Introduction

The close connection between football and national identity has been long recognised. Indeed, in the twentieth century, there were some notorious cases when football was explicitly used as a vehicle of the most virulent kind of nationalist ideology. Most obviously, sport was consistently employed by the Nazi regime to project an idealised image of itself both for its own people and for the international community. The 1936 Berlin Olympics, somewhat inconvenienced by the performance of Jesse Owens, were intended to be a demonstration of Aryan superiority and the strength of Nazi Germany. Yet, football, although still subordinate to gymnastics as the favoured male activity, was not immune to political manipulation. As part of this project, on 14 May 1938 the England team were obliged to give the Nazi salute before the beginning of a match against Germany in the Olympic stadium.

These crude expressions of nationalism seem distant now. Yet, in the twenty-first century, there is little evidence that the connection between national identity and football has diminished in any significant way. In 2006, Germany hosted its first major international event since reunification in 1991: the World Cup. The event was a crucial means by which Germany could, for the first time, unite its whole people in the first celebration of national unity since the 1940s and present itself as a nation to the world. One of the most interesting aspects of this event was the creation of fan zones, consisting of large screens on which live German games were broadcast watched by 27 million fans, who had gathered in these public spaces; a phenomenon which has become known in German by the anglicised term, ‘public viewing’ (Holl, 2012: 158). Following 2006, the idea of public screenings has become institutionalised in German culture and every international football tournament now involves the creation of public viewing spaces in almost every city and town in Germany. Indeed, the German television network ZDF had created its own dedicated viewing space which forms a self-referential centre of its broadcasts; during the 2012 European Championship they erected a screen on a beach on the Frisian coast. Perhaps, the most interesting and evocative fan-zone, however, has been in Berlin and specifically on the 26 September 1956 Street in front of the Brandenburg Gate, not far from the very stadium in which the notorious salute had been given in 1936. This is one of the largest and most impressive public viewing sites in which it is estimated that some half a
million Berliners watched Germany’s games and its eventual exit from the European Championship. Clearly, the national identity celebrated by Germans in the twenty-first century has been very different from the fascist displays of the 1930s. Nevertheless, sport and football, in particular, have remained central to the national imaginary in Germany. Although its past is more troubled than most, Germany is by no means exceptional in this. On the contrary, as the prime global sport, football has been widely, almost universally, associated with national identity. This chapter explores the connection between football and national identity conceptually before analysing the ways in which the expression of national identity through the sport may have changed in the twenty-first century. The chapter will examine the way in which nationalism has been renegotiated as a result of globalisation.

Theories of nationalism

The concept of nationalism is complex and has generated intense debate in the social sciences, which has essentially revolved around the question of whether modern nationalism has emerged from long-standing almost primordial communities (Smith) or whether it is a much more recent invention (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). In order to understand the connection between national identity and football, it is unnecessary to discuss these debates at length, still less to resolve them. It is enough simply to establish a general concept of how nationalism has been defined. Nationalism is widely seen to be an inclusive form of political community which is distinctive of modernity. Nations and nationalism, as they are now understood, first began to appear in the late eighteenth century, have been closely associated with the appearance of the modern state (although not always synonymous with it) and have been the dominant social community in the international order since that time. Ernest Gellner proposed one of the most famous definitions of nationalism in the early 1980s, relating nationalism to the rise of industrialism. For Gellner, agrarian societies were divided politically into a small elite of clerics, nobles and merchants, which was culturally quite separate to the rural peasantry and artisans who comprised the vast bulk of the population and who were typically isolated from each other, sharing little in common (2003: 9). Industrialisation represented a profound transformation of this order. Industry, oriented to perpetual growth, required social mobility and flexibility. It required a universal culture so that individuals could assume a diversity of roles in the division of labour, communicating and cooperating with each other; ‘Universal literacy and a high level of numerical, technical and general sophistication are among its functional prerequisites’ (Gellner, 2003: 35). Nationalism, for Gellner, is the answer to this problem posed by industrialisation because it uniquely is ‘the organisation of human groups into large, centrally educated, culturally homogenous units’ (2003: 35). It is uncertain whether Gellner’s economic functionalism reflects the historic record very accurately. However, his claim that nationalism unites a whole population into a single political community with a shared culture in which a common language (or languages) and literacy form a critical part seems to be well founded. He is explicit that nationalism is not based on deep ethnic identities. On the contrary, the prime purpose of nationalism is to cut across ethnic and status divisions so typical of agrarian civilisation such as medieval Europe. Specifically, Gellner advocates a version of civic nationalism in which a nation is defined legally rather than by deeper social associations.

