A Voice for the Voiceless: A Cultural Understanding of Football

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Abstract : The 1940's is dubbed as the remaking of the nation of the Great Britain where the idea of the nation as a whole became more synonymous with the people during the wartime."The war, it has been argued, held 'a central place in the British national narrative,' creating and sustaining the notion of a united national community, and reinforcing ideas of Britishness defined against enemies both abroad and at home" (Ugolini and Pattinson 2015). The emergence of the game of football in Britain during wartime was the result of the frustrations and the dissatisfaction among the people regarding the war. The game of football gave them a sense of normalcy, a leisure time to break away from their war period traumas and a mode for the working population of Britain to stay fit. This will help to understand how football became more than just a game of leisure and connected to the emotions of the people where we see thousands of waving flags in a stadium expressing their sense of nationalism and patriotism. The German national team has also gone through its own turbulent ups and downs throughout the course of the post war period. Patriotism, which is considered a very important characteristic of German nationality was also on display throughout their various international meetings with other nations.

***IndexTerms*–Football, War, Nationality, German National Team**

I. INTRODUCTION

Football has been dubbed as the people's game since it is the world's most played sport and the craze that the World cup of football induces among the population of the world during its one and a half month tenure every four years during summer is the final proof of its popularity. More than just a game, even the spectators have become more than just an audience and each football playing nation and their respective football clubs has created their own fraternity. Football ties between nations and moreover specific matches between nations have also been used for other purposes rather than just giving an enjoyable match to its spectators.

"At its simplest level, [soccer] diplomacy is the use of a common interest in football to create networks. These networks can be used for a variety of other purposes, including diplomacy, forging political and business connections, promoting products, tourism, development, and education"(Bubalo, 2013).

Football as a sport over the years has continued to unite people on different grounds and will continue to do. The Swedish lawmaker Lars Gustafsson when nominating football for a Nobel peace prize in 2001, quoted "Football has and will continue to play an important role in the global arena, when it comes to creating understanding between people". "Taking part in the game of football, either as a player or a spectator, is a way of expressing oneself in a universal language. With its common rules and principles of understanding, football creates a public meeting-place with no hindering boundaries. The game links people together … from different continents and with varying history and culture"(Deyo,2013)

This paper will focus on the uprising of the popularity of football during the second world war in Great Britain, changing notions against the national team of Germany, football as a medium for people to voice their political concerns and how from time to time it served as an improvement in diplomatic ties among nations.

Relevance of the Topic

The 1940's is dubbed as the remaking of the nation of the Great Britain where the idea of the nation as a whole became more synonymous with the people during the wartime."The war, it has been argued, held 'a central place in the British national narrative,' creating and sustaining the notion of a united national community, and reinforcing ideas of Britishness defined against enemies both abroad and at home" (Ugolini and Pattinson 2015). The emergence of the game of football in Britain during wartime was the result of the frustrations and the dissatisfaction among the people regarding the war. The game of football gave them a sense of normalcy, a leisure time to break away from their war period traumas and a mode for the working population of Britain to stay fit. This will help to understand how football became more than just a game of leisure and connected to the emotions of the people where we see thousands of waving flags in a stadium expressing their sense of nationalism and patriotism. The German national team has also gone through its own turbulent ups and downs throughout the course of the post war period. Patriotism, which is considered a very important characteristic of German nationality was also on display throughout their various international meetings with other nations.

Football has been a medium for the people to voice their concerns for a very long time. The most popular and well known among all of them, is thus the 99,000 thousand spectators at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona where the Catalonian population can be seen voicing their angst against the central government in Madrid. This paper will look into the events unfolding in the world of politics and football alike and the political clash between the two regions over the issue of Catalonia's independence which gave birth to the fiercest rivalry in football, the ‘El Clasico’.

