery nations(in this case, Qatar) and Periphery nations(who supplied labour to Qatar for the 2022 FIFA World Cup). While this essay remains primarily theoretical, I still aim to analyse the objective evidence from Qatar 2022 to argue that the exploitation of migrant labourers was far from an anomaly.

The empirical evidence employed in this paper has been selected from NGO reports, journals, academic articles, and contemporary media pieces. In particular, evidence pertaining to migration channels from Southeast Asia is prioritized; data sets from amnesty reports, scholarly literature, and annual reports are also considered.

The theoretical basis for this paper rests on Wallerstein's premise that Peripheral countries are being exploited by those in the Semi-Periphery and Core, suggesting that wealthy countries benefit by taking advantage of labour from the latter two types of countries. However, it is important to note that Wallerstein recognised the minimal benefits to Periphery and Semi-Periphery nations provided by participating in this form of economy. In this type of global economy, multinational corporations such as FIFA and host nations (in the case of Qatar) can extract the most value out of the system. I argue that the migrant exploitation exposed in the 2022 Qatar World Cup was not merely an anomaly, but a deep-rooted and systemic pattern of global labour extraction, sustained, namely, by the unequal relationships between the Core, Semi-Periphery, and Periphery nations.

## **Organisation**

The rest of the article will be organised as follows: The section titled "The Role of Migrant Labour in Building the 2022 FIFA World Cup" will analyse the trends of migrant workers who built the World Cup. The "Understanding World Systems Analysis" aims to explore the relationship between the so-called 'feeder' states of Southeast Asia and Qatar, as well as the role of the multinational body, FIFA, regarding the migrant labour market and the dependency of Periphery nations on Semi-periphery nations like Qatar. Moreover, the section will aim to explore the role of the 2022 Qatar World Cup as a case study within the broader dynamics of labour market globalisation. The "Mechanisms of Exploitation in Qatar" will elaborate on the *Kafala* system and its role in migrant labour during the 2022 Qatar World Cup. Furthermore, this section will analyse the methods of migrant exploitation, including but not limited to: passport seizure, unsafe working environments and international complicity. Finally, the "Conclusion" section will summarise the key discussions within the article and outline potential research areas for the future.

## **The Role of Migrant Labour in Building the 2022 Qatar World Cup**

This section aims to build on the existing literature surrounding the demography of migrant workers in Qatar's construction industry, with a central focus on the 2022 Qatar World Cup in particular. The project was a result of not only a decade of planning and meticulous city design, but also one of hard labour by the thousands of migrant workers who moved to Qatar in the hopes of finding a better life for themselves and their families. I aim to delve into the infrastructure demands that were required in the construction of the 2022 Qatar World Cup, and how this directly correlates with the

role of migrant workers in Qatar. This issue is especially prevalent, as will be shown, since Qatar itself had nowhere near the capacity to undertake such a huge project from its own population.

The 2022 Qatar World Cup led to an unprecedented infrastructure boom, with workers needed for the construction of hotels, stadiums, roads, restaurants and the like. The role of migrant labour in building the Qatar World Cup can be traced back to the period 2012-2015, shortly after the announcement of Qatar's winning bid in 2010. Already a key destination for migrant workers (predominantly male labourers), research into the demography of Qatar (Gulf Research Center, 2017) found that Qatar's population increased by an astounding "35% between 2010 and 2015". The gargantuan project, which was estimated by Standard Chartered Bank (Gulf News, 2018) at "up to 72.5 billion dollars", called for a dramatic influx of labour, which Qatar did not possess among its own workforce. Given the limitations of Qatar's own population in extracting workers, the Qatari Government turned to the countries of the Global South to source labour. It came as no surprise that the migratory flow of these same workers came predominantly from countries in the Global South in Southeast Asia, including Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines. This reliance on foreign labour was not coincidental; rather, it underpinned the key method of Qatar's preparation strategy for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The intentional selection of countries whose economies were predominantly remittance-based (as in the case of Nepal and Bangladesh) led to foreign workers who would be incentivised to work harder to send remittance packages home. Furthermore, this subsequently led to workers from the Global South playing a key role in the core of Qatar's development model. If anything, the 2022 Qatar World Cup can be seen as a case study within broader global dynamics as an event that proved the success of relying on migrant labour to complete massive infrastructure projects despite international concern over human rights abuses. Qatar's migrant labourers were responsible for the building of seven new stadiums and one city, Lusail. Research into Qatar's working demography (Gulf Migration, 2023) found that of the labourers in Qatar who worked under the sector title "Craft and Related Trades Workers", only 0.47% were Qatari; of the total 551868 workers, only 2634 were Qatari (with 0 Qatari women, compared to the 826 non-Qatari women). Based on this empirical evidence, it is clear that the construction sector of Qatar at the time was not only made up almost fully by migrant men, but also fully dominated by migrant women when examining the work done by women in this sector.

