

# [Impacts of terrorism on sporting events](https://assignbuster.com/impacts-of-terrorism-on-sporting-events/)

Examining the Impacts of Terrorism on Sporting Events: Focusing on the FIFA World Cup.

Terrorism is now, more than ever, a prevalent subject within media discourse. The impact of threats of terrorism, be they perceived or realised, is one that shouldnot be underestimated. While the threat of terror attacks is one that we see on a regular basis, the fact that large scale events such as the FIFA World Cup draw thousands of spectators to one confined area (i. e. a football stadium, and the location surrounding the stadium) means that terror attacks and the threat thereof should be addressed as part of the risk assessment for the event.

The events industry, focusing particularly on sports tourism, have been affected by the global concernsurrounding terrorism. Hinch and Higham (2001) recognise that sport in general, be that on a local or a global level, has a huge influence on the numbers of tourists that are attracted to a particular area. Sport is a massive, multi-billion-pound industry, and the tourism that it encompasses makes a significant contribution to the revenue it creates.

There are anumber of facets to sport tourism that make it what it is. There are three prominentmarkers of this particular aspect of tourism, which include outdoor sports, fitness activities, and major events (Hall, 1992). If we consider one of thosecriteria – major events – then this study will focus on the FIFA World Cup, andwill explore how the World Cup has been affected by terrorism.

Since the 2001terror attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre, major events havebeen directly affected by the threat of terror attacks. Sports tourists nolonger feel as safe as they did travelling to destinations for major sportingevents, as the risk of attack is perceived as being much greater. These fearsare exacerbated by the fact that tourists are in enclosed spaces for theduration of the sporting event, with means of escape being difficult tonavigate and police in large crowds.

Since the late1900’s sports tourism has seen a surge in popularity unrivalled by other largescale events (Standeven and DeKnopp, 1999). Sport tourists are known to spend asignificant amount of their income on travelling to destinations in order towatch their favourite team or sportsperson perform. We can define sportstourism as “‘ sport-based travel away from the home environment for a limitedtime, where sport is characterised by unique rule sets, competition related tophysical prowess, and a playful nature” (Hinch and Higham, 2001, p. 56). Thiscan be directly attributed to the FIFA World Cup, as teams of players will takepart in a match with defined rules, are athletic by their very nature, and ifwe break football down to a basic level, the players are playing a game.

So, as discussedone of the criteria that makes up sports tourism is ‘ major events’. This titlecan be attributed to the likes of the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics. We cansee how the act of putting on such a large-scale event has benefits for boththe fans of the particular sport in question (in this instance the FIFA WorldCup) and also the country in which the event is to be based. The fans areafforded the opportunity to witness their favourite sports team in action, while the revenue produced through their tourism contributes greatly to thearea in which the event is to take place. During the FIFA World Cup that tookplace in South Korea in 2002, the then-president of South Korea is quoted asstating that the event was ‘ a chance for us to make the country prosperdiplomatically, economically and culturally, in sectors like tourism andscience’ (McCormack, 2002, p. 39), ‘ us’ in this instance being South Korea.

As there is asignificant return made when compared to the actual investment involved in theplanning, launching, and running of such an event, many destinations who areable to host events such as the FIFA World Cup vie for the opportunity to doso, as they are all too aware of the benefits they will be rewarded with inexchange for their investment (Kelly, 2000).

Although we haveseen significant growth in terms of sports-related tourism (which may be due tothe advancement of travel networks, and the ability to now travel to events fora smaller financial outlay), the notion of sports tourism is still a fairly newconstruct. With this in mind, consideration by organisers must be made towardshow terrorism can have negative effects on sports tourism. Sport is a globalphenomenon, which means that global incidents, such as acts of terrorism, havea direct effect on the industry.

Terrorism is adifficult term to describe. In fact, the US Department of State (2001) hasargued that there is no universally accepted definition of what terrorismactually is . There are a significantnumber of variables that can affect how people perceive an act of terrorism, and indeed whether they actually see an act as one of terrorism at all. Ganor(2001) argues that in order for terrorism to be fought back against, then aspecific definition should be in place that sets out exactly what an act ofaggression (or otherwise) should constitute in order for it to be labelled as‘ terrorism’. This inability to agree on what constitutes terrorism has led toseveral difficulties. Governments are unable to create laws around terrorismbecause they can’t agree on what terrorism is (Whitaker, 2001), and alsoopposing terrorism, in certain circumstances, could be construed as an act ofterrorism in of itself.

Freedman (2002)attempts to remedy the situation of disagreement regarding what is and isn’tterrorism by stating what those attempting to define it do agree on. These factors include:

* Terrorism is carried out in a purposeful manner(i. e. specific targeting).
* Terrorism is inclusive of acts of violence, which vary in their extremity.
* Terrorism has some form of political motivation.
* Victims of terror are not ‘ pre-selected’ (i. e. victims of suicide bombers for example)
* The act of terror is intended to affect people, bodies or movements outside of the direct victims of the attack (i. e. coercionof a government to act in a certain way as a result of the attack).