The issue of racism has also been a point of concern throughout the course of history and in the football pitch, it is no different. FIFA, the governing of international football has taken various steps and strides against this particular issue which is most evident the 2006 FIFA world cup where players pledged allegiance ' Say no to Racism'. International disputes have also been mediated to a greater extent if not completely resolved in cases of countries such as Armenia and Turkey. In the Nagorno-Karabakh issue concerning the above mentioned countries, talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia have been going on in 2002 only after the 2002 international friendly between Turkey and Armenia where the former won 2-0. “After the commotion of the first match, when Turkey won 2-0, delegations began meeting regularly and were able to announce in April that a roadmap had been finalized. Its details were not made public, however, and within a matter of weeks, Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan was in Baku announcing nothing would be agreed without first; resolving the Karabakh issue, something the other side j claimed had not previously been"(Lasocki,2009).

A CULTURAL STUDIES ANALYSIS

THE WAR AND FOOTBALL:

"Most amateur bodies and clubs, in sports such as golf, hockey, lawn tennis and rugby union, had suspended fixtures and dedicated their resources and manpower to the war effort. Commercialized sports such as cricket, horse racing, football and rugby league, by contrast, generally opted to carry on" (Veitch 1981; Taylor 2001; Collins 2006; John 2013). The advent and conclusion of the First World War raised a lot of speculations whether or not sports like football could be continued during wartime. It was a more serious one during the Second World War as two World Cups of football had already commenced in 1930 and 1934. However with the difficulties of the commencement of football matches during the war also showed a great deal of understanding and brotherhood among the people. When the Second World War was announced on September 3 in 1939, government authorities in Britain immediately restricted all outdoor

games and other forms of entertainment. All the games were to be played were going to be friendly matches in local or district clubs, with the outdoor games having a limited seating area. This was due to the fact that there was a great deal of the risk of air attacks by other countries after Germany declared the war. The sense of understanding among the people displayed how much the game was still played even in limited areas as a form of leisure or escapism from the reality of the war. Matches were not that competitive for a period of time but the people resisted by saying it was due to the restrictions by the government on the matches."A low maximum of between 2,000 and 5,000 in evacuation areas, which government officials preferred, was pushed up in discussion with the FA, the Scottish FA and the Football League, which ran the elite professional game. FA secretary Stanley Rous argued that a higher limit of 8,000 would just make the difference between games at a loss and games with their overheads paid"(Taylor,2015). But the zeal of enthusiasm was low overall which led to many players complaining about the strict rules of the FA governing body and that the players would be more competitive if the crowd showed a greater deal of support. Football is a funny game in that manner how the people's game needs the people to be invested in it to make the game more interesting. The emotional connection that the spectators had with their local clubs was visible in the commencement of the matches, continuous reforms in the rules were requested to the government with the spectators at times even showing great discontent and pleasure with the attendance slowly allowed to rise up over the years; as mentioned before, because of the fear of air attacks. Moreover, with the game already hosting two World Cups etched into the people a sense of unity which during the World War period was a crucial feature. "The government did agree in September 1943 to increase the attendance limit to 40,000 in all areas except the southern and eastern coastal regions of England, reflecting the reduced risk of air attack. But significantly, this policy change was not advertised to the public, for fear that publicity might encourage the higher attendances that other government departments such as the Ministry of War Transport (MoWT) were still determined to avoid"(Taylor,2015).

WAR AND BEYOND:

