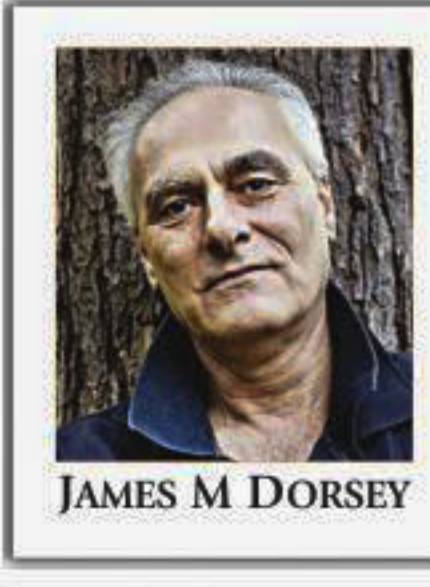


Gulf crisis upends fiction of a separation of sports and politics



JAMES M DORSEY

Saudi businessman Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, in one of his first public acts since being released from three months of detention in Riyadh's Ritz Carlton hotel and in a demonstration of fealty to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, donated USD 533,000 to Saudi soccer club Al Hilal FC. Prince Alwaleed, who was among

The political manipulation of sports in the Gulf crisis has however prompted FIFA to closely monitor the Saudi and UAE efforts while the AFC has put its foot down in preventing the Gulf crisis from shaping the Asian Champions League.

the more recalcitrant of the hundreds of members of Saudi Arabia's ruling family, senior officials, and prominent businessmen in what amounted to a power and asset grab under the mum of an anti-corruption campaign, said the donation was in

response to a call by the government. Saudi authorities said they expected to collect some USD 106 billion in assets and funds from released detainees as a result of the campaign, yet that figure is in doubt.

"It has come as no surprise that the total haul will be a mere fraction of the sum anticipated... Authorities are only counting on the acquisition of USD 13.3 billion in settlements by the end of the year, equivalent to the amount of revenue the country would receive from a small increase in the oil price," said Ambrose Carey, director of Alaco, a London-based business intelligence consultancy, who has been involved in some of the most high-profile asset-tracing cases in past decades, and an expert on Saudi Arabia.

Prince Mohammed reportedly had demanded that Prince Alwaleed, one of the world's richest men with investments in a host of Western blue chips, pay USD 6 billion for his release. It is not known on what terms he was set free.

Similarly, limits to Prince Mohammed's power and contrasting efforts by Gulf rivals to forge closer covert relations with Israel and woo the American Jewish community played out on multiple sports arenas.

Media reporting on this month's participation of Israeli teams in a handball tournament in Doha suggested that social media criticism may have been engineered, a fixture of the Gulf crisis, that was sparked last May by fake news published on Qatari websites in a hack allegedly engineered by the United Arab Emirates. "It is not known whether the tweets critical of Doha actually originated from Qatar," Agence

France Press reported in its coverage of the criticism.

Despite Israeli athletes repeatedly competing in tournaments in the Gulf over the years, Prince Mohammed, the heir-apparent to the title of Custodian of the Holy Cities, Mecca and Medina, opted not to risk criticism by barring Israeli players from participating in a chess match in December in the kingdom.

The decision suggested that Prince Mohammed was walking a tightrope in prioritising the kingdom's rivalry with Iran at the expense of the Palestinian issue in his relations with Israel and the Trump administration.

It's on the soccer pitch, however, that Gulf states may hit a wall in the willingness of international sports associations to look the other way in their increasingly difficult effort to maintain the fiction that sports and politics are separate as the divide in the region spills onto the field and Saudi Arabia and the UAE seek to engineer an environment in which Qatar would be deprived of its World Cup hosting rights.

In an indication of the importance Gulf leaders attribute to Qatar's ability to garner soft power on the soft pitch, Dubai security chief Lt Gen Dhahi Khalaf suggested in October that the UAE-Saudi-led diplomatic and economic boycott of Qatar would be lifted if the Gulf state surrendered its hosting rights.

That may have been an overstatement by the notoriously bombastic law enforcement official, but nonetheless reflected thinking about the political importance of sports in Qatar and among its detractors.

The political manipulation of

sports in the Gulf crisis has however prompted FIFA to closely monitor the Saudi and UAE efforts while the AFC has put its foot down in preventing the Gulf crisis from shaping the Asian Champions League following incidents in December during the Gulf Cup in Kuwait.

