



The Discourse of Orientalism and Narrative Gaming A Case Study of Media Opinion on the FIFA World Cup 2022

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Abstract

Although the process of modernization and democratization has been effectively promoted in Middle Eastern countries, especially in nations like Turkey and Qatar. However, orientalist discourse still profoundly influences the narrative of Western media and the construction of the image of Middle Eastern countries to this day. Based on the concept of Orientalism of Edward Said, this paper attempts to briefly sort out the media coverage of the FIFA World Cup 2022 by research methods of qualitative analysis as the main, quantitative analysis as the auxiliary. Then, this article tries to summarize the main differences and game playing between the Eastern and Western media in the narrative of the event, as well as how the orientalist discourse in the western media plays an important role. The most innovative point of this study is to analyze modern Western media discourse based on Edward Said's orientalism. The results show that the Middle Eastern countries represented by Qatar try to improve the entire world's perception of Eastern countries by establishing educational institutions, media centers and other ways. Especially with the hosting of the World Cup as a typical example, Qatar is trying to challenge existing Western stereotypes. However, the Western media is still opinionated. The logic approach and discourse paradigm of orientalism are yet deeply rooted in the West.

Keywords: *The Discourse of Orientalism; The FIFA World Cup 2022; Narrative Gaming; Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis; Western Media*

1. Introduction

Originally theorized in Edward Said's book of the same name, *Orientalism*¹ (1979), this Western self-consciousness is ideologically constructed as superior to its imagined "other" in the East, which is intellectually, physically, emotionally, sexually, culturally, politically, economically, and nationally, and can be seen as derived from and directed at various Enlightenment-oriented Western theories and practices. The concept of Orientalism, which has been employed in postcolonial studies, explains how the "West", Europe, and the United States, have constructed a peculiar representation of the "Arab" and "Muslim" world. Generally speaking, Orientalism is a worldview that sees the peoples of Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East through a specific Western-centric lens. It is a way of dealing with "questions, objects, qualities, and regions deemed Oriental", which is based on "the Orient's special space in European Western experience". Building on Foucault's concept of discourse, Said (1978) reveals how a certain vocabulary is employed "whenever the Orient is spoken or written about" in the field of humanities and social sciences. Orientalist terminology, which is mainly characterized by the use of collective terms, binary opposition, and generalizations shapes a discourse of 'us' and 'them' based on 'the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them")'.

When we pay attention to the Western media's coverage and narrative of major events taking place in the Middle Eastern world, we find the fact that the Western media are more inclined to question and even criticize the status quo from the perspective of Western ideology and so-called universal values. In the Western world, media audiences and content producers seem to exhibit a mythology about such a mysterious so-called Eastern world that is very difficult to clarify. If there is a paradigm that can provide us with a plausible explanation for this, it is undoubtedly the one proposed in this paper, where the discourse of Orientalism has until today profoundly influenced the Western media narrative and the uniform shaping of the image of Middle Eastern countries, despite the fact that modernization and democratization processes have been effectively promoted in the East, especially in countries like Turkey and Qatar. Building on Edward Said's concept of Orientalism (1979), this article attempts to briefly examine the world media coverage of the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar, hoping to summarize the main differences and games between the Eastern and Western media narratives of the event in question, and how the discourse of Orientalism latent in the Western world media plays an important role.

It is worth making clear that the concept of the East discussed in this essay is the East as constructed in typical Western discourse. It refers to both a political-geographical concept, first proposed by the Englishman Thomas Edward Gordon, which refers to the southern part of the eastern Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf coast, and a cultural concept, which is an ethnographic, psychological, political, religious, historical, and linguistic overview of the sub-regional civilizations of Africa and Eurasia.

2. The Use of Binary Terminology

In his book *Covering Islam*², Said (1978) critiques the Western media's biased approach to Middle Eastern society and culture. The use of binary terminology of Western/non-Western, political/ non-political, democratic/non-democratic, and free/non-free is entrenched in media scholarship to the extent that it is almost impossible to communicate without them, in particular when we acknowledge the fact that most occasions of agenda setting about the FIFA World Cup 2022 in western media establish in the horizon of Orientalism.