Most of thediscourse surrounding violence within the sporting industry has been directedtowards the violent conduct of spectators of a specific sport. Football fans inparticular have found themselves the subject of much conjecture regarding the causesof sports violence, and this has been the case since the 1960s and 70s.

There has, however, been an underwhelming degree of investigation into the effect ofterrorism on sports tourism (Atkinson et al, 2000, p. 54). Wedermeyer (1999, p. 218) supports this assertion in stating that ‘ specialist literature on therelationship between sport and terrorism is rare’. This is in contradiction tothe fact that major sporting events are in no way insusceptible to terroristattacks, a point which is highlighted by the fact that in December 2016, aseries of car bombs was detonated outside the stadium of Turkish football team, Besiktas, injuring many in the process, the majority of whom were completelyinnocent civilians.

Atkinson andYoung (2000, p. 54) further their point by saying that although, on the face ofit, sports may not seem to be linked to acts perpetrated by terroristorganisations, there is no escaping the fact that major events in the sportingworld may become the target for terrorist attack. These acts of terrorism maynot only be directed towards the spectators at a major sporting event, but alsothose who partake in the events themselves (i. e. the athletes), or even thelarge corporations who have put funds towards sponsorship of the event. Theyare, in essence, saying that everyone associated with the event is a potentialtarget for terrorism. If we consider the FIFA World Cup, then this is quiteobvious a major event, with a huge amount of prestige attached to it. As aresult, it makes sense that we can consider the FIFA World Cup, in the contemporaryclimate in particular, to be at risk of a terrorist attack.

We have seenhistorical instances of major sporting events attracting the attention ofterrorist groups. Perhaps one that will be forever remembered is the 1972Olympic Games, which took place in Munich. A militant terrorist organisationknown as ‘ Black September’ stormed the grounds of the Olympic residentsaccommodation and attacked the Israeli team’s hospitality area. In doing so, they murdered one Israeli sports coach in cold blood, and took ten hostages. The attempts to save the hostages failed tremendously, and they all died as aresult of the failed attempt, as did a number of the Palestinian terroristsinvolved in the coup, and several police officials.

More recently, during the Olympic games which took place in Atlanta in 2002, severalindividuals died either as a direct result, or indirect result, of a concealedbomb which was hidden in a backpack in the spectator area of the stadium. Manywere injured in the attack, while one of the spectators died as a result of theblast.

We have seen howWorld Cup Football has contributed to violence in the past, and sometimes on aserious and larger scale than ‘ mere’ hooliganism. In 1969, two countries, Honduras and El Salvador, ended up declaring war on one another after they camehead-to-head in a pre-tournament qualifying match. Because friction between thetwo countries was already high, this translated directly to the football field, and as a result the spectators clashed violently with eachother. This escalatedand the two countries entered into a war in July of that year.

Whilst this maynot be seen as a direct act of terrorism, it does serve to illustrate how violenceis present in World Cup football, or any kind of football for that matter. However, this kind of violence can be seen as politically motivated. Twoseparate sets of fans are brought together, from separate countries, betweenwhich tensions may be running high. The emotion of the event, and thepatriotism felt for each sets of fans’ own countries, by the fans themselves, could potentially lead to an act of terrorism taking place.

As mentionedearlier, sport is a truly global phenomenon. So, it goes without saying thatglobalisation will have an effect on sports related-violence. We have seen howglobal travel has become much more accessible to those who previously wereunable to make journeys to far-away destinations due to the financialimplications of doing so. However, we briefly touched upon how footballhooliganism has been an issue in sports events since the 70s. Inexpensiveholiday deals, and even travel deals tailored specifically towards the sportstourist, have been prolific for the past 30 years, and so it makes sense tomake the link between sports tourism and sports violence.

Working classmales have been given access to the deals mentioned above, which means thatthey can travel to destinations for a comparatively nominal fee. It shouldn’tbe viewed as entirely coincidental that where these travel opportunities aremade available, and are combined with cheap alcohol, that sports violence(particularly hooliganism, which is often associated with working class males)would increase and become more of a threat in the time leading up to a majorsporting event. Taylor (2002, p. 27) supports this assertion. He states that‘ For many (especially) ‘ working class’ young men, it was football that firstinitiated them into ‘ foreign’ travel’.

To return toWorld Cup Football and acts of terrorism, we saw that there was a great deal ofconcern surrounding the safety of spectators and participants of the 2002 SouthKorean FIFA World Cup. As stated earlier, this was as a direct result of theatrocities that took place during the 9/11 terror attacks in America. Nevertheless, all the authorities involved decided that this major event shouldgo ahead unhindered. This may well have simply been down to the fact that therevenue generated by the tournament would have been undeniably beneficial toSouth Korea. Indeed, as quoted earlier, the South Korean President, KimDae-Jung, stated himself exactly how beneficial it would be for their country, bringing in hundreds of thousands of tourists from across the globe.

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