Why sportswashing and state ownership is killing modern football

Introduction

Modern football is one of the most lucrative businesses in the world with transfers breaking the £100 million mark more and more often the money within the sport just keeps rising, as more and more money is being piled on within sport the reach and exposure offered is also more and more valuable. Knowing this in the modern era people and states with near limitless funds and a less than perfect public image have begun to tap into the industry with an end goal of mass positive pr and profits that help improve their reputation without having to change anything that caused the negative impression in the first place.

Pros and cons of state backed clubs

One of the few pros of this is that it raises the quality of the teams that are being bought this affects that team massively and has a further knock-on effect throughout their competitors who are forced to try keep up with them financially, a near impossible task, this pro is only relevant on a sporting level but has paid off massively for clubs like Manchester city and PSG who have seen utter domination in their respective domestic leagues and now harbour some of the best players on the planet which is an impressive feat considering Manchester city were a mid-table side at best prior to sheikh Mansours takeover and PSG had barely been around 40 years prior to Qatar sport Invesment (QSI). However, the extreme downside to all of this is the immense propaganda the clubs are being used for with PSG signing global superstars like Lionel Messi and Neymar Jr the public's perception of the PSG and in turn its Qatari owners is of a much more positive one this is sportswashing at its finest and simplest form, sign the superstars and the players fans will support you and them.

If sportswashing wasn’t enough to leave a sour taste the fact that all the ridiculous amounts of money being injected into the club seemingly appears from nowhere, through the use of artificial companies and massively inflated sponsorships to bypass UEFA's financial fair play (FFP) restrictions, should be more than enough. The owners often have to do this quickly after the takeovers are complete as most use smaller or less prominent clubs to build their empires from. Which means they now need to try match their immeasurable spending to a low revenue to avoid being sanctioned, with the easiest way being to fabricate a new company and inject the money through ludicrously high sponsorships. It's an effective method for garnering support as seen by Manchester city and its immense growth over the last 15 years it’s gone from a relatively unknown club to a European titan with a good grip on the next generation of fans. The club regularly performs tours of the UAE to try bolster some good PR by having superstars posting photos whilst there which leaves a mark on the impressionable younger generation.

The main reason why all of this is such an issue becomes much clearer when u take a look at these states' politics and human rights records countries where women are oppressed and have considerably less freedom and where same sex relations been heavily punished still with both having criminal sentences for these acts. Qatar laid claim to being one of the few countries privileged enough to host the world's largest sporting even- the world cup finals, It wasn’t without controversy even from the beginning FIFA has been accused of aiding Qatar's sportswashing and taking bribes in order for Qatar's bid to be successful aside from bribery the event build up was filled with severe accusations of human rights violations from modern slavery and horrific working conditions leading to the deaths of an estimated 6,500 migrant workers since the bids acceptance in 2010. The most horrifying thing about it all is how quickly it has gone to the back of peoples mind due to the success of Qatar hosting one of the greatest world cups of all time. I believe this is the pinnacle of sportswashing and truly highlights how effective and damaging it can be. Currently Qatar and other state ownerships are able to get away with silencing journalists, avoiding criticism, abusing human rights and other atrocities due to the fact the west simply don’t care about lives that don't affect themselves and as long as this remains the case sportswashing will run rampant with zero consequences

conclusion

In conclusion I feel the modern use of sport-swashing is incredibly damaging for the sport and morality as a whole in. It is becoming more expansive than ever with more regimes looking to get involved and deflect away from their reputation by garnering favour with the ever-so impressionable sports audiences. I believe this will continue to plague all sports with large audiences and will only become a larger problem. those regimes that are trying to avoid media criticism will continue to do as well as they please unless rigid restrictions are put in place and aren’t given into under the influence of the money. Additionally, with state-backed organisations like Manchester city thriving, their owners' actions and agendas have already been overlooked with no sign of slowing down this propaganda may continue unfiltered for many years to come and will only encourage more similar minded people to pollute the sport as a political mouthpiece and lead to the death of the beautiful game.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/feb/23/revealed-migrant-worker-deaths-qatar-fifa-world-cup-2022>