¹ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. 1st Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

² Said, Edward W. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. Rev. ed., 1st Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.

First of all, Said (1978)'s reference to "a binary type of 'rational, developed, humane, superior' (the West) and 'anomalous, undeveloped, inferior' (the East)" becomes evident when we focus on the dichotomy between the West and the non-West (East) (Said, 1978). In terms of media autonomy, the Western versus non-Western dichotomy is reflected in the taken-for-granted assumption that "Western" journalist democracies enjoy greater "editorial autonomy" than their counterparts in "non-Western" environments. "Any experience outside of this model is an exception to the rule. Yet in a media commentary on the news coverage of the FIFA World Cup 2022, titled "Qatar's Achievement and the Triumph of Palestinians and Arabs," Al Jazeera specifically suggested that the event "reconstructed the world's mental image of Qatar, of Arabs and their culture and values ". There is also a series of related stories about how Qatar has achieved correcting the stereotypes of the Arab nation that people around the world have. From this, it might be concluded that these notions of a Western versus non-Western dichotomy regarding media autonomy do not adequately match empirical reality, as data from multiple studies suggest that despite structural constraints, journalists in more restrictive political environments such as Iran and Qatar can maintain a degree of autonomy in defining their roles and daily practices.

One set of dichotomous terms used that is most noteworthy to us is political and apolitical. The British and American mainstream media, represented by the BBC and the New York Times, have focused on exploring politically relevant hot topics in many of their reports on the FIFA World Cup 2022. As a result, what was originally a world-renowned sports event has become the most politically charged public event. For example, the human rights issue in Iran and the labor issue in Qatar, etc. made the dichotomy between politics and non-politics especially obvious in the coverage of the World Cup. There is also a subtle paradox in that the Western media is playing up the strong political nature of the 2022 World Cup, while at the same time providing legitimacy to the many political issues it has taken the opportunity to set up through so-called sportsmanship. There is of course a large part of the reason for this is an examination of the political system itself, and descriptions such as the following that refer to the full reality of politics-defining media in a given context are commonplace: "In non-democratic politics, the key role of the media is to shape a shared narrative in support of the regime." For Western media, the Middle East lacks the necessary ability to separate politics from other matters, and all social issues are tied to its intransigent political conservatism, and simply tilting the narrative in a political direction is enough to gain an easy explanation and create a hotbed of controversy.

The essentialist view makes the Western incarnation a symbol of democracy, and the growth of freedom and human rights always seems to get full soil only in the Western world. Preconceptions about the existence of authoritarianism and censorship have led media outlets like the BBC to pre-set all kinds of doubts before the official start of the 2022 World Cup. For example, in the question "Why Qatar?" and the discussion of gay and lesbian rights in Qatar, including a profile of Qatar in which the Qatari authorities and legal norms are particularly restrictive of public rights and behavior at the societal level. Terms such as "ban," "silence," "illegal," and "accusation" appear frequently in Western media coverage and discussion of political issues associated with the Qatar World Cup. We can easily find the fact that there is a controversy about the rights of the LGBT community that has existed from the preparatory phase to the hosting of the FIFA World Cup 2022, and at one point it became a hot topic of media attention. In fact, it is a discussion about inclusion and discrimination, but also about the contradictory relationship between freedom and non-freedom. In the BBC report, it is explicitly mentioned that "same-sex sexual activity is illegal in Qatar." While the FIFA World Cup 2022 organizers responded that "everyone is welcome", they emphasized that Qatar has no plans to liberalize its laws on homosexuality. Individual freedom, including the Iranian players' protests, has become the most convenient and powerful tool for the Western media to criticize Qatar and the Arab world.

