



Soccer Against the Enemy: How the World's Most Popular Sport Starts and Fuels Revolutions and Keeps Dictators in Power

By Simon Kuper

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Soccer is much more than just the most popular game in the world. It is a matter of life and death for millions around the world, an international lingua franca. Simon Kuper traveled to twenty-two countries to discover the sometimes bizarre effect soccer can have on politics and culture. At the same time he tried to discover what makes different countries play a simple game so differently. Kuper meets a remarkable variety of fans along the way, from the East Berliner persecuted by the Stasi for supporting his local team, to the Argentine general with his own views on tactics. He also illuminates the frightening intersection between soccer and politics, particularly in the wake of the attacks of 9-11, where soccer is obsessed over by the likes of Osama bin Laden. The result is one of the world's most acclaimed books on the game, and an astonishing study of soccer and its place in the world.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Kuper, a reporter for the *Financial Times*, delves deeply into the ways that soccer has become intertwined with the politics, philosophies and worldview of most of the planet's population. Originally published in the U.K. in 1994; this updated version includes chapters that refer to more recent events such as 9/11 and the U.S. foray into Iraq. Sketching relations between Holland and Germany or Croatia and Serbia, Kuper describes a transglobal culture of fans, managers, players and political leaders engaged not only on the pitch but in the arenas of money, power and influence. Toward the end of this often slang-laden book, Kuper makes some useful observations: "the main allure of soccer to terrorists is the game's global reach." Indeed, Kuper quotes Osama bin Laden's biographer Yossef Bodansky stating that the deadly 1998 al-Qaeda attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were the direct result of a foiled plan to disrupt the World Cup competition earlier that year. Arresting stuff, but as a whole the appeal will be limited by the microscopic focus on the particulars of a sport whose professional teams haven't yet found mass appeal in the U.S. (*July*) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

In 1992, Kuper set out to travel the world, looking for case studies to support the thesis in this book's subtitle. He found a former East German who'd been hounded by the Stasi for his love of a West German team, a Slovakian president who made a nationalist statement with troops and truncheons in a soccer stadium, a Ukrainian club that exported nuclear missile parts, and much more. First published in England as *Football against the Enemy* (1994), this version has been updated (with a new preface, a postscript, and a chapter called "Global Game, Global Jihad") and Americanized (the word *soccer* substituted for *football* and occasional American references added). It's an exceedingly interesting book and a good shelf mate for Franklin Foer's *How Soccer Explains the World* (2004). But while Kuper ably blends travelogue, political research, and social investigation, the material's lack of timeliness limits its effectiveness. And while the examples don't always justify the bold thesis, it's a worthy approach: "Enough has been written about soccer hooligans," he writes. "Other fans are much more dangerous." *Keir Graff*
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About the Author

Simon Kuper was born in Uganda in 1969. He has lived (and played and watched soccer) in Holland, Germany, the USA and England, and has written on soccer for publications all over the world, including the New York Times. He now works for the Financial Times. He studied history and German at Oxford University and supports Ajax Amsterdam, but not all that passionately.

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