An alternative view is possible. For instance, the formation of European states involved not only continued warfare with rival polities externally but a systematic process of internal ethnic homogenisation. Early modern states were ultimately involved in processes which might now be termed ‘ethnic cleansing’. They aimed at the imposition of a homogeneous culture on all their subjects or, later, their citizens; this culture was by no means universalistic and inclusive.
Football and national identity

States sought to impose the culture of the dominant ethnic group onto marginal groups. Philip II’s expulsion of Moriscos and Jews from Spain in the sixteenth century, the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, the French republic’s suppression of the Vendée during the Revolution, the Highland Clearances and the Indian Wars of the late-nineteenth century could all be cited as examples of forced attempts at ethno-national homogenisation. This process was not unrelated to industrialisation but it was primarily a political phenomenon demanded by interstate competition and the consequent desire of governments for ever greater central control over their territories. In this case, nationalism is not so much a civic as an ethno-political project in which a unification of language, culture, religion and, often, skin colour was a decisive feature. This story is different and far more brutal than Gellner but they are not totally incompatible. On both accounts, nationalism represents the development of a unified political community of citizens under a modern state. Whether the origins are ethnic or civil, the common affiliation to the state becomes a decisive index of status and identification in the modern world, taking precedence over class, religious, linguistic, tribal or regional affiliations.

Benedict Anderson has been a crucial figure in explaining how nationalism, as a relatively new form of identification, became established and sustained as a prime social identity in the nineteenth century. Partly echoing Gellner, he attributes nationalism to the rise of print capitalism. Specifically, he claims that from the eighteenth century but particularly in the nineteenth century, national communities were formed by the shared experience of reading the same newspapers every morning. Out of this common ritual, very large communities whose members did not know each other even indirectly began to appear especially in Europe. Without immediate social contact, these huge communities were ‘imagined’ into being: ‘It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion’ (Anderson, 1990: 15). For Anderson, this did not in any way imply that emergent nations were artificial; on the contrary, the potency of these new solidarities were very clear. However, without a common act of imagination, located in specific practices like newspaper readings, a national community could not exist. The members of a would-be nation had to conceive themselves actively and self-consciously as a unity, even though the vast majority of citizens would never know each other. For Anderson, the nation emerged when this act of collective imagination assumed concrete forms. Whether national identity was civic or ethnic in origin, it requires an active and continual effort of collective imagination.

Anderson locates the emergence of these imagined national communities in the mundane daily practice of newspaper consumption. Yet, there are many other practices which might equally well generate the imagined national community. Indeed, Michael Billig (1995) has developed the phrase ‘banal nationalism’ to denote this process. For Billig, national communities are sustained by a diverse and very large suite of apparently everyday activities, each with apparently little meaning and with often only apparently indirect relevance to national identity. Yet, while each practice might in itself be ‘banal’, taken together, these recurrent practices among a myriad of small co-present groups eventually connects citizens separated by the widest social and geographic distance to coagulate into a potent affirmation of collective identity: ‘The constant flaggings ensure that, whatever else is forgotten in the world of information overload, we do not forget our homelands’.

