PART V

Regions
The Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) was founded in Paris in May 1904. A growth in the appeal of international fixtures played between teams representing nations was a key reason behind the establishment of a governing international body for football being regarded as relevant in the early years of the twentieth century. FIFA commenced as a European affair with the national associations of Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland as founding members. Additionally, there was Spanish involvement at the inaugural moment via the Madrid Football Club. This converted to representation by the Royal Spanish Football Federation in 1914, following the establishment of that organisation in 1913 (Lanfranchi et al., 2004: 56–63). The expansion of FIFA beyond Europe commenced with membership applications coming from South Africa in 1908, Argentina and Chile in 1912 and the United States of America in 1913 (Lanfranchi et al., 2004: 64–5). Immense controversy notwithstanding, the ambition to become a global organisation has been largely fulfilled. FIFA now provides organisational coverage around the world via six confederations, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), the Confederation of African Football (CAF), the Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF), the South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL), the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) (Tomlinson, 2014: 29). At the time of writing, these confederations consist, respectively, of 46, 54, 41, 10, 11 and 53 national member organisations. By including non-sovereign entities, such as Scotland and the other UK ‘Home Nations’, as well as disputed territories, FIFA can claim a larger membership of ‘national states’ than the United Nations. Some fudging of the location of teams within confederations has occurred because of both diplomatic and football-related reasons. For example, Israel is a member of UEFA, whereas its northern and eastern neighbours, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria are members of the West Asia Football Federation within the AFC, and Egypt is a member of the Union of North African Football Federations within the CAF. In 2006 Australia was relocated from the OFC (where it was justifiably located in geographical terms) to the ASEAN Football Federation within the AFC. The move was done on the grounds that Australia had become too dominant as a competing nation with the OFC, but also, that this
dominance came to disadvantage Australia in the final play-off stage towards qualification for the World Cup (Hughson, 2006).

This latter example of organisational flexibility is an indicator of how significant the World Cup is within FIFA’s decision-making and overall modus operandi. A world-based football competition was on the cards from the time of FIFA’s formation in 1904. The first manifestation came with the 1908 Olympic Games in London, at which FIFA assumed responsibility for staging the football competition (Goldblatt, 2007: 243). The five competing nations consisted of four of FIFA’s founding members, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and Sweden, along with a team from Great Britain. In 1906 Daniel Burley Woolfall, an Englishman from Blackburn, succeeded Robert Guerin of France as President of FIFA. England had belatedly joined FIFA in 1905. The year 1908 was the first summer Olympics at which nations appeared within the football competition. At both the 1900 and 1904 Olympic Games football had been played between club teams – club teams from Belgium, England and France at the Paris Olympics in 1900 and club teams from Canada and the USA at the St Louis Olympics in 1904. Football enjoyed great popularity at the Olympic Games and gave assurance that international football competition in another context had good prospects. Great Britain (essentially England) won the gold medal at the 1908 Olympics after defeating Denmark, 2–0, in the final at White City Stadium. With this success, and with Woolfall as FIFA President, England may have been expected to be at the centre of an ongoing initiative in international football, culminating in a world cup-type tournament. However, this was not to be the case. Payment to amateurs for playing for their country remained a sticking point for English administrators and militated against enthusiasm for an international football tournament outside the framework of the Olympic Games. Nevertheless, football at subsequent Olympic occasions gave impetus to an outcome contrary to such wishes. This was driven by outstanding performances of the teams from non-European countries. At the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris, Uruguay won the gold medal after four lopsided victories, including a 3–0 win against Switzerland in the final. Uruguay won the gold again at the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam. But, on this occasion, a tough challenge was offered by South American rivals Argentina. A first final match was drawn 1–1 and a tight replay won by Uruguay 2–1. The reported 250,000 requests from across Europe for the available 40,000 tickets to the 1928 final gave credence to a claim made by FIFA Secretary Henri Delaunay in 1926 that ‘Today international football can no longer be held within the confines of the Olympics, and many countries where professionalism is now recognized and organized cannot any longer be represented there by their best players’ (Goldblatt, 2007: 247).