In an Al Jazeera commentary titled "Western 'concerns' about the FIFA World Cup 2022 are extremely hypocritical," author Belen Fernandez sharply exposes the malicious intentions of the Western media. A series of binary concepts and dichotomous relationships are constructed based on the false

tendency of Western centrism and essentialism. In the publicity for the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar, the Western media are fond of portraying a "non-Western" country and constructing a "non-Western" "other" in a superior light. This "other" symbolizes a "non-democracy" or "dictatorship" in relation to the West, and many of the restrictions imposed by the authorities are interpreted Many restrictions by the authorities are interpreted as direct interference with human rights and gross violations of freedom. Much of the discussion surrounding this World Cup has attempted to contrast the enlightened West with the irrevocably uncivilized Middle East; in fact, this situation is "a representative case of the world built by Western powers.

3.Comparison of Media Coverage Between the West and Middle East

This paper analyses the sample articles from the following four perspectives. (i) The underlying intention. While the West has a strong political agenda in its attempts at cultural colonization, Al Jazeera is more concerned with promoting and building its national image than responding to Western criticism. (ii) The reporting framework. The sample articles were coded and analyzed in terms of phrases and sentences: all sentences related to political and ideological positions are categorized under the 'ideological bias' framework; all sentences related to national security, economic and diplomatic interests are categorized under the 'national interests' framework; sentences related to human rights and humanities are classified under 'humanitarian' framework; sentences related to the construction of sports facilities, athletes and event coverage are classified under 'sports events' framework. (iii) The tonality of the media, i.e. the attitudes and emotional judgements highlighted in the coverage itself, was summarized, with positive coverage being generally positive towards the host country, negative coverage being critical, and neutral coverage being non-emotional. (iv) Mass communication. A comparison of the content of Chinese and Western mass communication about the Qatar World Cup from the perspectives of both self-publishing and official communication.

3.1 Comparison of Potential Intentions

In most of the coverage of the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar on the BBC website, the following issues have been repeatedly mentioned and slammed. Firstly, Qatar is suspected to have obtained the right to host the World Cup through improper means, which involves the interest exchange between Qatar and FIFA as well as judicial injustice; The deaths of foreign migrant workers and the infamous Kafala system have been discussed for many times during the construction of facilities and stadiums; Thirdly, Qatar discriminates against the LGBT and bans homosexuality. A prominent British figure, Peter Tachell, was blocked by local officials in Doha from staging an LGBT equality protest in front of the public. The fourth is about human rights, focusing on the restriction of drinking beer and the oppression of females; Fifthly, there is no freedom of speech or press in Qatar; Sixthly, Qatar has caused environmental pollution and huge carbon emissions for hosting the World Cup.

On the official website of Al Jazeera of Qatar, we can see that they reported the following aspects. One is about every aspect of the World Cup, including Qatar's strength, transportation, stadiums, competition schedule, and so on. The other is to respond to the Western media's heckling and political attacks.

It is not difficult to understand how hypocritical the West is from their negative reports against the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar. The west is hard to reflect on itself. The underlying intentions of Western media coverage are strongly political. In the short term, the Europeans are using the media coverage to attack Qatar for the obvious purpose of getting some gas out of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and solving the recent energy crisis. In the long run, they attempt to promote Western chauvinism through the media and create an image of Qatar as a backward and bound orientalist country. Britain and the United States imposed the concept of Westernism and supremacy on the East by pretending to advocate human rights.

The west carried out a kind of hidden colonization of cultural hegemony and then stood on the moral high ground via media.

By contrast, Al Jazeera's reports are objective and neutral. The main purpose of their media reports is to use the fame of the World Cup to improve the country's influence and people's life. Hosting the World Cup will bring greater economic benefits to Qatar in the future. It is equivalent to advertising Qatar itself and creating a good image of Qatar to the world. This is conducive to attracting future talent resources, increasing the probability of investment and energy export opportunities. There was also a very small amount of coverage in response to Western criticism of Qatar's problems. It can be shown that Al-Jazeera's reports on the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar are based on facts, which are more real and objective, unlike the West's obvious political bias.

3.2 Comparison of Reporting Framework

The New York Times and BBC's coverage of the Qatar World Cup continued the logic of traditional Orientalist discourse construction, showing a clear pattern of ideological fusion between Western capitalist hegemony and Western media conglomerates, with the narrative framework unfolding with Western interests at its core.

