

## SPORT, NATIONALISM AND GLOBALIZATION: RELEVANCE, IMPACT, CONSEQUENCES

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### *Relevance*

#### **International Sport**

At the most basic level of analysis, it is easy to see the extent to which sport, arguably more than any other form of social activity in the modern world, facilitates flag waving and the playing of national anthems, both formally at moments such as medal ceremonies and informally through the activities of fans. Indeed there are many political nationalists who fear that by acting as such a visible medium for overt displays of national sentiment, sport can actually blunt the edge of serious political debate. No matter how one views the grotesque caricatures of national modes of behavior and dress that so often provide the colorful backdrop to major sporting events, one certainly cannot escape the fact that nationalism, in some form or another, and sport are closely linked. It is important to appreciate, however, that the precise nature of their relationship varies dramatically from one political setting to another and that, as a consequence, it is vital that we are alert to a range of different conceptual issues.

For example, like the United Nations, sport's global governing bodies, such as the International Olympic Committee or the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), consist almost exclusively of representatives not of nations but rather of sovereign nation states. It is also worth noting that pioneering figures in the organization of international sport, such as Baron Pierre de Coubertin who established the modern Olympics in 1896, commonly revealed a commitment to both internationalism and the interests of their own nation states. Thus, whilst de Coubertin could write enthusiastically about a sporting event that would bring together young (male) athletes from across the globe, he was also specifically concerned with the physical well-being of young French men in the wake of a demoralizing defeat in the Franco-German War.

Whilst in most cases, these nation states that constitute international sporting bodies are coterminous with nations, the fact remains that numerous nations throughout the world, as well as other forms of collective belonging, are stateless and are consequently denied representation in international sporting competition just as they are in the corridors of global political power. When considering the relationship between sports and nationalism, therefore, it is important to think in terms both of nation states and of nations. This also provides the means whereby sport's connection with nationality and also with national identity can be separately explored. It is also useful to bear in mind that sport often acts as a window through which we are able to

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examine a whole range of social developments and to test a variety of theoretical concepts and perspectives. With specific reference to the relationship between sports and nationalism, observing the world of sport offers insights into the relevance and reliability of such concepts as ethnic and civic nationalism and the validity of explanatory approaches to the rise of nations and nationalism such as primordialism and modernism. Sport can also provide important insights into varieties of imperialism, the cultural politics of anti-imperialist struggle and postcolonial legacies.

### **Sport, Imperialism and Postcolonial Legacies**

Britain, and in particular England, is usually credited with the 'invention' of modern sport, in general, and of numerous specific sports. The global diffusion of sport certainly owes much to the imperial exploits of the British with sports such as cricket and rugby union becoming rapidly and firmly established in various corners of the British Empire. Furthermore, even in those parts of the world that did not constitute elements of that Empire, British citizens played a major role in countless other parts of the world in the diffusion of sports such as soccer. The evidence remains to the present day in the names of clubs in Spain (*Athletic Bilbao*) and in Italy (*AC Milan*) with English usages still preferred to Spanish (or Basque) and Italian equivalents. Thus, through informal business connections as well as through the mechanisms of the formal empire, sport operated, alongside Christianity and the works of William Shakespeare, to provide cultural support to Britain's expansionist ambitions in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In the case of sport, it would be easy to assume that its role consisted solely of ensuring that first indigenous elites and later entire native populations would accommodate themselves to British games and by extension to British rule. But sport's legacy in this respect is double-edged. Whilst playing the imperialist masters' games might well be conceived of as an indication of cultural inferiority, it has also given colonial peoples opportunities to measure themselves against their present and former rulers. Nowhere is this more apparent in that most quintessential of English sports, cricket, which became hugely important as a marker of identity in many corners of the former British Empire — perhaps most notably in Australia, the Indian sub-continent and the English speaking Caribbean. Victory over the English cricket team in such countries became one of the most convenient and visible ways of measuring the extent to which the colonial mantle had been lifted. It is no accident that one of the most influential books on the relationship between sport and politics was written by a Trinidadian, C. L. R. James. It is also worth noting that cricket, in the shape of the West Indies test team made up of players from a number of islands and island groups as well as from mainland Guyana, demonstrates that sport can from time to time transcend national and nation-state boundaries.

