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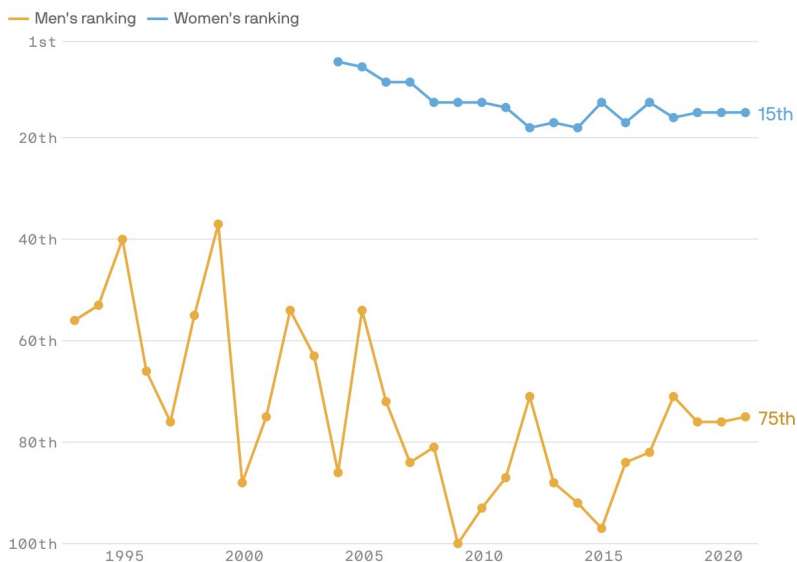
■■■■ Chinese President Xi Jinping hoped to make China a global leader in soccer, his favorite sport. After years of massive government support, that dream has so far fallen short, writes @BethanyAllenEbr, @TheKendallBaker and @JeffreyTracy.

<https://t.co/KtSH1MI3GO>

■ The Chinese men's national team is currently ranked 75th in the world, up from where it was 10 years ago (90–100 range) but down from where it was before the turn of the century (30–40 range). <https://t.co/asrZ007spS>

China's FIFA world ranking

End-of-year rankings, December 1992 to December 2020



■ The Chinese Super League was on the rise and threatening to tilt the balance of global soccer during the last decade. Now, it's in complete disarray.

The league's uncertain future could damage soccer's domestic popularity.

<https://t.co/nA6f7SREuO>

■ Chinese money, which 5 years ago poured into European soccer at a meteoric rate, is now returning home just as quickly as it went abroad.

Its long-term goal of growing its global soccer profile hasn't changed, but the strategy to attain it has.

<https://t.co/vZgZFkxtrO>

■ Some European soccer stars have used their fame to raise awareness of China's campaign against Uyghur Muslims.

At least one has paid a steep price for speaking out. <https://t.co/UVmOxyt3fM>

In December 2019, Turkish soccer star Mesut Özil, then with English club Arsenal, condemned China's repression of Uyghur Muslims in a tweet.

After the tweet, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV announced it would no longer broadcast that week's Arsenal game.

<https://t.co/UVmOxyt3fM> <https://t.co/XM57QA9Ee7>



■ ■ Over the decades, several authoritarian regimes have hosted the World Cup, using the global spotlight to burnish their image. And FIFA, which is plagued by corruption, continues to give World Cup bids to countries with records of human rights abuses. <https://t.co/NaAMK7KSHM>

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