The effects of the war over football were still prevalent for many years even after the war had ended. The German national team even to this day is dubbed as 'Hitler's army' because of the ferocious attacking style of play against the opposition. Even though the term today does not reflect much of negative representation of their team, back in the mid 20th century, it was indeed a political issue. The fans of the German team who waved their thousands of flags in enthusiasm were deemed 'fascist' and the drunken fans were regarded as abusive and intolerant in the crowds. The 1958 semi final between Germany and Sweden in the World Cup is a great example of this. The match took place in a period which was seen as a period of temporary decline for German football and the crowd in the host country shouted anti-German chants throughout the match in one of the most infamous events in football history." In the 1958 World Cup the team surprisingly reached the semi-final in the 1958 but went out 1:3 against host Sweden. The match took place in Gothenburg in an overheated atmosphere which was poisoned by anti-German polemics in the Swedish press. In the run-up to the game DagensNyheter had criticised the German fans' rowdy behaviour during the tournament, their excessive alcohol consumption and their ostentatious waving of Germany flags. The stadium in Gothenburg was filled with hostile local crowds"(Andersson, 2014). In the semi-final, the Swedes won after the captain of the German National Team was sent off during the match who was considered the most important player at that time for the German team. This became a huge issue in Germany where one of the newspapers asked what they had done to cause such uproar among the Swedish where they continued saying that even during the time of the war, the Germans never set foot in Swedish soil. The great deal of enthusiasm that was prevalent in the 1954 World Cup four years prior for the Swedish team was no longer seen and the

Swedish natives stopped going even for vacations in Germany which was a result of the triggered dispute between the two countries during the semi-final match. This led to a decade of denationalization of West Germany where the supporters showed little to no enthusiasm in the crowds. This was also due to the fact that they had no huge reason to celebrate as the German team which won the 1954 world cup faced a steep decline over the next decade in its performances in the pitch. The supporters stopped singing the national anthem in the matches and also stopped waving German flags. The 1974 world cup was also won by West Germany but the level of enthusiasm that was prevalent twenty years ago was nowhere to be seen this time around. "Look, ladies and gentlemen, if Breitner keeps his nerve and takes on this task in the 24th minute at 1:0 down, we have to be able to do the same. Goal! This was miles away from the emotional outbursts of Herbert Zimmermann on the radio twenty years earlier. There is truth to the suggestion that the Germans at the time 'feared all kinds of extremes, all raving seemed suspicious, especially if it could be construed as nationalistic"(Korner, 2006). The denationalization of the German spirit reached its peak in the 1974 World Cup. "Not even winning the title against the favorites Holland sparked much national enthusiasm. According to Christiane Eisenberg this was because nationalist outbursts were generally frowned upon due to the legacy of the student movement and the politics of détente pursued by Willy Brandt's social liberal coalition"(Schiller,2015). " While the German national football team advanced no further than the semi-finals during the FIFA World Cup in 2006, which Germany hosted, the country surprised itself and the world with a good-natured, festive and light-hearted patriotism during what was dubbed the 'summer fairy-tale' of June and July of that year" (Schiller,2015). This was a different kind of nationalism which the Germans wanted to portray in contrast to the aggressive nationalism portrayed before in the 1950's. Angela Merkel was a huge proprietor of this which led to the changing of the image of the German nationalism from 'aggressive nationalism' to benevolent nationalism'. The 2006 World cup thus played a huge role in how the world perceives them as host nation to international events. The concept of German patriotism which was linked to as being 'fascist' was a huge factor in the denationalization of Germany during the 1970's. As also mentioned above, from the quarter finals onwards; the slogans against racism before the beginning of every game were ceremoniously done. With popular German players like Mesut Ozil and Sami Khedira along with players like Jerome Boateng and Miraslov Klose who all come from different descents such as African, Turkish or polish; the multi ethnicity in the German national team was also being welcomed by millions of fans across the world after the devastation that was World war 2 which led to a dictatorial and extreme nationalistic image of the Germans was cured to a lot of extent. The sufferings of the Germany and its people in its national identity and their expressionism was a questionable in the 1970-80's but today their national team is one the most diverse in the world, and their football league, 'Bundesliga' is one of the leading and popular football leagues in the world with football club giants such as 'Bayern Munich' and 'Broussia Dortmund' having players of many different descents.