In the classical literature on nationalism, organised sport has not always featured very prominently. Billig mentions it briefly (2004: 110): ‘The plebiscite, whether through habitual deixis or sporting cheers, reproduces the nation state’ (Billig, 2004: 127). Yet, it is at this point when the concept of the imagined community sustained through banal means is recognised that the connection between national identity and football begins to appear. Naturally, football is by
no means the only way in which national identity has been generated since the late nineteenth century; the repertoire of practices in which nationalism is implicated in almost infinite. Yet, as a shared ritual which evokes effervescence and, indeed, ecstasy, football has often become a potent means of generating a sense of communal unity, superseding class, profession, religion or party, which is the distinctive feature of nationalism. As such, football has been consistently used by governments and states, citizens and peoples to articulate and project a concept of themselves to themselves and to the wider world. Football might be defined as part of Billig’s ‘banal nationalism’ though, following Durkheim, it might more properly, given the emotion it invokes, be called sacred nationalism. It is worth considering in detail the specific processes by which national identity can be generated through participation in football for they are certainly not as simple or self-evident as they seem. National communities like to think of themselves as unified and homogeneous entities and consequently there is an assumption that a single, shared idea of identity emanating from a single source is adopted by citizens generally and universally. In fact, the genesis of the national community is more complex, as Anderson alludes. The national team is seen to signify the nation. However, this meaning needs to be generated and sustained continually by the public. Precisely because the nation is such a large community, this cannot be done together but rather citizens’ support in micro social networks and subgroups; with groups of friends, colleagues, co-workers and families. Each of these groups is oriented in its own way to the national team and its games to form a multiplicity of mini-national celebrations in a myriad of locales; inside the stadium, in the streets, in bars and restaurants and, of course, in the living room in front of the radio and television. In supporting the national team, each of these subgroups is affirming its own localised unity but by doing so in reference to the national team, it inscribes a national identity on immediate social relations. These relations are taken to define and signify the nation in a concrete and visceral way. At the same time, because all of these micro-groups know that they are supporting the same national team as all of the other groups and above all because they therefore share and respond to the common symbols – the same flag, national team strip, the player – all the localised micro-rituals are connected together and united into a single mass celebration of the nation itself. In this act of imaginative connection, the actual difference between the myriad of sub-rituals is occluded and ignored. Although citizens can only in actuality celebrate the success of the national team with the immediate group of co-present fans and so the national team and its significance is in fact different for every single group, the generalised symbols of nationalism overwhelm these distinctions to prioritise the unity of the celebration. Fans think they are all celebrating the same thing because they are all focused on ostensibly one social object: the team. An imagined (and therefore) real unity is created out of difference. It is precisely because micro-rituals have to be connected imaginarily by all the citizens of a nation to be effective that a host of recurrently appearing signs and symbols have to be generated around the national team. Citizens have to be reminded that their sub-celebrations are all interconnected. Clearly, the complex process by which national identity is ‘banally’ created is often empirically and analytically irrelevant. However, it is important to be sensitive to the complex process involved in generating a national identity because it both explains the great lengths to which citizens and states have had to go to sustain such an identity through the use of sport and the significant indeterminacy in such a process. Settled national identities and their affirmation in football seem self-evident. Yet, without the successful participation of micro-groups and their articulation of their sub-rituals into an overarching shared imaginary, national identity begins to dissipate and fragment. The point is, of course, that in different historical eras and in different societies the way in which micro-groupings are recruited into nationalising processes and the national communities which are then imagined is never self-evident and never unchanging.
There are many examples of this process but one of the most striking is provided by the World Cup Final of 1954. After the Second World War, the defeat of Germany and the creation of the Bundesrepublik, football became a critical means of re-establishing German civil society and rehabilitating its national reputation; football was ‘a unique triumph as a cultural asset in the 1950s’ (Pyta, 2006: 8). One of the critical moments in this act of national reimagining occurred in the 1954 World Cup, the so-called ‘Miracle of Berne’ when Germany beat the favoured Hungarian team, having been 2–0 down and scoring the winner on the final whistle, to claim their first title, some five years after the founding of the Federal Republic. Pyta has discussed the cultural significance of the media coverage of the event and above all the commentary of Herbert Zimmermann, who delivered ‘an unforgettable moment of sporting journalism’. Although football had played only a marginal role in post-War German culture up to that point, the World Cup final was listened to almost universally by West German citizens – television ownership was still small – so that the ‘towns were virtually deserted that Sunday afternoon’. Zimmermann played the crucial role not only of invoking the highest forms of ecstasy (and of reawakening a sense of pride and well-being quite extirpated by the catastrophe which had befallen Germany in the previous decades) among family groups crouched around their radios or listening in packed bars (which had to be booked for the occasion) but crucially providing a common language which linked all these millions into a single imagined community. For he did not resort to jargon which was familiar only to football insiders but translated this match with his voice into German living rooms so that even absolute beginners were infected with the drama of this event. Without Zimmermann’s warming commentary the effect of the World Cup victory would not have been as long-lasting, and this event, which had been, first of all, purely sporting in nature, would not have become a symbol of cultural orientation in West Germany.

(Pyta, 2006: 11)

In the era of mass state-regulated media, Zimmermann was able to do for a nation what Kenneth Wolstenholme’s commentary of the 1966 World Cup final – and above all, his phrase ‘They think it’s all over, it is now’ – did for England. Zimmermann enraptured his myriad micro-audiences and connected them together in single national imaginary. It is vital that scholars are sensitive to the contingencies of national identity and its connection to football and to the role which artefacts like Herbert Zimmermann’s commentary have played in this process.