Today, at least one nation state that was formerly part of the British Empire and remains a member of the Commonwealth appears to be partaking in its own kind of sporting imperialism. Rugby union has long been regarded as being of massive symbolic importance for New Zealand. In recent years, however, the national team, the All Blacks, has drawn increasingly upon players from various Pacific islands, such as Samoa and Fiji, arguably with serious, detrimental consequences for the further development of the game in these countries. Meanwhile Canada, another Commonwealth member, far from investing any energy in competing with the British, has sought to establish a sporting national identity, in part by

distancing itself from the United States, for example through a fierce determination to retain symbolic ownership of hockey, but also by competing against its more powerful neighbor to the south, sometimes with 'real' Canadians and, on other occasions, with proxies such as the predominantly American baseball players at the Toronto Blue Jays.

In the period since the end of the Second World war, sport has also played its part in the development of new 'empires'. The Soviet Union, for example, increased its sphere of influence in part by helping to support sport and also individual athletes in a number of African countries. Meanwhile the diffusion of baseball can be seen as part of a wider process of Americanization especially in the Caribbean, central America, and Japan. In this particular case, comparisons can be made with the trajectory of cricket with baseball bats being used quite literally (although without causing physical damage) by some countries to challenge their neo-colonial status. The issue of the use of sport for the purposes of nationalist struggle is one that will be returned to. First, however, it is necessary to establish how sport is used in the world of constitutional politics.

### **Sport, Nation States and Constitutional Nationalism**

Much of the literature on the relationship between sport and politics has been concerned with the ways in which nation states seek to promote themselves, or simply carry out their business, using sport as a useful and highly visible medium. During the Cold War, for example, it was apparent that the Soviet Union and most, if not all, of its east European neighbors used sport in general and especially the Olympic Games to advertise their particular brand of communism. In addition, international rivalry was not only acted out on the athletics track or on the high beam but also impacted on the wider context of events such as the Olympics with the United States of America seeking to lead a boycott of the Moscow games in 1980 and the Soviet Union and its allies responding in kind when the Olympics moved to Los Angeles in 1984. Related to this is the fact that nation states also put considerable efforts into acquiring the right to host major events, which are then turned into spectacular exercises in self-promotion by the successful bidders. There can be little doubt that most national leaders in the modern world are highly conscious of the role that sport can play in boosting confidence and gaining markers of esteem.

In some cases, most notably that of the United States, the role of sport in relation to national feeling need not even depend upon the scale or even the availability of international competition. Baseball acquired the status of a national pastime precisely because it was regarded as America's game and the rivalries that for so long helped to maintain its place in the country's popular mythology involved cities and even neighborhoods in the same cities rather than other nation states. Thus, American isolationism, rather than any felt need to take on the rest of the world, has been crucial in the formation of a sense of sporting nationalism.

Another use of sport that is connected to the political interests of nation states relates to diplomacy. There exists a school of thought in certain governmental circles and even more obviously at the level of sports administration that sport is a valuable tool in assuaging international tension and, in some cases, even helping to broker peace. The process has been referred to as 'ping pong diplomacy', a nod in the direction of American attempts in the 1960s to improve relations with the People's Republic of China by establishing contact through the use of table tennis players as quasi envoys. More recently, qualified claims have been made

with respect to the integrative role that sport has played or can play in peace process in such places as Northern Ireland and the Middle East. Whilst claims of this sort need to be viewed with a certain amount of caution, what is not in doubt is the extent to which many nation states have invested substantial amounts of money in sport and leisure facilities in an effort to lessen anti social behavior in general and especially the violence that is associated with inter-communal tension. Nevertheless, this kind of social engineering through sports has been viewed with considerable skepticism not least by those who argue that, by their very nature, sports are more likely to be catalysts for violence than vehicles for spreading harmony.