VOICE OF THE CATALONIA:

The biggest rivalry in the world of football or perhaps, possibly the biggest rivalry in sports today - the matches held between the teams of Barcelona and Real Madrid also known as 'El Clasico' is referred to as a grudge match between the two Spanish football giants in any events of La Liga, Copa Del Rey or the UEFA Champions League. The rivalry between these two teams dates way back to the end of the Spanish civil war after which Catalonian region wanted to serve as an independent country but the central government of Madrid refused to grant them independence. The people of the Catalonia region have been vying for independence since but the central government is reluctant to do so because of the wealth and resources in that north eastern region of Spain. Perhaps, in no other country will we see

football and political relations as visible in this case. The region wanted to secede from the country of Spain for many years and the stadium of FC Barcelona, Camp Nou; serves as Mecca for the Catalonian population who express themselves in loud chants and banners in thousands in unity especially in the 'El Clasico' matches. "Despite the lack of homegrown heroes in football's modern era, examples such as Figo's transfer show that a sacred trust between fans and their teams clearly persists. Rivalries on the field are engendered by deep-seated politics and bolstered by fundamentally opposing identities. The depth and intensity of such rivalries is best understood through the Spanish notion of morbo"(Ball, 2011). Throughout the years the notion of homegrown talent has been deeply attached with the club of Barcelona where transfer of players such as Luis Figo and Ronaldo from Barcelona to Real Madrid has led immense criticism from the Catalonia fans. With the capacity of the stadium standing at around more than 99,000, the chants at the stadium have become a voice for the uproar of the population with its discontent towards the government. "Within this framework, fan hood becomes a social institution grounding one within the context of a larger inclusive community, a community with a shared identity"(Giulianotti, 1999). "The football dyad at club level… [Becomes] an exterior site in which ethno-nationalist tensions are symbolized and expressed. Barcelona, synonymous with Catalonian nationalism, displays a richer luster in confrontations with Real Madrid (the team of Castile and Franco)"(Guilianotti, 1999). With the recent ongoing clashes in the region where the people of Catalonia held a referendum in 2017, it was shut down by government officials and police showing the existing discontent among the people. It is believed that 90 percent of the population wanted to secede and also, the stadium Camp Nou has been granted for public rallies and processions for the independence of the Catalonian region. The issue of Catalonian independence has gained worldwide recognition especially due to the voices heard during the matches of El Clasico and the hopes of the people of this region are still clinging on to the existence of their club. Since the region is in the northeastern part of Spain, if by any chance the secession happens; the French football league has offered them to play in their own league as the two regions merge together. Here, we see how a foreign nation has also tried to insert itself into the scenario as the case is much more than football, it is about the wealth in the region of Catalonia especially in Barcelona.

Conclusion

This paper delves into the matter as to how the people express themselves differently in the realm of sport of football. Be it the matter of British discontent, the feeling of denationalization among the Germans or the chants of thousands of Catalonians in the Camp Nou, the common line of thread is linear pattern of their voices. Football for almost a century now has been a podium for people to unite, express, celebrate and rejoice their victories and the enthusiasm that the sport of football brings. With football now being the most viewed sport in television and internet, people are becoming more delved into the passion and the love for the sport with games like El Clasico making even the foreign viewers feel the same fist pumping passion and excitement during the games. We have people all around the world today who call themselves '*Madristas,* or *'Barcaholics'* where the people even indulge themselves in discussions regarding the Catalonian issue on the basis of who is right- the Madrid government or the Catalonians. In various mannes like this football has immersed in itself the international issues which further indulges more people from the world just not because of the issue but also because of the passion that the supporters have for the clubs. Football is often dubbed as the 'Beautiful game', where the spirit of togetherness binds all of us together and the World Cup in itself turns into a global festival. With taking into account the changing images of German football players and their supporters, we have seen how this beautiful game has led to better cooperation and a sense of togetherness among the people of

all around the world. Today, the German national team has got ardent followers all around the world with the German football league, the Bundesliga, being watched by millions through the medium of television and internet. The British passion for football is not dying anytime soon as they are hosts to the most watched league in the world of any sport, the English football league more popularly known as the 'English Premier League' or the 'Barclays Premier League'. Football for now and forever will continue to bind people together and be a platform for the people to voice their opinions and concerns, for example, players wearing arm bands or their unique way of celebration to speak against racism like Mario Balotelli does.

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