Nationalism and football

Football has contributed to the formation and maintenance of national identity in ways implied by Anderson or Billig but in order to gain a better understanding of the empirical mechanics of this process, it is necessary to understand the historic origins of the sport. Association football, as it is now recognised, was invented in a small group of elite English Clarendon schools between the 1840s and 1860s to be formally codified in 1863. The sport was part of a wider reformation of those schools which reflected a transformation of the class hierarchy in Britain as a result of industrialisation. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, English ‘public’ (in fact private) schools had been institutions dedicated to the education of the aristocracy and gentry and, while they were certainly intellectual institutions for some students, they were primarily aimed at the inculcation of aristocratic mores, above all ones of gentlemanly honour in which the assertion of individual status, by violence if necessary against one’s peers and inferiors was deemed essential. While masters taught the boys, the school was run by an
often violent hierarchy of schoolboys, the so-called fagging system. As urban professional and commercial elites began to send their sons to these schools and as the requirements of industry and empire changed to promote discipline, self-denial and teamwork over individual honour, the schools began to be the subject of reform from the 1820s. Thomas Arnold at Rugby was the most famous of the reformers and he, with his fellow headmasters, sought to impose a new regime on the schools which replaced an aristocratic ethos with one of muscular Christianity. The schools became primarily responsible not only (or even primarily) for the intellectual development of their pupils but their moral education. Sport was seen as a critical means of encouraging this new rational and Protestant ethos since it was seen as a means of submitting the boys to the discipline of the team, and of diverting them from enervating sexual activities and above all homosexuality and masturbation. Yet, the sports which these boys were to play themselves required revision, since, besides blood sports, they involved precisely the unruly individualism which Arnold and his reform movement wanted to eliminate. Accordingly, traditional games, of which some like Eton fives, the Eton Wall Game or Harrow football still survive, were organised and ordered to generate the kind of disciplined teams which have now become typical of modern culture; rugby, hockey and tennis were all developed in this era. However, association football was one of the central and surely most important achievements of this process.

Football was from its origins closely and consciously connected by the new British elites of the nineteenth century with a particular concept of masculinity and nationalism. Football was seen as a means of generating the kind of manhood capable of defending and extending Great Britain and its Empire. From elite public schools, football was quickly disseminated out into the working-class populations of Britain’s major cities, typically through religious organisations aiming at the moral improvement of the masses. Football was seen as a rational recreation which would distract the urban population from drink, gambling and prostitutes. It was specifically seen as a means of generating social order and ultimately forging the nation by incorporating the working class into the civilised culture of the professional classes. Although the working class adopted the game not just as a sport to be played but as a form of entertainment to be watched (quite against the intentions of the reforms), football established itself as a genuinely shared practice across the classes in Britain by the later decades of the nineteenth century (see Bailey, 1978; Baker, 1979; Dunning, 1971; Elias and Dunning, 1986; Holt, 1989; Mangan and Walvin, 1987). It constituted precisely the kind of universal homogeneous culture which Gellner identified as central to nationalism.

Indeed, the fact that football became a unifying national practice for the British was very evident during the First World War. During that conflict, football was consistently used by the government, the press and the army to mobilise popular support for the war and the population recognised and concurred with this equation between the moral qualities required by the football team and a nation at war. This was illustrated by the popularity of Henry Bolt’s poem ‘Vitaï Lampada’ which celebrates stoic British sacrifice. Even in the face of certain death in battle, the officer in the poem is able to recall his schoolboy sporting experiences, challenging his enemy to ‘Play up and play the game’. On the first day of the Somme, a day that has remained central to British collective national memory, this connection between football nationalism and teamwork was demonstrated with perhaps most pathos by Captain Nevill of the East Surrey Regiment. Commanding an assault company in the 18th Division, he conceived the idea of procuring a football for each of his platoons which would be kicked into no man’s land at H-hour and followed by them; the winner being the first platoon who got its ball and themselves into the German lines. On one of the footballs, Nevill wrote ‘Great European Cup-Tie Final, E Surreys v Bavarians, Kick off at Zero’ (Hart, 2006: 104). The footballs were meant
to distract his men from dwelling excessively on the potential dangers which they faced, but Nevill was also explicitly seeking to encourage cohesion among his men by appeals to British national identity; the football was a collective reference point which transcended any class division by communicating a sense of national pride and destiny. It is noticeable that he invoked these national commitments through localising the approaching battle. Satirically, Nevill compared the coming conflict not to an international match – England at that point played only home nations – but to a local FA Cup round between two regional teams, the Surreys and the Bavarians. Through this ironic reduction, the footballs became a banal means of embodying an abstract concept of nationalism which was about to produce the cataclysm into which Nevill’s soldiers were to be hurled. On 1 July, Nevill’s footballs soared into no man’s land followed by the East Surrey Regiment. In the end, the 18th Division assault, of which the East Surreys were part, was completely successful, though the Surreys themselves took heavy casualties, including Nevill himself who was killed. The Nevill example is one of the more tragic demonstrations of national identity through football.