This trend of migrant workers in Qatar is hardly surprising. Since the late 1960s and 1970s, the construction industry within the wealthy Arab nation's oil sector has been predominantly made up of migrant male workers. To put this into perspective, by the numbers, people from the same aforementioned countries make up just over 50% of Qatar's total population. When examining the demographics of Qatar, it is clear that the population is dominated by migrants from South-East Asia and North Africa, comprising around 78% of the population. With the rapid expansion of the Gulf states, migration to

Qatar has become increasingly attractive for young workers in the construction industry to attempt to better their living conditions. A report into the migrant workers controversy (Moodie, 2025) found that the 2022 Qatar World Cup alone brought a 40% increase to the population of Qatar; faced with the immediate need for migrant workers to construct the infrastructure required for hosting the tournament, migrants from Southeast Asia flocked to the Arab state. While publicly available sources for the precise demography of construction workers concerning their age ranges or education are limited, they would likely have been young to middle-aged men. Due to the harsh working conditions, older men would likely have struggled significantly.

The countries from which the majority of the migrant workers for the 2022 Qatar World Cup came were limited to Southeast Asia or North Africa. This paper focuses on the migratory flow from Southeast Asia to Qatar, namely, with the countries of India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines.

It is clear to see the relationship between Qatar, FIFA, and Southeast Asia/North Africa as being directly applicable to analysis through Wallerstein's WST. The global chain between migratory flows from Southeast Asia/North Africa to Qatar is directly mirrored in the extraction of resources from the Periphery to the Semi-Periphery and Core in WST. While this section has provided empirical evidence to substantiate the argument, the next section will outline how exactly Qatar 2022 fits into, and exacerbates the inequalities found in WST.

## **Understanding World Systems Theory**

This section outlines the key concepts associated with World Systems Theory and develops this into an analysis specifically for the 2022 Qatar World Cup. Originally introduced as a concept in 1974, Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory argued that the world should be viewed as a single hierarchical economy. Within this said economy, countries would be divided into the 'core', 'semi-periphery' and 'periphery'. The role of the multinational organisation FIFA is somewhat ambiguous within this theory, so this paper considers that FIFA is a detached body responsible for the oversight of its own events.

Critics of WST often consider the lack of empirical evidence as a basis for attacking the hierarchical macroeconomic model. However, in the specific case of Qatar's relation to the Global South (namely Southeast Asia), there is strong evidence pertaining to the fact that we should analyse the case of the 2022 World Cup through WST. Furthermore, WST has often been criticised by humanists as being insufficiently attentive to values of knowledge, such as culture and local customs. In the case of Qatar, *Kafala* is the main system of employment under which migrant workers fall; thus, the use of WST becomes even more pertinent due to its ability to analyse the impact of *Kafala* specifically on the

migratory flow from Southeast Asia to Qatar. We should not view WST as a barrier to analysing the local impacts of migration to Qatar, but rather as a tool which serves primarily to highlight the imbalances of power between migrants from the Periphery and Semi-Periphery and ethnic-Qataris.

Core countries in WST are characterised by their domination over the rest of the world, whether it be in economic activity, technological development, or trading power. Notable examples of Core countries include the United States of America, Japan, and Germany. Typically, Core countries are heavily industrialised and do not have to rely on exports as heavily as those in the Semi-periphery and Periphery. Semi-Periphery countries are those countries that are less developed than Core countries, yet are more developed than those in the Periphery. Semi-periphery countries can be seen as countries that are either declining Core countries, or rapidly industrialising Periphery countries. Typical examples of Semi-periphery countries often include South Korea, Brazil, and South Africa. In the case of the 2022 Qatar World Cup, it was the exploitation of migrants from Periphery and Semi-Periphery countries that highlighted the imbalances in power as explained by Wallerstein's World Systems Theory. Periphery countries are often underdeveloped, lack strong political power, and rely heavily on the export of natural resources (or, in this case, human labour). Periphery countries include Nepal, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka. These four countries were all important expatriate nations when considering the population of Qatar; combined, research into specific expatriate countries (Snoj, 2014, as cited by Ganji, 2016), found that they make up 36.77% of the total population of Qatar. Following the rapid growth of Qatar in the period 2010-2022 during its World Cup campaign, it is likely that this number has risen. Although India is not currently classified as a Periphery country, and classified as a Semi-Periphery country, and the nation makes up "23.58%" of the total population of Qatar (Snoj, 2014, as cited by Ganji, 2016)