Pro-Qatari and Spanish media said state-controlled Saudi media had offered Bahraini players bonuses during the Gulf Cup if they "defeated the (Qatari) terrorists." Saudi Arabia and the UAE, together with Bahrain and Egypt, accuse the Gulf state of funding militants and political violence.

Saudi and UAE players and officials, moreover, refused to participate in news conferences in which Qatari media were present.

The AFC thwarted a UAE-Saudi attempt to get Asian tournament matches that were scheduled to be hosted by Qatar moved to a neutral venue. The AFC warned the two countries that they would be penalised if they failed to play in Doha or host Qatari teams.

As a result, an Asian Champions League game in Abu Dhabi between Al Gharafa of Qatar and Al Jazira of the UAE constituted the first breach of the eight-month-old boycott of the idiosyncratic Gulf state.

The AFC and FIFA's record in dealing with the inseparable relationship between sports and politics in the Gulf is, however, at best mixed.

In a bizarre and contradictory sequence of events at the outset of the Gulf crisis, FIFA president Gianni Infantino rejected involving the group in the dispute by saying that "the essential role of FIFA, as I

understand it, is to deal with football and not to interfere in geopolitics."

Yet, on the same day that he made his statement, Infantino waded into the crisis by removing a Qatari referee from a 2018 World Cup qualifier at the request of the UAE. FIFA, beyond declaring that the decision was taken "in view of the current geopolitical situation," appeared to be saying by implication that a Qatari by definition of his nationality could not be an honest arbiter of a soccer match involving one of his country's detractors. In FIFA's decision, politics trumped professionalism, no pun intended.

Similarly, the AFC has been less principled in its stand towards matches pitting Saudi Arabia and Iran against one another. Iranian club Traktor Sazi was forced earlier this month to play its home match against Al Ahli of Jeddah in Oman. It wasn't clear why the AFC did not uphold the principle it imposed on Qatar, the UAE and Saudi Arabia in the case of Iran.

"Saudi teams have been able to select host stadiums and cities, and Saudi teams will host two Iranian football representatives in the UAE and Kuwait. In return, Iranian football representatives should be able to use their own rights to choose neutral venues," said Mohammad Reza Saket, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Football Federation in a recent letter to the AFC.

Dr James M Dorsey is a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, co-director of the University of Würzburg's Institute for Fan Culture, and co-host of the New Books in Middle Eastern Studies podcast. He is the author of *The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer* blog, and a book with the same title, among many others.

Food for thought



ZAHRAH HAIDER

lot of you. When a couple hosts a dinner party, usually the woman cooks, serves the food, and cleans, while the man mingles with the guests, effectively becoming one of them. Chatterjee describes this as "hiding the misogyny as flattery", when men delegate this task to the women of the house, because "they're just better at this sort of thing". While the guests are seated around the table, the hostess hovers around, topping up glasses, giving out second and third helpings, often only joining the table either halfway through dinner if she's lucky, or eating after everyone else has. The woman either says she isn't hungry, or she ate earlier, or will eat later, once the guests are taken care of.

Being a good host is one thing, and it certainly doesn't involve a woman compromising her hunger or appetite. Similarly, giving out the biggest and best portions to guests seems like something a good host should do, but it often leads to the woman having the smallest and least satisfying portion of food.

Those that know me know that I love food. I enjoy food the way it was meant to be enjoyed. I'll eat fried chicken with my hands, I'll crunch on bones and cartilage (much to the revulsion of my Western friends), I'll lick my fingers, I'll slurp my *daal* and happily load my plate with different types of *torkari* all at once. I believe in proper table manners and dinner etiquette when out in public, but in the sanctity of my own home, around people I am comfortable with, I prefer to savour every last morsel. I am sure the way I eat would shock my ancestors. It would shock the more conservative members of our society. I reiterate Chatterjee's emphatic proclamation about these archaic notions: "to hell with them. Crunch your chips, lick the sauce off your fingers, chomp your food, take delight in what you eat. They made up the rules for you as they went anyway, you can do the same."

As always when a woman voices her opinion online, she is harangued by men decrying feminism, saying that women are

Rituparna Chatterjee @MasalaBai

Today's feminism thread: That crunchless chips for women reminded me of the sexism around food in Indian families we knew growing up. The times our mothers claimed they're "not fond of a food" because it had probably run out. Why boys are served leg pieces of chicken, fish heads

10:28 PM - 3 Feb 2018

1,646 Retweets 3,194 Likes

197 1.6K 3.2K

Rituparna Chatterjee @MasalaBai · Feb 3

Women ate after everyone else at any meal because a woman's claim to proper portions of good food came after everyone else's. Women are advised from a pre-pubescent age to eat less eggs lest their hipbones get calcified and hard, making childbirth difficult.