The connection between football and nationalism was made very early and closely in Britain. Yet, by the First World War, football had been established in most European nations and in South America, due to trading links and often the actual presence of ex-public schoolboys, as a major and in most cases the most popular sport. As Pierre Lanfranchi has shown, for these countries and especially for the colonies or former colonies, football and especially the participation in international matches became a means of asserting their nationhood and demonstrating modernity; ‘football became a symbol of modernity’ (2002: 15). ‘As Eric Hobsbawm has shown, the emergence of national football teams before 1914 and the formation of national championships between the two wars contributed to the solidifying (concrétiser) the recognition of national differences’ (Lanfranchi, 2002: 16). Indeed, although the World Cup, first staged in the 1930s, was a small and amateurish competition in the interwar period, it became an important means for peripheral polities to promote themselves in the international order. Accordingly, Uruguay won the first tournament and Fascist Italy hosted the 1934 World Cup, one of a number of techniques by which Mussolini harnessed culture to promote his regime. Rumours of corruption and bribery abounded around the tournament. In Italy’s semi-final against Austria, it has been reputed that the referee headed the ball to an Italian player; certainly the winning goal involved the Italians ‘bundling the ball and the Austrian goalkeeper into the net’. The same young Swedish referee, Ivan Eklind, was appointed for the final, claims persist that he ‘had been wined and dined by Mussolini himself and invited to consider the consequences of an Italian Defeat’ (Goldblatt, 2007: 259). Goldblatt claims that ‘not a single shred of documentary evidence [exists] to support it’ (2007: 259). Given the nature of the regime, the absence of such evidence does not categorically prove that hidden influences were not at work. Certainly, the Italians’ aggressive style of play in the final went unpunished and the home team eventually won 2–1; few would dispute that this victory was not important to Mussolini or that it was not engineered by him, even if the referee was not actively suborned.

**Football and post-national identity**

Gellner, Anderson and Billig would all define nationalism as the shared identification of citizens with their nation state. Classical definitions of nationalism imagine a connection between a discrete territorial area and an inclusive and broadly homogeneous political community. Although Gellner de-amplified the ethnic dimension to nationalism, through most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, nations were either de facto or by design ethnically and racially coherent. In Europe and North America, in particular, the dominant ethnicity was...
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white and Christian. The processes of globalisation and above all mass immigration from the Third World to the west have substantially altered the composition of national communities. Above all, in the last 20 to 30 years, the presumption of ethnic, racial, religious or linguistic homogeneity has been strongly challenged. Indeed, in every western country, there has been a major reconsideration of the concept of nationalism and citizenship as a result of these demographic changes. At the same time, as the forces of globalisation has subverted the nation, states have begun to fragment into smaller regional or sub-ethnic units. This process of fragmentation has been most disastrously evident in the Balkans, Afghanistan or the Great Lakes region of Africa but it has assumed a more benign form in the gradual rise of Scottish nationalism in the United Kingdom and the growing tensions between Walloon and Flemish populations in Belgium, which have not been able to agree upon a government in the last few years. More recently, globalisation has engendered radical revisions of state authority and national identity in Muslim nations in North Africa and the Middle East: the so-called Arab Spring. Globalisation has been widely seen as a dialectic both of global expansion with a rising importance of the local area. Robertson has characterised this process as 'glocalisation', while others have explored the dynamics of transnationalisation and localisation. The result of globalisation is that national communities have both expanded to include individuals and groups once excluded but also simultaneously contracted onto different core populations. In many cases, these new social orders still define themselves as national communities, but in order to generate and sustain emergent solidarities, national identities have often undergone quite radical revision. Scholars have sometimes argued that 'post-national' identities are appearing to denote a process not so much of the collapse of the national community but its fundamental revision. In particular, established presumptions between territory, ethnicity and membership which were typical in the twentieth century have been displaced.