Two media outlets reported that the ideological issues involved in the Qatar World Cup focused on two main aspects: the criticism of Qatar for becoming the host country through "bribery", "corruption" and "misconduct". The criticism of Qatar as a host country through "bribery", "corruption" and "misconduct", which involved an exchange of interests between Qatar and FIFA and judicial injustice, and the strong political ideology of the decision to disqualify Russia from the World Cup.

The national interest framework was applied to the New York Times and BBC's coverage of the Qatar World Cup. Both media outlets saw Qatar as the controversial host country, and one of the key objectives of hosting the event was to raise Qatar's international profile and to shape and spread the image of the Qatari brand in the world. As the New York Times reported: "(Qatar), a tiny desert country, a peninsula shaped like a thumb, is probably one of the least suitable countries to host an event of the magnitude of the World Cup, a country sorely lacking in stadiums, infrastructure and history but (Qatar) only aspires to be more famous and become a member of the world stage".³ Not only that, but the Qatar World Cup is also seen to benefit Qatar's neighbors, with the BBC saying, "Saudi Arabia is preparing a bid to host the World Cup and the Olympics."⁴

The Western media, represented by the New York Times and the BBC, observed the political and human rights situation of the Qatar World Cup in a Western humanitarian framework. In particular, the ban on homosexuality, the discrimination against the LGBT community, the poor conditions of foreign workers during the construction of the facilities and venues, the Karafa system and the restrictions on freedom of expression and the press, which are contrary to the individualistic and liberal ideology practiced in the West, were presented as anti-humanitarian; the topic of "all-female judging panel", which is related to women, was praised as humanitarian. In addition to the hosts, Qatar, the Western media also focused on the performance of other Islamic countries during the World Cup in Qatar. The New York Times, for example, reported on Iranian footballers remaining silent during the national anthem and Iranian fans singing the pre-revolutionary anthem and raising the words "Women! Life! Freedom" signs, and other concerns about Iranians publicly protesting against Iranian dress code restrictions and law

³ Panja, Tariq, "Qatar Got the World Cup It Wanted." The New York Times, 18 Dec. 2022, www.nytimes.com/2022/12/18/sports/soccer/qatar-world-cup-host.html?searchResultPosition=6. Accessed 18 Feb. 2023.

⁴ "How Global Media Judged Qatar World Cup." BBC Sport, 20 Dec. 2022, www.bbc.com/sport/football/64038338. Accessed 18 Feb. 2023.

enforcement against women.⁵

Although the Western media, represented by the New York Times and the BBC, have framed the Qatar World Cup in a highly political manner, the 'sporting events' framework still prevails. Both the New York Times and the BBC will present the rules and results of the Qatar World Cup in an objective manner. It is clear that sport, although politicized to a certain extent by the Western media at the moment, still plays a role as a link and medium for dialogue among civilizations.

Table 1 Percentage of coverage framed by the New York Times, BBC on the Qatar World Cup

Media	Ideological bias	Competing national interests	Humanitarian	Sports events
The New York Times	11.1%	11.1%	33.3%	44.4%
BBC	25%	25%	37.5%	12.5%
General information	15.4%	15.4%	34.6%	34.6%

(Source of table: the author compiled from the New York Times and BBC. See: <http://www.nytimes.cn>, <http://www.bbc.com>)

In contrast, Qatar has actively defended itself against questions from the Western media about human rights and the hosting right of Qatar from the outset. QNA, Qatar's state news agency, said, "The dream has become a reality and has not been diverted from its course by distorted campaigns and malicious accusations." Qatar's Al Jazeera, on the other hand, used more of a sports events framework to present an objective and comprehensive view of the World Cup schedule and results, explaining the arrangements for transport, accommodation, security protection, technology and so on during the tournament.