Planning for a dedicated World Cup competition was spurred into action after the Amsterdam Olympics. While the initiative was European driven, European countries were anxious about the financial risks that might be borne should a tournament not live up to anticipated success and popularity. However, such timidity was not shared by the government of Uruguay. A promise to bankroll a world cup competition, as well as a commitment to the building of a new stadium for the occasion was given to FIFA (Goldblatt, 2007: 248). By this time, Jules Rimet was well established as the third President of FIFA. At the FIFA congress in Barcelona in 1929 Rimet duly announced acceptance of Uruguay as the first World Cup host nation and that the tournament would be held during the latter half of July 1930. The ambition of hosting the World Cup was challenged by the demands of preparation, in a way that set the tone for subsequent ventures right up to the present time. In 1930, the main problem was having the new Centenario Stadium ready for the tournament’s start on July 13. This endeavour failed and opening games were played at home grounds of local clubs. However, the Centenario was opened four days later and to great accolade. Enthusiasm to
host the World Cup coincided with a centennial spirit; 1928 marked the 100th year of Uruguay’s independence. The appropriately named stadium, along with a new hospital became the key features of a ‘new modern visage’ for Montevideo (Latin America in Construction). The Centenario – attendance capacity 90,000 – was the largest football stadium outside of Britain and, in its modernist innovation, arguably the most splendid. To the north side of the stadium, architect Juan Antonio Scasso plotted a nine-storey tower that exceeded the 100 metres in height of Montevideo’s previously tallest building, a skyscraper built in the centennial year. The staging of the World Cup in Montevideo did not appeal to all Uruguayan modernists. The painter Joaquin Torres Garcia complained that football offered nothing culturally to Uruguay and was indeed antithetical to indigenous cultural traditions. However, his objections seem to arise from a culturally elitist standpoint by which football would be unfavourably adjudged irrespective of where it came from. Garcia’s opinion showed no understanding of how Uruguayans (and other peoples of South America for that matter) had taken hold of the imported game, which was association football, and stamped it with their own cultural imprimatur (Leaver, 2015). Uruguay went on to win the 1930 World Cup, again defeating arch rival Argentina in the final.

It may well have been that these two outstanding, modern football nations would have played the final irrespective of which other teams had competed in the tournament. However, the limited number of competing nations, thirteen overall, seven from South America, the US and Mexico, and Belgium, France, Romania and Yugoslavia from Europe denied a shine to the victory in the eyes of Europhiles. Disputation with FIFA and withdrawal of membership by the UK football associations in February 1928 ensured that none of the British home nations would compete at the 1930 World Cup. Discomfiture over the amateur–professional divide remained, and, largely under the impetus of English football authorities, the British associations decided they were better off conducting their own affairs at one remove from the organisational constraints that they perceived to accompany FIFA membership. The communication sent to FIFA by Frederick Wall, Secretary of the English FA, gave view to a disgruntlement that went beyond particular matters of discord. Wall referred to the ‘experience’ of British football associations, a type of experience that ‘the great majority of the Associations affiliated’ with FIFA could not possibly have (Tomlinson, 2014: 18). The letter smacked of arrogance and an attempted invocation of a sense of superiority in English tradition. It rather confirms suspicion that FIFA was regarded as an upstart organisation by the English football elite, a view that, in some ways, has marked the relationship between FIFA and the English FA. Significant periods of FIFA leadership with Englishmen as president, Woolfall (1906–18) and then a near twenty-year stretch between the 1950s and 1970s with first Arthur Drewry (1955–61) and then Stanley Rous (1961–74) in the key post, have not overcome the historical tension recurring when Englishmen have not been at the FIFA helm. When England failed in its bid to win hosting rights for the 2018 World Cup the chairman of the Premier League, Dave Richards, accused FIFA of wasting the FA’s time and money. Richards intimated that the FA representation, which included Prince William, as the FA’s President, should have been advised in advance that a bid from England would not be favourably received (BBC Sport Football, 2012). Although Richards’s comments were dismissed by the FA as his personal view, and, subsequently by Richards himself as being made with ‘light-hearted’ intention, they complied with a certain mindset that believes England to be entitled to special consideration, if not treatment, because of its historical legacy to football. In more recent criticism of FIFA’s handling of the selection of host nations for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups, the FA’s chairman, Greg Dyke, while not making any direct assertion of a privileged position for England within the World Cup bidding process,
maintains a tone in complaint that might be taken to suggest that England deserved better because of a presumption of its standing within the world of football (Press Association, 2015). The high moral ground taken by Dyke seemingly ignores criticism of England’s own bidding activity, contained in a commissioned but independent from FIFA report, particularly in regard to the lobbying of Jack Warner, then CONCACAF president and significant power broker within the election process (Gibson, 2014a).