The case of Qatar is particularly interesting, as highlighted during the 2022 World Cup, the Semi-Periphery country was the host of a range of human rights violations of its migrant workers from Southeast Asia and abroad. While on the whole Qatar has been acknowledged as a semi-periphery nation, its complex background and current economic backdrop make the case that Qatar could potentially sit somewhere between 'Semi-Periphery' status and 'Core' status. Currently ranked third in the world in terms of GDP per capita, there is certainly room for critics to argue against the nation's classification as Semi-Periphery. (WorldoMeters, 2024) Indeed, the greatest arguments for Qatar's semi-periphery status are twofold: (1) The nation relies extremely heavily on low-skilled migrant labourers from Periphery countries (2) the country's economy is still reliant on natural gas exports. For the purposes of analysis through WST, this essay will accept Qatar's position as a semi-periphery nation. Qatar's hosting of the World Cup illustrates a striking image of the immensely wealthy hydrocarbon economy being fuelled almost completely by the import of labour from peripheral countries in Southeast Asia. The 2022 World Cup highlighted a structural dynamic and dependency

between countries; while countries like Nepal and Bangladesh rely heavily on remittances as an essential component of their GDP, Qatar was equally reliant on migrant labour due to the nature of its small population. Qatar, while being immensely resource-rich, was and still is labour poor. Semi-periphery countries (like Qatar) occupy a middle ground where they benefit from global capital flows, like exports or trade, but are still dependent on external input of labour to sustain their economy.

The dynamic created by the migration of workers from Southeast Asia to Qatar closely mimics the vision of the relationship between the periphery and core as outlined by Wallerstein. While official estimates put the number of migrant workers for the World Cup at “over 30,000” (Workers’ Welfare & Labour Rights, 2022), there can be no doubt that the number falls somewhere within the boundaries of “500,000 and 1.5 million” as per outside estimates (Ganji, 2016). Of course, it would be unfeasible and unreasonable to expect the construction of the World Cup to have been done primarily by domestic workers, as the numbers tell a revealing story that this would have been impossible. However, we should attribute the reasoning behind labour importation in Qatar not only to the limitations of the Qatari population, but also to Qatar’s status as a rentier state. A report into Qatar’s economy (Milipol Qatar, 2025) saw that the reliance on the exporting of oil and gas makes up around 70% of the total national income of Qatar, which enables Qatar to form a social contract where citizens are generally taxed less, and benefit from state employment and a strong welfare system. However, what this allows is for the proliferation of physically demanding jobs (such as those involved in the World Cup) to be undertaken primarily by migrant workers.

Thus, migrant workers form a “buffer state”, where manual work is essential to Qatar’s global ambitions, yet those same workers are hardly recognised and protected by government reform. Throughout the Gulf nation’s history, Qatar has always remained a hub for migrants from Asia and Africa. The 20th century saw Qatar develop as a fishing and pearling port, whereas the discovery of oil in the 1940s catapulted the country to a state where it would no longer be able to rely on the trickle of migrants. What remains key to note is that Qatar has now transitioned to the reliance on a globalised migrant labour market to sustain the development of its own infrastructure.

The route from Southeast Asia to Qatar is the primary channel for low-skilled migrant workers to enter the Gulf and find work in Qatar, as on a macroeconomic level, a trend has emerged wherein expatriate countries are ‘locked’ into a relationship with Qatar. The emergence of the ‘globalised economy’ has led to what Richard E. Lee calls “a hierarchical ordering of multiple centres of power that can unilaterally impose resolutions to struggles among competing interests, but, with maximum legitimacy and efficacy, only within their exclusive geographic confines” (Lee, 2011, p.33). Such is the case of Qatar, where the employment system of *Kafala* is exclusive to the Middle East. In many ways, the intense expansion of the migrant labour pool after the announcement of Qatar’s winning bid in 2010 can ultimately be attributed to not only the necessity of