According to George Orwell, international sporting competition can best be described as war minus the shooting. The statement is sufficiently ambiguous as to be open to two radically different interpretations. On the one hand, Orwell could be understood to be arguing that international sporting competition acts as a safety valve which makes warfare increasingly less likely. Alternatively, he may have meant that international sporting competition actually keeps alive those very tensions out of which violent conflict is often the inevitable consequence. In fact, we know from other observations that Orwell expressed about sport, that it is the latter reading of his comment which gets closest to an accurate understanding of his meaning. Sport is necessarily competitive and, by implication, conflictual. It is also an important element in the construction and reproduction of social identities. It brings people together. About that there can be no question. It does so, however, in contexts which are arguably more likely to exacerbate tensions than to help to resolve them. This 'fact' of sporting life can be particularly problematic for newly established nation states, the rulers of which may be inclined to look to sport in their endeavors to foster a sense of national unification.

This has been a common practice in many sub Saharan African nation-states. It is often the case that alongside national flags and anthems, sporting heroes are of vital importance in helping to promote unity between people who have been brought together within the same constitutional entity that owes its existence far more to the map makers of various European empires than to any collective sense of a shared history. But using national sporting representatives to this political end can be a difficult strategy to manage in situations in which people retain deep affinities for their own tribal, ethnic or linguistic groups. Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent, and certainly more discussed, than in the 'new' Republic of South Africa where sport has frequently been saluted as the actual, or at least the potential, repository of the collective identity of the Rainbow Nation. It is true that at the symbolic level, few gestures have had more impact than Nelson Mandela donning the shirt of the Springboks rugby union team, so long regarded as the main sporting medium of Afrikaner nationalism. Such gestures notwithstanding, subsequent events in South Africa have demonstrated how difficult it is to unite divided peoples around the banner of national sport. This becomes all the more apparent when one turns one's attention to sport's relationship with unofficial nationalism.

It should be noted that politicians in Africa who now seek to use sport to help establish and consolidate a sense of unified national purpose are the successors of those anti-imperialists who, as mentioned above, also harnessed sport for their particular political purposes. On one level applying the games of their colonial masters could have given the impression that indigenous peoples were willing to accept cultural assimilation. At the same time though, sports clubs became important centers for the dissemination of anti-colonial sentiments.

Most of the discussion so far relates to constitutional or proto constitutional nationalism, i. e. that which is bound up with the politics of nation states, either already in existence or in

embryonic form. However, before considering further the relationship between sports and nationalism, it is essential to reiterate and elucidate the distinction between the nation from the nation-state. The latter features prominently in the formal organization of international sporting competition. Representatives of nation states constitute sport's world governing bodies and take part as athletes in global events such as soccer's World Cup and the Olympic Games. In order to do so, these competitors need to be in possession of a nationality — a designation that is itself bound up with the idea of the nation state. Many nation states, however, are comprised of more than one nation. In some instances, identification with those nations is relatively weak and has long since been transcended by a national identity that accords legitimacy to the nation state. In other cases though, primary identification relates to the nation, with the nation state being accorded secondary importance except in formal situations. As far as sporting competition is concerned, however, regardless of the depth of feeling that exists for submerged nations, nation states alone are granted international recognition. One obvious exception to this rule is to be found in the United Kingdom, the example of which helps to explain more fully the diverse relationships that can exist between nations and nation states, nationalities and national identities.