3.3 Comparison of Media Tone

Within the framework of the mostly sporting event coverage, the tone of the local Qatari media was mostly positive. The pro-government Al-Sharq newspaper said the event had shown fans a new face of Arab culture. The Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, tweeted, "We have kept our promise to organize an extraordinary tournament on Arab soil, giving the people of the world the opportunity to understand the richness of our culture and the authenticity of our values."⁶

The media in most Arab countries praised the Qatar World Cup. Morocco's state-run Al Aoula TV, for example, described the World Cup hosted by Qatar as "having a special flavor, full of the culture of a people who have not abandoned their roots and are still attached to their traditions. The event will be remembered by all the people of the world and future generations will be taught how Arabs have succeeded in shocking the world with their message of brotherhood, tolerance and solidarity".⁷ Pakistan said that "Qatar's hosting of the World Cup is a just cause that will help restore confidence in the Arab world and strengthen Qatar's international standing".

The framework of coverage mentioned in the above analysis is inextricably linked to the two media outlets' coverage of the Qatar World Cup, forming their media tone when it comes to narrating.

⁵ Engelbrecht, Cora, and Jeré Longman. "In Silence or Aloud, High-Profile Iranians Signal Support for Protests" The New York Times, 22 Nov. 2022, <https://cn.nytimes.com/culture/20221122/iran-protests-actresses-arrested/>. Accessed 18 Feb. 2023.

⁶ "How Global Media Judged Qatar World Cup." BBC Sport, 20 Dec. 2022, www.bbc.com/sport/football/64038338. Accessed 18 Feb. 2023.

⁷ Ibid.

According to the author's statistics, the BBC's coverage of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar was 28.6% positively inclined, 21.4% neutral, and 50% negative. The New York Times reported 12.5% positive, 25% neutral, and 62.5% negative. The positive coverage was dominated by women referees and sports stars, the neutral coverage was dominated by predictions of sports results and publicity, and the negative coverage included key phrases such as "epidemic" and "human rights" in an attempt to create a dichotomy between the East and West discourse. For example, a BBC report stated outright that "Sadly, Qatar has actually increased its discrimination against LGBT+ people since outside pressure to improve the situation." The New York Times even tried to drag China into the center of the discourse with it in a story titled "China CCTV World Cup Broadcast Cuts Audience Footage", using epidemic prevention and control measures. As can be seen, the Western media coverage of the World Cup in Qatar was strongly emotive beyond the sporting results. Constructed in Orientalist terms, it presents a clear dichotomy.

3.4 Comparison of the Content of Mass Communication

From the perspective of the overall mass media of the FIFA World Cup 2022 event,

3.4.1 We-Media Communication

In the era of ass-participated Communication, the active participation of large areas of the audience in the dissemination of information is a communication path that cannot be ignored. In the event of the FIFA World Cup 2022, out of enthusiasm for the World Cup every four years, the public spontaneously organized and publicized events related to the game in the early stage, such as the evolution of the World Cup theme song music style, the recent situation of BTS guests invited at the opening ceremony, the tips of transportation facilities around Qatar, etc., which continuously improved the popularity of Qatar. It was a successful World Cup with global influence. In the middle and late stages, Qatar has been able to draw the public's attention away from the World Cup as a sporting event to the Qatar nation itself in time to let people elsewhere know Qatar. At the scene, some famous EKOLs used phones or cameras to shoot short videos of Qatar matches, which further enhanced the international influence of the Qatar World Cup. It can be said that the mastermind behind the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar has turned popularity into a mass force for the good of their country.

When We-Media carries out network communication, most Chinese and western people spontaneously publicize the World Cup through We-Media, which does not involve sensitive political issues, but simply for entertainment. Few individuals publish politically inclined words on We-Media accounts unless these people themselves work for certain organizations.