England finally partook in the fourth World Cup in 1950. This was the first World Cup to be held since the conclusion of the Second World War and since England reassumed FIFA membership in 1946. The two other World Cup tournaments to be held in the 1930s, subsequent to the first World Cup in Montevideo, were won by Italy. The 1934 World Cup, held in Italy, was used by Benito Mussolini as an occasion for the glorification of his own totalitarian might (Murray, 1996: 69). But no amount of bluster could conceal the limited claim for Italy’s team to champion status, as Uruguay and other South American countries, including Argentina and Brazil, decided not to travel to Europe for the tournament. Italy’s victory in 1938 was tarnished in a similar way. Although Brazil partook in that World Cup, Argentina and Uruguay did not. However, come the significant re-engagement of South American teams from the time of the 1950 World Cup, the footballing prowess of the teams from that continent was on full show once more. Uruguay became champions again in 1950, defeating the host nation Brazil 2–1 in the last match of the tournament – a match which served as a proxy final. The 1954 World Cup final produced a surprise outcome with West Germany prevailing over the much fancied team from Hungary, the reigning Olympic football champions. Uruguay managed only fourth place in that tournament and Brazil did not advance past the quarter finals. The tide turned four years later. The 1958 tournament in Sweden saw the rise of the Brazilian team’s star, and the appearance of the youngest player to play in a World Cup final, namely Pele. Brazil defeated the hosts Sweden in the final 5–2. The seventh World Cup tournament returned to South America. It was played in Chile. The host nation won the playoff for third place, but, for the second consecutive World Cup, Brazil won the final. Although Italy had accomplished the two-in-a-row feat in the 1930s, Brazil’s similar achievement was made against the full strength of international football competition.

The consecutive World Cup wins by Brazil occurred during the FIFA presidencies of Englishmen; Arthur Drewry in 1958 and Stanley Rous in 1962. Rous was FIFA president when the subsequent World Cup tournament was hosted in England in 1966. A promotional film for the 1966 World Cup produced by the Rank Organisation included, within its commentary, specific reference to football as ‘the global game’. The commentary boasts, ‘more than seventy countries competed for places to get into the last sixteen of the World Cup’ (Hughson, 2016). The eighth FIFA World Cup did provide a forum for the world’s leading national teams to come together in competition, but that did not mean the tournament occurred without geopolitical upset. Indeed, African nations withdrew in the early stages due to dissatisfaction with FIFA’s qualification procedure, whereby the leading team to emerge from African subgroups needed to then play off against the winner of the Asian subgroup for a place in the World Cup finals in England. The particular grievance was that with thirteen nations involved in the qualification phase, the winner of the group should qualify for the final sixteen without need to play off against another regional winner (Mayes, 1967: 35). As it turned out, North Korea unexpectedly won their way through to the Finals after defeating Australia in the decisive qualification match. North Korea proved to be one of the surprise successes of the tournament, making it through to the quarter-final stage. However, hosting North Korea’s football team at a major sporting tournament also proved diplomatically
awkward for the British government, given that Britain did not recognise North Korea as a legitimate nation (Polley, 1998).

The advertising for the World Cup in England, indicated that by the mid 1960s the tournament was being set apart as a distinct sporting occasion from the Olympic Games. On the one hand this was done via a tendency to emphasise the heritage of the Olympics in connection with Ancient Greece, while likening the World Cup to a Roman gladiatorial contest. From this perspective the Olympic Games are a pageantry involving gallantry and honour, along with the great physical prowess of the competitors, but they do not feature the fervent and frenzied support of spectators in the way of football. In this latter regard the World Cup, it might be argued, witnesses a modern form of Roman games in which patriotism is given legitimate vent in the football arena. J. L. Manning of the Daily Mail claimed, ‘The World Cup unashamedly cares nothing for ritual and idealism. It strips sport of all pretence to present an out-and-out professional show of games-playing skill’ (Hughson, 2016). An Oxbridge mentality pervaded the FA in the 1960s, and even beyond. The comment by the journalist Manning challenged that elitism, at least to the extent of its harbouring of a lingering bias to amateurism. However, Manning’s statement spoke to the modern footballing culture known by supporters of the sport in England. They knew only too well that the players who made up the England team were professionals and had they been interested enough to read magazines and ghost-authored biographies, such as Bobby Charlton’s My Soccer Life, they would have had an idea of players’ justification for regarding football as a profession (Charlton, 1964). However, as much as Manning might have been correct in intimating that the World Cup put the best of professional football players on show (a view of course complicated by the fact that the teams from Communist nations – Bulgaria, Hungary, North Korea and the Soviet Union – were involved in the 1966 World Cup finals) when playing for their counties in the World Cup, players did so more for honour than financial reward. The meagre material returns to England players for competing in the 1966 World Cup finals is evidence enough to support this point (Hughson, 2016). As the years have passed, and football players have become more like commercial brands under the controlling influence of personal managers, the appeal of pure honour to represent one’s nation may seem more questionable. Today, playing successfully in a World Cup can result in lucrative advertising contracts for a player who might not have been as well known on the world stage until a starring performance in the tournament.