### **Sport, Nations and Submerged Nationalism**

Britain is in itself a nationless entity. Nowhere is this demonstrated more publicly than in the world of international sport. With a single Olympics squad, four 'national' soccer teams and three 'national' rugby teams together with Northern Ireland's part share in the Irish team, the UK's sporting landscape is testimony to the complex relationship between nations and nation-states. In addition, the Commonwealth Games provide all of the UK's four nations — England, Scotland, Wales, and, more contentiously, Northern Ireland which, in the eyes of most Irish nationalists, is merely a political entity isolated from the nation, Ireland, to which its six counties properly belong — to participate in a major international sporting event. Indeed, their presence at this event is further bolstered by the participation of three offshore islands — the Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey. The reasons why the nations of Britain are given opportunities to compete at the Commonwealth Games and in international soccer in their own right and not as part of the UK can largely be traced to Britain's pioneering role in the development of modern sport. Not surprisingly the current situation, particularly as it relates to international soccer, has long been a source of some disquiet amongst other nation states which resent the fact that one of their peers is allowed to retain four places in competition for the World Cup and the European Championship. Certainly this is not a privilege that is extended to other nation states, such as Spain, which, as will be developed later, it could be argued, is similarly a state made up of a number of nations. Furthermore, no such allowance could ever be made in order to incorporate the sense of collective belonging that is felt by the members of tribal, ethnic and linguistic groups that are scattered throughout the world of nation states.

What the British example underlines is that when we refer to the prestige that nations can derive from sport, it is important to think in terms not only of internationally recognized states whose politicians seize upon sporting success for ideological and propagandist reasons but also of submerged nations (Scotland, Wales, the Basque country, Catalonia, Québec perhaps and so on) for which sport has commonly been one of the most effective vehicles for cultural resistance by both cultural and political nationalists. Sport provides both athletes and fans with

opportunities to celebrate a national identity that is different from and, in some cases, opposed to, their ascribed nationality. The two forms of engagement need not be mutually exclusive. It is possible to support both British teams and Scottish ones or to represent Wales and also the United Kingdom. Another example is provided by Spain where football fans from Catalonia, the Basque country and Galicia find it possible to support the *selección* (that is, the Spanish 'national' soccer team) without necessarily identifying with the Castillian version of Spanishness. It can be argued, however, that national identity (which often equates to nationality) tends to take priority in the minds of sports fans — hence the passion for those soccer clubs that represent the submerged nations of Spain such as Celta de Vigo and Deportivo de la Coruña in Galicia, Athletic Bilbao and Real Sociedad in the Basque country and FC Barcelona in Catalonia. Nationality, however, is normally what matters to athletes since this alone guarantees the right to compete on behalf of nation-states, which unlike many nations, can be represented in international sport just as they are at the United Nations itself. It is worth noting, of course, that nationality rules have become increasingly flexible in sport as response to labor migration. This trend is taken up later in the discussion of globalization and its consequences for nations and nationalism.

The desire, particularly on the part of fans, to express their national identity in the realm of sport is clearly linked to nationalism in the broadest sense or, at the very least, to patriotism. Former British Member of Parliament Jim Sillars dismissed the attitude of his fellow Scots towards national sporting representatives as 'ninety-minute patriotism'. Similar views are also held, in certain quarters, with regard to some Irish supporters of sport. Thus, Irish support for national representatives in global sporting activities such as golf, rugby union and soccer, is seen by some followers of the Gaelic games tradition as patriotic rather than nationalistic and, by implication, therefore, relatively politically shallow. The relationship between Gaelic games and Irish nationalism on the other hand is, as we shall see, regarded as being much more profound. In general, however, attempts to distinguish the passions aroused by international sport from 'real' nationalism miss the point. It is undeniable that expressions of solidarity for players and teams that represent one's nation are closely linked to cultural nationalism. Whether or not they are also bound up with political nationalism is a different question, the answer to which necessarily varies from one individual to the next. For many people, even ones whose national identity is associated with a submerged nation, cultural nationalism is enough. They may well feel that they could not become any more Scottish or Welsh or Catalan than they already are with the formation of a nation state that would correspond to their sense of national identity. For others though, cultural nationalism is nothing more than the emotional embellishment of a strongly held political ideology that will settle for nothing less than national sovereignty.