In his work on European football, Albrecht Sonntag has claimed that because emotion is central to the experience of football, national identity has remained a critical framework for the sport. Indeed, through its ability to articulate national identity, it represents a 'pocket of resistance' against the forces of globalisation (2008: 247). Sonntag is correct to highlight the persistence of national identity, but, hostile to economic liberalisation, he may underestimate the way in which nationalism itself has been ‘reinvented’ in the current era. Specifically, the transnationalisation and localisation of national identities are as evident in football in the early twenty-first century as classic nationalism was in the early to mid-twentieth century. Germany constitutes an interesting example of this process. In the last ten years, scholars have become increasingly interested in and attracted by the concept of cosmopolitanism. Not only do they observe evidence of the appearance of cosmopolitan cultures especially in western Europe but they regard cosmopolitanism as normatively attractive and appropriate; ‘cosmopolitan citizenship is the mode of belonging that is most appropriate for a post-sovereign state’ (Delanty, 2009: 112). Cosmopolitanism refers to the increasing diversity of today’s societies and the ethic of tolerance which is going to be necessary to sustain them as unified polities. Accordingly, Delanty defines cosmopolitanism as ‘self-problematisation and reflexivity’ (2009: 13). Delanty has in mind the ability of the cosmopolitan society of critically revising its laws and morals especially in the light of the incorporation of new groups with alternative cultures. For worthy ethical reasons, cosmopolitan theorists sometimes idealise the inclusiveness of some political settlements today. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence of cosmopolitanism at work articulated not only through formal political debates but in ‘banal’ forms of post-nationalism such as football.

Germany seems to be an obvious example of this where, as we have seen, football has been central to national identity for 70 years but has been critical after reunification. The reunification of Germany was greatly desired by many Germans on both sides of the Iron Curtain but it has
been a deeply problematic process. Not only has it been economically costly and politically difficult but reunification has generated something of an identity crisis. In becoming ‘normal’ again, the exceptionalism of German history has had to be reconsidered. Despite apparently only uniting a single nation, which was divided artificially 45 years ago, the reunified Germany actually constitutes a fundamentally different political community from its forebear, therefore. It is effectively a new nation, created by shifts in the post-Cold War global order. Having always been a nation, it is one of the most obvious but paradoxical examples of ‘transnational’ or ‘post-national’ nationalism to have been produced by the forces of globalisation. In particular, while Max Weber claimed that nations were primarily created by a shared memory of violence, Germany has almost uniquely eschewed any reference to past or present wars as a means of reuniting itself. On the contrary, any reference to Germany’s past aggression would be totally unacceptable to both Germans themselves and to other Europeans. Football has, consequently, become a critical vehicle of national expression in this delicate context precisely because the sport provides an arena in which an irenic form of national and civic pride and community can be expressed (Holl, 2012). Through football, Germany and German citizens have consciously sought to articulate a peaceful and inclusive cosmopolitan identity. The public fan zone at the Brandenburg Gate seems to be particularly instructive here because this area of the city is so redolent with political meaning; it is intimately associated with Germany’s dark history. However, as fans watch the screens looking towards the Brandenburg Gate, the Reichstag with its Foster Dome is visible on the right while the Holocaust memorial is a short distance away to its right. The team, playing on the screen in the middle, represents a cosmopolitan, post-national political settlement in which the indispensability of democratic accountability, transparency, inclusive citizenship and human rights is animated by a sharp and constant reminder of a past in which those checks and balances were ignored. In this way, the German supporters echo the kind of cosmopolitan, multicultural identity which was evident with France’s very successful team of the late 1990s and early 2000s which won the World Cup and European Championship. A notable feature of that French team was how many players were drawn from France’s former colonies, including one of the world’s greatest players, Zinedine Zidane of Algerian descent. While Jean-Marie Le Pen’s National Front rejected the national team for its ethnically diverse composition, the team was celebrated in France as a symbol of social diversity, representing a multicultural nation. The definition of who is part of a nation has changed and in this case it has broadened to include individuals who would not once have been considered as genuine French nationals. The German team itself does not include the wide diaspora evident in the French teams of the last decade but its supporters typically demonstrate a similar articulation of post-national or transnational identity which prioritises inclusive, difference and otherness, even while retaining a concept of homogeneous political community.