migrant labour but also to the structural hierarchy that was formed between Qatar and Southeast Asian expatriate countries. Lee (2011) notes that the expansion of this form of economy has consistently evolved in the past, and is what is happening right now. “The world economy has expanded (a fundamental process in the reproduction of the system) to incorporate fresh pools of cheap labor at the bottom of the wage scale to make up at the system level what has been conceded in local struggles” (p. 34). The ‘local struggles’ in the case of Qatar, amount to an extensive list of benefits which would be a rarity in the West. Qatari citizens benefit from a range of “concessions” made by the government, including being tax free in personal income and property, as well as substantial benefits such as free healthcare, education, housing assistance, and preferential government jobs.

In many ways, the World Cup can be seen to have compressed the concept of WST into one event. The so-called ‘core’ components of WST included the multinational body FIFA, sponsors (such as Coca Cola and Adidas); the Semi-Periphery was the host country, Qatar, and the Periphery included the migrant workers who constructed the project.

The 2022 Qatar World Cup provided a lens through which to examine the event as a microcosm within broader WST dynamics. A publication of the annual report of FIFA (FIFA, 2022) found that, typical of the WST model, it was FIFA who extracted a record high total revenue of “7.56 billion USD” in the period 2019-2022. Comparatively, Qatar received only “1.56 billion USD” (FIFA, 2022) despite (Lyjak, 2023) finding that Qatar spent around “220 billion” on the mega project. Moreover, the sales of sponsorship rights amounted to a “1.795 billion USD” profit for FIFA (FIFA, 2022); with the exception of Qatar Airways, almost all sponsors were headquartered within the Core nations: Coca-Cola, Hyundai, Kia, Visa, and McDonald's. This case represents not only the domination of the Core economies over the Periphery, but also highlights the intrusion of what are essentially core capitalist businesses into the Semi-Periphery. In a sense, the firms are just another facet of WST within the World Cup; while they shouldered no cost in investing in infrastructure for the event, the global visibility of the tournament allowed for the quick pay-back of costs that were spent on buying sponsorship rights for the event.

The compression of WST into the World Cup allows for the event to be viewed as a showcase of hierarchical patterns of economic power. In all cases, it was the Core (sponsors and FIFA) who benefited the most from a historic revenue increase, and the Periphery (migrant workers) who suffered intensely under the toil of constructing the event.

### **How the Globalised Economy allowed for Migrant Exploitation during the 2022 Qatar World Cup**

The idea of WST assumes that the Core extrapolates as much profit as possible from the Periphery. The rapid expansion over the past few decades of the global economy should be seen as a contributing factor for the exploitation that occurred during Qatar 2022; the exploitation that happened during the World Cup is not a mere anomaly to the *Kafala* system, but a systemic system of exploitation that has been made possible by Globalisation.

Research into the World Cup (Galily, 2025) found that Qatar's bid for the World Cup can be viewed as a soft power play intended to project the nation's image into the Global Core. The World Cup was an event intended to expose Qatar to the world; in this sense, WST can be applied in viewing the exploitation of Migrant Labour as the extraction of labour from the Periphery (Southeast Asia) to the Semi-Periphery (Qatar).

The mechanisms of exploitation imposed on migrants during the World Cup mirror the exchange that occurs within WST. While migrants were exploited for maximal value, it was the Core and Semi-Periphery who stood to benefit the most from exploitation. Wallerstein argued that globalisation had allowed for the exploitation of the Global South by the Global North, and as previously explored in the 'microcosm' of Qatar 2022, this was certainly the case. Despite reforms promised by the Qatari government to change labour dynamics in the run-up to the World Cup, there was little done, suggesting that the promised reforms were all illusory. *Kafala*, overseen by Qatar's internal ministries, as opposed to labour ministries, effectively tied workers directly to their employers with no chance of presenting litigation against their working environments. By viewing the World Cup through WST, we see the migrants as the Periphery; *Kafala* all but enabled exploitation to occur, and despite promised reforms, there was little done to solve the exploitation crisis.