31 392 1.3K

more naturally suited to nurture others, that women do it out of love rather than expectations, that men do more labour-intensive work and therefore deserve more food, that there are worse things to be complaining about, that it doesn't happen in all households. The usual arguments repeated ad nauseam. These rebuttals are hollow, and hold no sustenance. Women are taught to be caregivers from an early age, when we are moulded by society's gender roles to become nurturers. Yes, there is an element of care and love involved when serving others food.

Naturally you want your loved ones to be well-fed. That doesn't mean that the woman has to go without, which is what Chatterjee's original point was—the fact that in a lot of households, the women compromise their own health so that others can eat first, and eat more. Derailing a conversation about a specific issue with "whataboutisms"—one of my favourite neologisms, referring to those that begin every counterargument with "what about..."—is highly counterproductive.

Chatterjee also never claimed that men never sacrifice. It was a general commentary

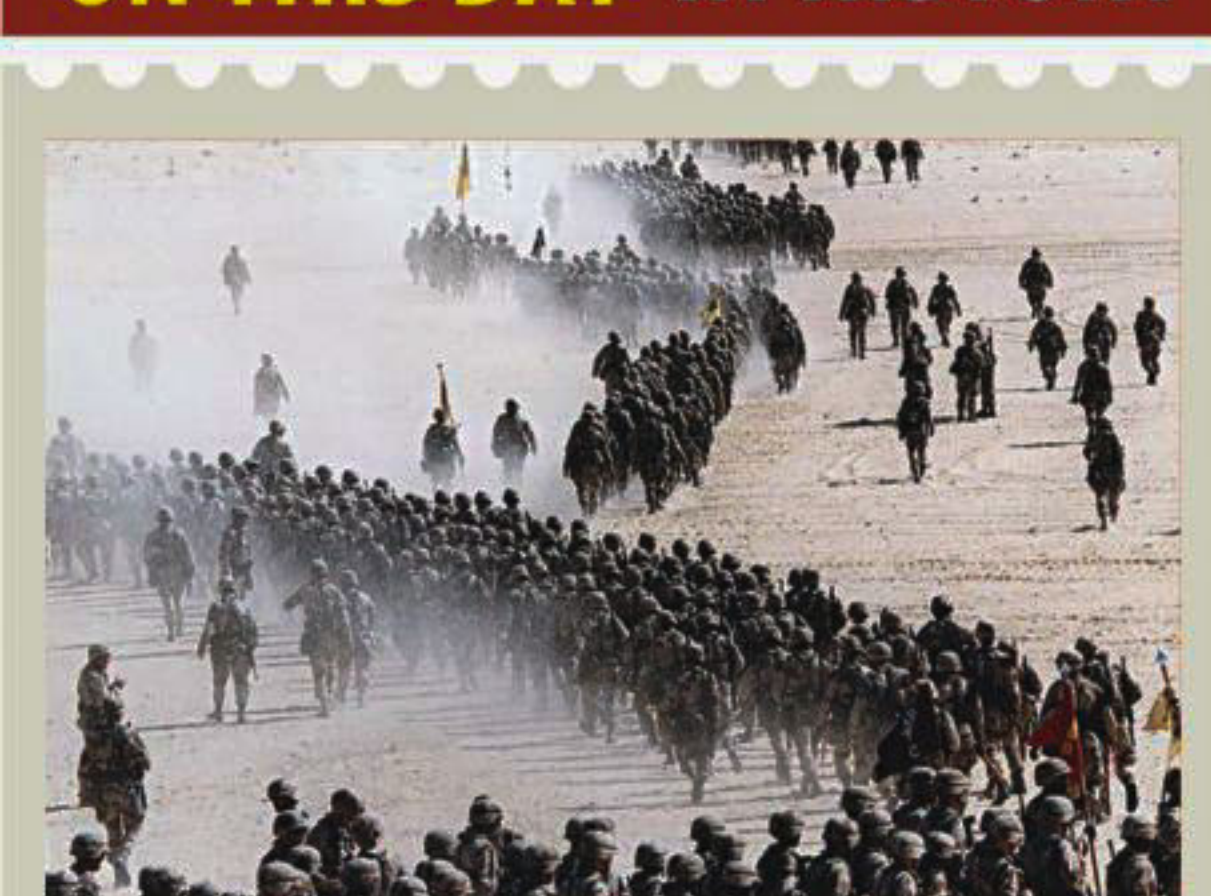
on the roles men and women play in society, and the societal expectations of both when it comes to food culture in South Asian households. She also emphasised that just because it never happened to some people, doesn't mean it doesn't happen. In response to those saying "but my mother fed us first out of love" she asserts that that is due to choice, something that a lot of women unfortunately do not have. Families that experienced equality in all aspects of their life, including food and dining, are the exceptions that prove the rule. From what I've read online and from what I've heard from other people, equal opportunity families are very much a minority. And in no way is this limited to South Asian countries, as I've found out.