The emergence of new national, or post-national, identities in Europe is a response to global economic forces. The development of new German identities has been a positive response to globalisation. Yet, this is only one side of the current process. Emergent social groups are not only promoted by globalisation – they are also threatened by these forces. New social groups emerge as a means of collectively resisting the uneven development initiated by globalisation. Appadurai has called this resistance which often takes the form of violence as the ‘ugly face’ (1996: 42). Indeed, Delanty fears that if new cosmopolitan post-national identities do not emerge, ‘the danger is that xenophobic currents will capture the social space’ (2009: 224). Les Back, Tim Crabbe and John Solomos have rightly illustrated the complexity of racial identifications in and around football. In their work on English football culture, they have noted that even those fans who regularly use racial abuse against other fans and their teams may accept not only black players but black and Asian fans. They have recorded that there are a
significant number of black and Asian fans in the England following who are accorded the attribution of ‘boys’; that is, they are seen as legitimate member of the national hooligan firm (Back et al., 2001: 97). There is a ‘complex relationship between race, nationalism and inclusion’ (Back et al., 2001: 98). Yet, they note the presence of a small minority of politically committed far-right racists and, despite the complexity of the phenomenon, they would not deny the significance of racism in international football today. For instance, in 2012 English football was in the midst of a racial crisis following a legal case in which the former English captain, John Terry was accused of racially abusing Anton Ferdinand on 23 October 2011 during a Premier League game between Chelsea and Queens Park Rangers. He was acquitted in May 2012 by Howard Riddle, the chief magistrate of Westminster Magistrate Court, where the case was heard, though questions were raised over the credibility of his defence. Riddle pointedly identified Ferdinand alone as a ‘believable witness’. Indeed, Terry was later found guilty and charged by the FA (which rejected his defence as ‘improbable, implausible, contrived’) with abuse. The Terry case is in global terms a minor affair but it usefully illustrates both the prevalence and the sensitivity about the dangers of racism, as a political reaction to globalisation, in football. Elsewhere in Europe, the problem of racism has been more extreme. In response to the global financial crisis, there has been a manifest rise in far-right politics in Europe evident most obviously in Greece but especially in Hungary. Extremist groupings seem to be becoming more prominent as the massacre of nearly 200 Norwegians by Anders Behring Breivik, the racially motivated white terrorist, indicates. Just as cosmopolitanism has been evident in contemporary football so is this new European racism equally obvious. Racism at football became increasingly evident at football matches during the 1990s in many parts of Europe and this trend has continued and been accentuated in the last decade. For instance, there were significant fears of racism during the European Championship of 2012 precisely because racism at football matches is a regular feature of the club game in Ukraine and Poland, the two countries in which the tournament was held. Just as nationalism in the twentieth century involved an exclusive ethnic element, so do some new types of national or post-national identity in the twentieth century continue to utilise racism in order to generate exclusive forms of group solidarity in the face of new threats. It is likely that a complex geography of cosmopolitan and ethnic nationalism will continue to be articulated through football in response to the double dynamics of globalisation as it reconfigures existing social orders and hierarchies between and in every country.

Conclusion

Since the late nineteenth century, nationalism has become a, sometimes the, prime form of collective identity for aspirant political communities. Even in the twenty-first century, nationalism remains a potent reference point for most societies, although under the pressures of globalisation the concept of a national community has changed dramatically. Various forms of transnationalised or localised post-national communities have emerged along with immigration, changing international borders and the fragmentation or reconstitution of state authority. As a public, perhaps, banal ritual, football has been associated with the concept of nationality and nationalism from its origins in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Once established as a mass leisure activity, it is understandable why football should have been able to assume this social function. As an ecstatic public celebration, football has the power to vivify the national imagination in a way which few other activities besides war itself have been capable; it unites the imagined national community around a single emotive and concrete object – the national team. Football has accordingly been used by citizens and manipulated by states to project and
realise a concept of national community in moments of genuine collective effervescence. Today, football continues to serve that role. It has provided an arena in which the post-national even cosmopolitan revision of national identity has been articulated and expressed. If the global passion for football demonstrates anything, it is that some form of nationalism is likely to remain extremely important as a form of social solidarity well into this century. The question for scholars and spectators of football alike is whether cosmopolitan or ethno-racial identities are to predominate in the coming decades.

References