3.4.2 Official Communication

3.4.2.1 New Media

The communication effect of media played an indispensable role in the whole process of the event, especially at the beginning. the FIFA World Cup 2022 event publicity uses a lot of media supported by new technologies for information transmission, such as some new media applications: Twitter, BBC NEWS, CNN, Facebook, YouTube, etc. On these apps, Qatar World Cup official accounts only publish some information about the preparation, process, and outcome of the World Cup, which is completely in line with popular taste. The most mentioned are the performances of the stars on the football field, the construction of the infrastructure around Qatar, and the celebrations of fans. On the other hand, the political orientation of Western media videos on new media platforms is much less. Although some of them are direct attacks on Qatar and FIFA, they are not as targeted as the news reports.

3.4.2.2 News Reports

(i) Al Jazeera's Tracking Reports on the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar

Through the field tracking and reporting operation, it can be summarized in broad outline what is worthy of heated discussion about the event. The first-hand information they had has advantages for event reporting. Local media focused on the World Cup itself. However, western media focused on the imagination and construction of orientalist countries in the western world, most of which was the output of opinions and positions. They believed that Qatar was a backward, oppressive, unfree, and undemocratic Eastern country. They paid little attention to the tournament itself with obvious political tendencies.

(ii) Retransmission of Network Reports and Dissemination of Keyword Engine search

Online media, such as Al Jazeera, BBC, CNN, FIFA, and the New York Times, have also made great contributions to the continuous ferment of hot World Cup events. In the era of Mass-participated Communication, such as the homepage page of websites, the number of page views and likes is very high. Meanwhile, search engines such as Sogou whose large database search page views are also high, are also the reason for its being quickly known by others. Among them, Qatar's official coverage of the World Cup opening ceremony and the semi-final final received the most page views. In the West, apart from the World Cup, labor issues and racial discrimination even received more page views than the separate sports channels.

3.4.2.3 TV Broadcast and Network Broadcast

In the World Cup hot events in the dissemination process, in addition to the above things, a variety of live broadcasts and relays are also indispensable. But the local and Western reactions to the opening of the World Cup could not be more different. The BBC and ITV have refused to show the rest of the Qatar World Cup opening ceremony. The BBC showed a pre-prepared video about the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar controversy after the English women's Premier League match. Qatar at the time allowed direct flights to Doha for fans from Israel and the Palestinian territories, including residents of the occupied West Bank and the blockaded Gaza Strip. Qatar used the World Cup to send a political signal that it was willing to ease relations with Israel. Qatar staged an elaborate World Cup opening ceremony for the global audience, projecting an image of a friendly and open-minded nation. The official media of Qatar took the initiative to guide the direction of public opinion positively and effectively. At the same time, given the content output of the real-time hot events of the World Cup, they chose the resource-rich online media to cooperate with for channel communication. They maximized the desired communication effect and made the FIFA World Cup 2022 event hot affecting the world at that time.

In short, the discussion on the phenomena triggered by the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar has become diversified and three-dimensional, which is not limited to the discussion on football matches at the beginning, but later developed into an in-depth discussion on politics, society, development, human rights, and so on. The online and offline public opinion of this event has a wide range of influence and lasted for a long time. The attitudes and positions of the East and the West towards the same event are not the same due to ideology and values. The political tendency of the Western media is more obvious.

Conclusion

This article selects the media coverage surrounding the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar as a case study, particularly how the Eastern and Western media engage in a sharp discursive game, and how the Western media construct their own idea of the East through their use of terminology and choice of

narrative structure. This paper includes a comparison of the following four perspectives: the underlying purpose, the reporting framework, the tonality of the media, and the content of mass communication. It can be proved that the post-colonial logic and discourse paradigm revealed by Said in his book *Orientalism* is still followed by the media in the West, such as the UK and the US, even today. Despite the fact that Qatar has served as a model of modernization for the Middle Eastern world, the Western media still strives to create political controversies in order to maintain the inherent perception of a feudal, conservative, backward, and unequal East. It has deepened the theoretical research on the concept of orientalism. At the same time, this study is conducive to scholars who study discourse of orientalism, narrative gaming and media. This study has made up for the knowledge gap in modern Western media discourse mixed with Edward Said's orientalism, and future research can be further expanded to other typical nations. Undeniably, limited to practical factors, our research lacks field investigation, which will be improved for other scholars.

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