This conversation isn't part of some nefarious feminist agenda to overthrow society (maybe just the patriarchy...) and plunge our country back into the Dark Ages. It's about deconstructing age-old practices within our culture that don't benefit everyone equally. Are the women, who slave over stoves all day and then resort to eating scraps and leftovers, benefitting from this? Are we teaching our sons that they must expect their wives to serve them, and are we teaching our daughters that they must put their husbands before their own needs? To those that are privileged enough to not experience this, are you aware that this level of inequality exists throughout your country, affecting the majority of families?

We can't continue conditioning girls and boys into thinking this behaviour is okay. Ingrain better practices into them. Introduce equality into every aspect of your life. Feminism isn't just about pushing women to be CEOs. Equality starts at home. Equality takes place at the dinner table, over freshly made food, with everyone seated and eating together.

Zahrah Haider is a journalism graduate and freelance writer currently living in the UK.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY



February 28, 1991

THE FIRST GULF WAR ENDS

The war waged by coalition forces led by the United States against Iraq in response to Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait had lasted a little over half a year and claimed over 100,000 civilian casualties.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Mamas' mates
 - 6 Oyster product
 - 11 By surprise
 - 12 Be in accord
 - 13 Game show loser's prize
 - 15 Jargon suffix
 - 16 Tell tales
 - 17 Stick in a pack
 - 18 Flips
 - 20 Ignored a diet
 - 21 Geese formation
 - 22 Wild guess
 - 23 Divided
 - 26 Shoplifted
 - 27 Seasonal song
 - 28 Producer Ziegfeld
 - 29 Circle section
 - 30 Spotted cat
 - 34 Sch. org.
 - 35 "— we there yet?"
 - 36 That lady
 - 37 Final zinger
 - 40 Snowy wader
 - 41 Singer Cara
 - 42 Slender
 - 43 Frisco player
 - 8 Tokyo thanks
 - 9 Proving wrong
 - 10 "Go away!"
 - 14 Cairo's river
 - 19 Wicked
 - 22 Terminate
 - 23 Menu fish
 - 24 Carrying of canoes
 - 25 "A Perfect Spy" author
 - 26 Fizz ingredient
 - 28 Forest plant
 - 30 Clergy's counterpart
 - 31 Pale
 - 32 Avignon's river
 - 33 Discourage
 - 38 TV's Danson
 - 39 — Lanka
- DOWN**
- 1 Copier need
 - 2 Degrade
 - 3 Trims
 - 4 Drama division
 - 5 Cook's pan
 - 6 Book makeup
 - 7 Meringue start

BEETLE BAILEY



HE'S SULKING ON THE ROOF? WHY IS HE SO MAD?

WE MADE FUN OF HIS MEATBALLS

HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET HIM DOWN?

10-8

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50

BLATS MIFF
RICKY ARIAS
ABHOR MARIE
VEE IKE ERA
OLDFAITHFUL
ANT ELSE
KEATS BAYED
ELLA OAR
YELLOWSTONE
PAT BEE RAM
ANIME MIAMI
DOMES ALITER
RENE NEEDS

BY MORT WALKER



SALE OF OFFICE ASSETS

Some used asset items (AC 42, Desktop PC 35, Laptop 9, Computer Accessories 59, Office Equipment 75 and Furniture 390) of a Foreign Organization will be sold in separate lots on an urgent basis on 8 March 2018 (Thursday).

Office address: Katalyst, House 20, Road 6, Baridhara, Dhaka 1212 (opposite to Malaysia Embassy). Contact: 01730795639.

Detail information of the items, bid form collection, visiting items and bid submission: 4th to 7th March 2018 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Security money as 10% of the bid price has to be deposited in Pay Order (Refundable) with the bid.

Bid opening and declaration of winner: 8 March 2.30 p.m.

By order of the authority