For most sportsmen and women, even in an era when money is a major incentive for sporting success, representing the nation remains important. It is not inconceivable that they might represent more than one nation with neither ethnic origin nor even well established civic connections being necessary for a move from one to another. However, for the overwhelming majority of athletes engaged in international sport the matter is still relatively clear-cut. For fans, things are arguably even simpler. In the modern era, following one's 'proxy warriors' into international competition is one of the easiest and most passionate ways of underlining one's sense of national identity, one's nationality or both. Needless to say, not everyone wishes to celebrate his or her national affiliation in this way, in most instances for the simple reason that



they are not interested in sport, the nation or the relationship between the two. But just as for most active participants, for the majority of sports fans the choice is relatively straightforward. This is not to deny of course that in certain circumstances athletes and fans alike may well understand their nations in different ways. Furthermore it is not only sporting individuals who demonstrate the contested character of most, if not all, nations. Sports themselves also do so to the extent that they become 'national' in the popular imagination for a variety of reasons.

### *Impacts: National Sports*

A discussion of the concept of national sports has particular value for the study of nationalism more generally inasmuch as it necessitates some reference to the main debates in this area. For example, a primordialist interpretation of the origins of nations would allow for the possibility that national sports are bound up with the various criteria which legitimate historic nationhood — blood ties, language, topography, the soil and so on. According to theories linking the rise of nationalism to the exigencies of modernization, on the other hand, national sports are simply part of a panoply of elements that serve to legitimize the nation state. In addition, concepts such as 'imagined community' and 'invented tradition' can then be invoked in an attempt to explain how attempts are made to bestow some historic legitimacy on what are essentially modern responses to particular political necessities. Furthermore, the distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism may also be invoked in order to advance the case that the national sport is about true belonging whereas other sports that are played within the nation can be linked to what constitutes the civic nation, or more properly, the nation state, but lack the stamp of authenticity. In reality, however, no single approach can fully explain how specific sports acquire national significance.

National sports take different forms and, in so doing, they provide us with interesting insights into the character of particular nations. Indeed, the concept of the 'national' sport not only illuminates the relationship between the various terms listed above, that are associated with the nation but also helps us to begin to understand how it is that nations resist globalization even in a global era. Some 'national' sports are peculiar to specific nations. Their 'national' status is ring-fenced by their exclusivity — echoes here of ethnic nationalism. National sports and games of this type are in some sense linked to the essence of the nations in question even though their actual origins may be pre-national or at least prior to the emergence of nation states. They represent 'the nation' symbolically despite the fact that they may well have demonstrably failed to capture the interest of most of the people who constitute the civic nation and/or the nation state.

It should be noted that those activities which are most likely to be ring-fenced because of their specific cultural resonance do not always find favor with members of particular nations' cosmopolitan elites who may well believe that the nation is better represented by sports that are both modern and transnational. Certainly the *corrida de toros*, the classic form of the bullfight, is not universally popular throughout Spain nor does it even take place at all in some Spanish regions. In the 'Spanish' context, one should also mention the sport of *pelota* played and watched enthusiastically in the Basque country together with numerous arcane rustic types of competition. Nevertheless, in terms of popularity, the 'national sport' of Spain is almost certainly soccer (association football). Yet, at least as much as taurine activities, soccer also

makes us appreciate the extent to which Spain is at best a divided nation and, at worst, not a nation at all — merely a nation state. In part, this explains *morbo*, the disease that infects football rivalry between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid CF for example and, perhaps above all, between clubs located in the Basque 'nation' (*Euskadi*) and those at the 'centre' (understood both physically and metaphorically) of Spain.

In Ireland, whilst hurling may well be the sport of choice in the eyes of *Bord Fáilte* (the Irish Tourist Board) or the advertising executives responsible for selling a variety of Irish products, including stout and whiskey, the sport's popularity varies considerably from one county, and even one parish, to another. Gaelic football is more uniform in terms of the support that it receives throughout the thirty-two counties. Yet there are isolated pockets where it loses out to hurling. Furthermore, the right of any Gaelic game to be assigned 'national status' is considerably weakened not only because some Irish nationalists opt for other sports, such as rugby union and soccer, but also because the overwhelming majority of the Protestant community in the north of Ireland have resolutely set their faces against the whole Gaelic games movement. It might seem easy to dismiss this difficulty by simply taking these people at their word and accepting that since they do not consider themselves to be truly Irish, their sporting preferences need have no impact on what does or does not constitute an Irish national sport. But this would be to ignore the basic precepts of Irish republican ideology that has consistently sought to embrace not only Catholics but Protestants and Dissenters as well.