The relationship between Core actors and the Periphery during the World Cup highlighted the hierarchical relationship between different facets of WST. As previously argued, Sponsors headquartered in the Core (such as the USA and Japan) benefited hugely from the World Cup at the expense of the migrant workers who laboured from the bottom to build the mega project. The position of sponsors as a third-party group detached from the building of the World Cup allowed them to dodge criticism from global media, as well as distance themselves from the exploitation that occurred in the construction of the event. There is no doubt that sponsors were able to extract brand value from the record "5 billion viewers" of the duration of the World Cup, more than 50% of Earth's population (FIFA, 2022). International complicity from sponsors and FIFA made it all the more easy for exploitation to happen on the ground for the sake of finishing the project in time. The combination of a lack of regulatory oversight from the Qatari government and international complicity should be seen as ultimately the root cause of the exploitation crisis in Qatar.

## Conclusions

As demonstrated by the previous sections, the concept of WST is still very much alive today, if not more than ever. The unbalanced relationship between the Core, Semi-Periphery and Periphery was highlighted by the 2022 Qatar World Cup, where Qatar became a vessel for WST to play out. Migration to Qatar has long been a contentious issue, and the rich Gulf nation has profited hugely from the work of migrants in the past. From its inception as a small fishing and pearling town to the ultra-luxury heart of the Gulf today, migration has and will continue to play a huge role in the development of Qatar. In viewing the World Cup through the lens of Wallerstein's WST, it quickly becomes clear that the Qatari Government is not singularly at fault for the exploitation in the build-up to the World Cup. Bodies of the Core (such as sponsors) extracted maximal value through brand deals with the Semi-Periphery (Qatar), who exploited the Periphery (migrant workers). As outlined above, a combination of International Complicity and lack of oversight were all contributing factors for the crisis that occurred before and during the World Cup.

While many criticise the use of WST as both a model and a form of analysis, it becomes ever clearer that the concepts of WST, which Wallerstein set out in the 1960's are very prevalent today. Examining the world through this lens allows analysis of specific migratory flows (such as the route from Southeast Asia to Qatar) and the analysis of the primary actors within the World Cup. This article's empirical section outlines the remittance-based economies of Nepal and Bangladesh, and the systematic extraction of value that occurs within the migration route from Southeast Asia to Qatar.

This article provides only an introduction to Qatar's need to maintain migration, and argues that not only is the population too small to sustain such a high capacity of work, but that the work of migrants is essential to maintain the 'buffer state' between migrants and ethnic-Qatari citizens. The section 'How the Globalised Economy allows for Migrant Exploitation during the 2022 Qatar World Cup' explores not only the main method of exploitation (in *Kafala*), but also how this exploitation is consistently ignored and profited from by actors in the Core.

Analysis through WST alone, while helpful in explaining global migration patterns in a broad overview, suffers from a lack of specificity in understanding ulterior motives for migration to Qatar. This article's attempt to analyse Qatar 2022 through WST has provided a broad theoretical overview on inequalities of both micro and macro scale when investigating dynamics between actors during the World Cup; in particular,

analysis by way of WST has been beneficial in its understanding between the hierarchies of said actors.

Further critical work on WST should investigate the 2014 Brazil World Cup or the upcoming 2026 North American World Cup. In the wake of using WST as a form of analysis, it may be interesting to investigate the difference between the events of Qatar(as a Semi-Periphery country) and North America(as a Core country). Such research could explain the difference between the use of migrants in a deregulated country like Qatar and an area with stricter legislation(in the case of North America). In examining the views of critics who believe WST ignores cultural and local customs, further examination of the 2026 World Cup could test the limits of WST, and possibly amalgamate WST with other concepts, such as the Global Commodity Chain(GCC). By examining the 2026 World Cup in relation to the 2022 World Cup, we may see a difference emerge in the hierarchy of the global economy, where WST exposes how a host in the Global North relies far less on migrant exploitation, but possibly still produces inequalities in the form of corporate dominance and consumption patterns.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank [redacted by Managing Editor] for facilitating numerous conversations around Globalisation and migration patterns. I would like to give a special thank you to [redacted by Managing Editor] for reading and commenting on the drafts of this article, as well as inspiring me to consider different schools of thought to approach the issue.

### **Bibliography**

1. Ehrenreich, B. & Hochschild, R.H. (2003). *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. Granta Books.
2. Farhanna. K.M, Mannan. K.A (2024, April 19) *Bangladesh's Economic Vitality Owes in Part to Migration and Remittances*. Migration Policy Institute <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/bangladesh-migration-remittances-profile?>
3. FIFA. (2022), *2019 - 2022 Revenue* <https://publications.fifa.com/en/annual-report-2022/finances/2019-2022-cycle-in-review/2019-2022-revenue/>
4. Galily, Y. (2023). Beyond the Goalposts: Decoding Qatar's Soft Power Puzzle and Its Paradox. *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, 12(2), 197-208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23477989251325622>
5. Ganji, S. K. (2016) Leveraging the World Cup: Mega-Sporting Events, Human Rights Risk, and Worker Welfare Reform in Qatar. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 4(4) pp. 221-223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241600400403>

6. Gulf Labour Markets and Migration. (2017). *Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in Qatar* (No.3/2017). Gulf Research Centre.  
[https://gulfmigration.grc.net/media/pubs/exno/GLMM\\_EN\\_2017\\_03.pdf](https://gulfmigration.grc.net/media/pubs/exno/GLMM_EN_2017_03.pdf)
7. Gulf Labour Markets and Migration. Labour Force Survey 2023 (2023), *Qatar: Economically active population(aged 15 and above) by nationality(Qatari/non-Qatari), sex and occupation(2023)*. Gulf Research Centre
8. Grosfoguel, R. (2002). Colonial Difference, Geopolitics of Knowledge, and Global Coloniality in the Modern/Colonial Capitalist World-System. *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, 25(3), 203–224. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40241548>
9. Henderson, A. M. (2017). MEGA SPORTING EVENTS PROCEDURES AND HUMAN RIGHTS: DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE FRAMEWORK. *American Indian Law Review*, 41(2), 367–407. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26492267>
10. Hughes, E(2025, February 10) *The True Cost of the 2022 World Cup*. Sussex Centre for Migration Research Blog.  
<https://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/sussex-centre-for-migration-research/2025/02/10/2022worldcup/>
11. Human Rights Watch. (2021, December 18). *Q&A: Migrant Worker Abuses in Qatar and FIFA World Cup 2022*. Human Rights Watch
12. Human Rights Watch. (2025) *Qatar Events of 2019. In World Report 2020*. Human Rights Watch <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/qatar>
13. Jackson. B, (2023, June 15) *World Cup 2022: Amnesty claims migrant workers paid 'unlawful recruitment fees'*. BBC.  
<https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/65916552#:~:text=Thousands%20of%20migrants%20paid%20%22illegal,Fifa%20to%20recompense%20the%20workers.>
14. Lee, Richard. E. (2011). *The Modern World-System: Its Structures, Its Geoculture, Its Crisis and Transformation*. In Palumbo-Liu. D, Robbins. B, & Tanoukhi, N. (Eds.) *Immanuel Wallerstein and the Problem of the World*(pp. 33-34) Duke University Press.
15. Lyjak, A. (2023, January 10). *The Finances Behind the 2022 World Cup*. Michigan Journal of Economics.  
<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/mje/2023/01/10/the-finances-behind-the-2022-world-cup/>
16. Milipol (n.d.), *Economy of Qatar*.  
[https://www.milipolqatar.com/en/useful-information/discover-qatar/economy#:~:text=Qatar's%20main%20sources%20of%20revenue,\(LNG\)%20in%20the%20world.](https://www.milipolqatar.com/en/useful-information/discover-qatar/economy#:~:text=Qatar's%20main%20sources%20of%20revenue,(LNG)%20in%20the%20world.)
17. Moodie. A, (2025, March 7) *Migrant Workers Controversy Behind the Scenes of Qatar's World Cup*. Boundless.  
<https://www.boundless.com/blog/qatar-world-cup-migrant-workers/>
18. Rahman. S, (2018, September 15) *Qatar football projects will benefit Gulf*. Gulf News.  
<https://gulfnnews.com/business/property/qatar-football-projects-will-benefit-gulf-1.730210>
19. The Global Economy. (2025). *Nepal Remittances, percent of GDP*. The Global Economy  
[https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Nepal/remittances\\_percent\\_GDP/#:~:text=Remittances%20as%20percent%20of%20GDP&text=The%20latest%20value%20from%202023,from%2022.56%20percent%20in%202022.](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Nepal/remittances_percent_GDP/#:~:text=Remittances%20as%20percent%20of%20GDP&text=The%20latest%20value%20from%202023,from%2022.56%20percent%20in%202022.)
20. Unison(2022, March). *Qatar 2022 and the World Cup of Shame*. Unison  
[https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/05/TowebQatar\\_briefing\\_2015.pdf?](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/05/TowebQatar_briefing_2015.pdf?)