Games such as rugby union and soccer have some claim on the right to be called 'national' in the Irish context. Despite their British origins, they are played throughout the island. Moreover, although rugby tends to be played by Protestants rather than Catholics in Northern Ireland, both football codes enjoy considerable support from both traditions on the island as a whole. They offer Irish sportsmen the opportunity to represent the nation at international level. Indeed, rugby, unlike soccer, allows northern unionists the chance to acknowledge their sporting Irishness whilst retaining a political allegiance to the union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It should be noted, however, that regardless of any claims that either sport may have to be recognized as 'national', neither has escaped the influence of globalization. The two Irish 'national' soccer teams have both fielded players whose ethnic 'right' to belong has been relatively weak. The same thing has happened in rugby union, which in recent years has witnessed a flood of antipodean coaches and players, some of whom have qualified to play for Ireland despite having accents that conjure up images of Dunedin or Durban, not Dublin or Dungannon.

Gaelic games have been less affected by the movement of people that is commonly linked to globalization except in the sense that Irish migrants have taken their traditional activities to other parts of the world, most notably North America. This is not to deny that changes taking place beyond the shores of Ireland have had an impact on the GAA. Nevertheless, the factors that have been most influential are best understood in terms of modernization and capitalism as opposed to the more specific category of globalization. Gaelic games have been relatively unscathed by the latter. As a result, the GAA offers rich insights into the processes whereby the nation has been able to resist the global in sport as in much else.

In terms of national sports, the United States and Canada also provide interesting food for thought. One could plausibly argue that the various games and pastime engaged in by the continent's aboriginal peoples are the true national sports of what became known as North America. Of these, however, only lacrosse has acquired a wider popularity ( and that fairly



minimal) whereas baseball has achieved the status of 'the national pastime' in the US and ice hockey has been similarly elevated in Canada. In the former, however, it would be foolish to ignore the rival claims of football and basketball.

Physical activities originating in the Far East have had their own particular trajectories. Thus, the martial arts of Japan and Korea have been adopted enthusiastically in the west and imbued with more easily accessible characteristics whereas sumo wrestling, whilst attracting participants from other parts of the world, remains very much a Japan-based sport. Meanwhile in both Korea and Japan, the global sport of soccer and the American national pastime, baseball, have become hugely popular. Such examples are common enough in an increasingly globalized world sporting order.

### *Consequences: Sports, Nationalism and Globalization*

Despite the resilience of traditional pastimes such as *pelota* and sumo and of organizations such as the GAA in Ireland, there are strong grounds for believing that the link between nationalism and sports is becoming weaker and that the very existence of international competition is threatened by the twin forces of globalization and consumer capitalism. Athletes migrate from one nation state to another in rapidly increasing numbers and not only to play for different clubs. In many cases, the move also involves the adoption of a new sporting nationality. This process has been notably exemplified in the global movement of Kenyan runners — representing their 'real' nation at one major event and Qatar, for example, at the next. In this way, Stephen Cherono became Saif Saeed Shaheen and won a gold medal for his new nation in the 3,000-meter steeplechase at the World Athletics Championships in Paris in 2003 beating a 'true' Kenyan, Ezekiel Kemboi, into second place. Furthermore, it is increasingly believed that whilst most professional athletes in team sports continue to represent the nation states of their birth, their true feelings of loyalty are for their clubs and even for their corporate sponsors. This leads to concerns that in soccer the European Champions' League has now virtually surpassed the World Cup in terms of its significance for players and that, in most sports, major competitions will in the long run involve representatives of Nike, Adidas and a host of other corporations, with nations and even long established sports clubs having greatly reduced importance. At present, the Ryder Cup in golf pits golfers from various European nation states against their counterparts from the United States, providing a relatively rare opportunity for the expression of American sporting nationalism prompted by international, or more accurately intercontinental, competition. But how realistic are fears that competition between nations is in the process of being superseded by a transnational, global sports culture?