21. Worden, M., & HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH. (2015). Raising the Bar: Mega-Sporting Events and Human Rights. In *World report 2015: Events of 2014* (1st ed., pp. 34–44). Bristol University Press.
22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvndv4w1.7>
23. Workers' Welfare and Labour Rights. (2022, December 31). *Workers' Welfare*. <https://www.workerswelfare.ga/en/workers-welfare.html>
24. WorldoMeters. (2024) *GDP Per Capita*. WorldoMeters <https://www.worldometers.info/gdp/gdp-per-capita/>

Dear Reviewer 1,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a revised version of my manuscript “Global Dreams, Local Nightmares: Migrant Workers and the cost of the 2022 Qatar World Cup” for publication in *Convergence Journal*. I appreciate the time that you have spent in examining and identifying points of improvement, and I am grateful for the comments and suggestions that you have given me. I have incorporated all of your suggestions, and I will give a point-by-point reply to each of the suggestions you made.

1. Improve transitions for better flow

Thank you for pointing this out - the transition was previously quite chunky and did not flow as well as it could have. I have added a paragraph immediately before the ‘Understanding World Systems Theory’ section which should help with the transition between sections.

2. Elaborate on the methodology with specific data selection details

I appreciate you noticing this - I did forget to incorporate this, and it has made a significant difference in assessing the reliability of the data sets and journals I take my information from. You should be able to find this change in the second paragraph, and partly in the third paragraph in the section titled ‘Methodology’.

3. Expand the literature review with recent studies on mega events or labor reforms

I have acted on this feedback and included some more recent examples, and events that could be impactful (the 2026 World Cup and the new ‘FIFA peace prize’). My literature review now includes a few more entries from reputed sources. You should be able to find the changes in the section titled ‘Literature Review’, with entries from Worden, Henderson, and an independent source ‘Worldometers’.

Dear Reviewer 2,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a revised version of my manuscript “Global Dreams, Local Nightmares: Migrant Workers and the cost of the 2022 Qatar World Cup” for publication in *Convergence Journal*. I appreciate the time that you have spent in examining and identifying points of improvement, and I am grateful for the comments and suggestions that you have given me. I have incorporated most of your suggestions, and I will give a point-by-point reply to each of the suggestions you made.

1. Clarify the research question and methodology. State whether this is primarily a theoretical essay, a case study, or both.

Thank you for your comment, I have made the appropriate changes in clarifying the status of my essay. I agree that it was slightly confusing before, hopefully this change should clarify things. You can find the changes made in the first paragraph of the ‘Methodology’ section where I have clarified the essay is primarily theoretical.

2. Reduce repetition of microcosm argument. Make the case strongly once, then use it without restating it.

I have cut down on the repetition of my microcosm argument, the paper should be less dotted with repetition of the same sentences and should feel less rambling.

3. Present numerical data (remittances, labor force, FIFA revenue) in tables or figures to improve readability.

While I appreciate your feedback, I have to respectfully disagree. It does not make sense to present data in a table as data has been selectively chosen, and large parts of the data set would be irrelevant. I have opted to keep the data in its current form, as I believe it conveys the scale of my argument well enough, and is legible for the reader.

4. Reframe the conclusion so it not only summarizes but also reflects critically on what the WST lens adds and where its limits lie.

I appreciate this comment, and have acted on it. It certainly makes sense for a critical reflection, and I have written a paragraph which should hopefully address your suggestion. This can be found in the fourth paragraph of the section ‘Conclusion’, and I have attempted to outline the limitations and strengths of WST.

5. Consider adding a short discussion of alternative frameworks to acknowledge scholarly debates.

I appreciate your suggestion, and I did consider the possibility of adding new models of analysis, but ultimately I believe WST does the best job of providing a strong overview that allows me to zoom into the micro and macro impacts of Qatar 2022 within the framework.

Dear Reviewer 3,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a revised version of my manuscript “Global Dreams, Local Nightmares: Migrant Workers and the cost of the 2022 Qatar World Cup” for publication in *Convergence Journal*. I appreciate the time that you have spent in examining and identifying points of improvement, and I am grateful for the comments and suggestions that you have given me. I have incorporated all of your suggestions, and I will give a point-by-point reply to each of the suggestions you made.

1. Supplementing with more rigorous sources

Thank you for pointing this out - I have changed some of the weaker sources with peer-reviewed journal entries. I have strengthened my argument by adding more sources as well, to bolster different sections of my paper. You can find these littered throughout the paper, but specifically in the Literature Review I have changed and added sources.

2. The literature review is rather thin, and Qatar’s position as semi-periphery,

Thank you for this comment, and it was something that was highlighted by the other reviewer as well. I have expanded the literature review with studies on WST and its effectiveness in examining inequality, and I have added a brief discussion on FIFA’s new peace prize which should add depth to my argument. This can all be found in the Literature Review section. I have added a section which explores Qatar’s position in the semi-periphery, and this should add more nuance to the claim of Qatar’s position within WST.

3. Some sections are unnecessarily long and rambling

I have acted on this feedback and attempted to cut down on some sections, although the paper overall has been lengthened due to the changes made from reviewer’s comments. I cut down on the repetition of the microcosm argument as it kept popping up unnecessarily. A read through should indicate that I have changed some sections, particularly in the middle of the paper.

4. Journalistic/Emotive phrasing

I have changed parts of the paper which felt more emotive than analytical, many of which were in the introduction and early sections of the paper. A read through now should show a more analytical style instead of the emotive sections that appeared before.

**Decision:** Accept for publication, pending minor revisions.

Overall, I believe the student has properly responded to most of the requested revisions and concerns brought up by all three reviewers. The paper more explicitly labels itself as primarily theoretical in the abstract and methodology, and also has a concrete methodology paragraph specifying NGO reports, academic articles, and contemporary media sources. There is a formal literature review section. The paper acknowledges a more nuanced perspective on Qatar's status/classification as semi-periphery vs. core, and adds a limitations paragraph. Some of the overly emotive/subjective phrasing has been toned down.

However, there are still some issues, many of which carry over from before. It is clear that the author has done a lot, but perhaps not enough. I will list these below:

- Some of the sources are still not rigorous enough.
  - Please remove or replace references to Worldometers, as it is a more informal, non-archival/reviewed data aggregator, not a primary source. Use a peer-reviewed or institutional economic source (e.g., World Bank, IMF, OECD, UNDP).
  - Some of the sources are also a bit too journalistic or imprecise, such as Moodie (2025) ("the 2022 Qatar World Cup alone brought a 40% increase to the population of Qatar" <- this sounds imprecise, could you at least corroborate or replace this with institutional data? Like those from the Qatar Planning and Statistics Authority?) and Milipol Qatar (2025) (which is acceptable, but you could have instead used some more detailed, theoretically grounded works in the literature like <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41857943> or [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/134326/No\\_7\\_MatthewGrayTheoryLaterRentierismArabStatesGulf.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/134326/No_7_MatthewGrayTheoryLaterRentierismArabStatesGulf.pdf)).
- Theoretical depth in World Systems Theory still relies more on description and references than precise scholarly debate and engagement. You should add some more significant direct engagement with and critical analysis of precise ideas taken from WST literature. More Wallerstein, maybe also engaging with some of this rather well-known review, would be useful: <https://www.annualreviews.org/content/journals/10.1146/annurev.so.21.080195.002131>.
- The paper is still a bit repetitive. The issue is not so much about length; if a paragraph does not introduce new evidence or a new analytical move, it should go. Your paper restates the following ideas multiple times in different contexts, and I believe this interrupts the development of your analyses and narrative.
  - Qatar 2022 as a microcosm of WST
  - Explicitly identifying what is core, semi-periphery, and periphery
  - Globalization enabling exploitation

I would suggest going through, identifying wherever these ideas are restated, and asking yourself if these need to be stated again. The point is: If you have communicated your main ideas well enough, the subideas/subpoints should all consistently remind you of those main ideas without the reader having to be explicitly reminded of them. Your

subideas/subpoints should add further nuance, depth, and structure to your main points; having to reroute these back explicitly to your main points sort of removes that.

- There is still some emotive language and phrasing throughout that can be toned down. This would also help shorten your paper a bit and make your points more direct and clear.
  - Examples (**not** exhaustive): “untold story,” “gargantuan effort,” “hidden away from the rosy lights.”

In academic articles, you want to deliver the ideas, details, and analyses in a pure way that is not clouded by more journalistic wording.

In net, I believe that doing another close reading of and adjustments throughout your paper will help clarify and address the above concerns. I am confident that you have already done enough reading and engagement with the literature on your own that you can add these in without much further analysis or source-finding. Best of luck, and nice job with the revisions so far.