First, we should always be cautious when we talk about the transformation of modern society into a globalized postmodernity. Throughout the history of modern sport which is itself not much older than that of most of the world's nation states, players have moved from one country to another. Furthermore, 'national' teams have always reflected the movement of peoples and the creation of diasporas. Indeed, the fact that some nation states now select representatives on the basis of the place of birth of one or more of their grandparents is little more than a reversal of that particular trend. If the host state's national selectors show little interest in a particular athlete, then it becomes increasingly likely that another set of selectors will. All of this suggests that, whilst here may indeed be more anomalies than ever before with

respect to who represents the nation, the phenomenon of representing a nation that is not fully one's own (whatever that actually means in relation to the idea of authenticity) is in no way new. Between the 1940s and 1960s, it was possible for one of the greatest soccer players of his time, Alfredo Di Stefano, who was born in Argentina into a family of Italian immigrants, to play for three different national teams — Argentina (7caps), Colombia (4 caps), and Spain (31caps). The life of this one sportsman alone is indicative of the extent to which modern sport has always thrown up issues surrounding the concepts of nationality and national identity. It should be added, however, that for the most part, throughout this period, the overwhelming majority of people who have represented their countries at sport have had remarkably strong ties with the nation state in question. In most instances, that is where they (or at least their parents) were born or else they have come to live there at some stage in their lives and have acquired citizenship and with it a legally recognized nationality. In addition, as suggested earlier, an even greater majority of fans have always been irrevocably tied to their respective national teams and representatives.

This is not to deny that it is easier than ever before for sports fans to watch, to support and to wear the colors of nations other than their own. Yet most choose not to do so. As a Scot I could conceivably have enjoyed soccer's World Cup Finals over the years far more than has been the case had I chosen to support Brazil, Italy or Germany rather than my own country. But it is not something that I have ever seriously contemplated. This is not to say that were I offered a large sum of money to transfer my allegiance that I would find it physically or indeed psychologically impossible to do so. To that extent one can understand the action of a Kenyan athlete who opts to represent Qatar. However, I would still find more meaning in watching a losing Scottish team than in giving my support to another, more successful football nation to which I feel no emotional attachment whatsoever. Sports fans who are in any manner motivated by the relationship between sport and nationalism are largely stuck with the nation or the nation state to which through nationalist identity or nationality they can be said to belong. It should be added though that this type of fan is also most likely to be attracted to team sports or to major events, such as the Olympic Games, at which athletes compete as representatives of their nation states. As far as more individualistic high level competition is concerned — in tennis, for example, or golf — it becomes easier for a fan to celebrate the achievements of a chosen player regardless of his or her place of origin. Once again though it is fair to say this has always been the case; it is not the consequence of increasingly influential forces of globalization or of the chaos that is believed by some to characterize the postmodern condition.

There is no denying that sport is constantly affected by social change. Sports that were once played only in certain places — national sports according to one set of criteria- are now played throughout the world. American influence, whilst insufficient to allow sports such as baseball and American football to supersede soccer in most parts of the world, has clearly impacted on the ways in which a sport such as soccer is now played, packaged, mediated and observed. The fact remains however that sport is still far more likely to contribute to the perpetuation of strongly held, local regional and national identities than to the construction and consolidation of a homogeneous global culture. This is scarcely surprising since sport is so central to the construction and reproduction of particularistic identities so different from the idea of a global culture that is so often heralded but which evokes so little emotion. For the time being, the relationship between sports and nations remains strong although it is equally apparent that this relationship manifests itself in a wide variety of ways. Sport can help to

promote the image of a nation state but it may also bring shame and financial ruin. Sport can unite a nation state; but it may not. Sport can often be the most important symbol of the continued existence of a submerged nation. Sport can allow nations and nation states alike, as well as regions and other localities, to resist cultural homogenization. Yet it can also serve the purposes of global capitalism. Like nationalism itself, sport is Janus-faced. Perhaps for that reason alone their continued relationship is secure.

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