While it might be too much to declare men like Robert Guerin, FIFA’s first president and the still longest serving president Jules Rimet – president from 1921 to 1954 – as lacking vision, it would be an overstatement to claim for them a philosophical ambition and commitment in their approach to the World Cup of the kind we associate with Baron Pierre de Coubertin for his principal role in founding the modern Olympic Games. Nevertheless, FIFA’s expansionist plans for the World Cup coincided with the growth of projects of modernisation in nations around the world. Conveniently, the modern nation state was able to become the organisational and hosting point for the finals of each tournament (Hughson, 2016). We have seen above that from the first tournament in Uruguay the World Cup became connected with aspects of urban development, particularly architectural plans. In 1930 all matches were played in Montevideo, so the focus was entirely on that city. If we move twenty years forward to further consider the World Cup of 1950, held in Brazil, we see matches being played in six different cities and a number of architectural projects going ahead to accommodate the tournament. A key example was the building of what became commonly known as the Independencia in Belo Horizonte. With a capacity of 30,000 this venue, in what is now Brazil’s sixth largest city, was the site for three World Cup matches,
including the surprise 1–0 loss by England to the United States. The building of this stadium gave impetus to subsequent stadium development in Belo Horizonte. In 1965 the Mineirao Stadium opened with a crowd of in excess of 70,000 in attendance. A major renovation was made in 2012 ahead of the Mineirao being used for both the 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup (a championship competition made up of the premier league winners in each of the six FIFA confederations, the current World Cup holding nation and the forthcoming World Cup host nation. The Confederations Cup is held in the year prior to a World Cup in the nation where that World Cup will be held) and the 2014 World Cup (Brazil’s second World Cup-hosting experience). The Mineirao hosted the semi-final match at the 2014 World Cup which Brazil lost, ignominiously, 1–7 to Germany.

The final match (not a final as such, but the last match of the ‘final round’) of the 1950 World Cup was held at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro. Hosting the most matches during the tournament, eight of the total twenty-two, the Maracana had been built over two years in the lead-up to the World Cup. Boosterists talked up the importance of the new stadium and thus football as a form of culture within Brazil’s urban modernisation. Critics saw the stadium as an unaffordable luxury as the country laboured under infrastructural problems particularly in energy supply and transport provision (Goldblatt, 2014: 88). But, go ahead it did, with completion occurring just a week ahead of World Cup kick-off on 24 June 1950. With a capacity of over 160,000, the Maracana became the ‘largest and most elegantly modern stadium in the world’ (Goldblatt, 2014: 89). Its double-tiered ellipse design was cutting-edge in stadium architecture and the use of concrete made in Brazil adhered to an international modernist ethos by which structures of universal appeal were enhanced by the input of local custom, ingenuity and material. Accordingly, a national newspaper wrote, ‘Today Brazil has the biggest and most perfect stadium in the world, dignifying the competence of its people and its evolution in all branches of human activity’ (Goldblatt, 2014: 90). Unfortunately, for Brazil, the outcome of the football tournament did not complement the excellence of its showpiece stadium. Brazil went into the last match of the competition needing only a draw to win the tournament. However, Uruguay once again proved a mighty foe in international football and prevailed 2–1 to be presented the World Cup trophy by the man it was then named after, FIFA president Jules Rimet. The Brazilian writer and journalist Nelson Rodrigues felt the sadness in national spirit in wake of the loss to be so profound that he referred to it as, ‘Our catastrophe, our Hiroshima’ (Goldblatt, 2014: 92). Exaggerated as the comparison is, it indicates an awareness by Brazilians of what had occurred. When Brazil was defeated 1–7 by Germany sixty-four years later at the semi-final stage of the 2014 World Cup, the magnitude of the loss, given the staggering score line, was so difficult to comprehend that journalists could write of Brazilians rising the next morning and praying that their recollection of the night before was but a nightmare (Gibson, 2014b).

At a more serious sociopolitical level, the extremity of the loss raised concerns that Brazil might be plunged into civil disorder (Gibson, 2014b). Similar objections to those regarding state investment in the 1950 World Cup, being a wasteful diversion of resources that would be better spent on improving the country’s poor standard of public services, were made ahead of the World Cup coming to Brazil in 2014, but the level of protest occurred on a much larger scale. Significantly, protests that were held to coincide with the Confederations Cup competition in 2013 attracted worldwide media attention. The arrest of protesters and use of tear gas by militia on them brought concerns to FIFA and public authority in Brazil that the World Cup might be disrupted by similar protests, which could undermine the festival nature of the occasion and have the event remembered for a display of political unrest rather than great football. As it turned out – and despite Brazil’s embarrassment on the pitch – the 2014
World Cup was regarded as one of the better tournaments in recent times for the excitement and footballing skill on show in many of its matches (bbc.c.uk/sport, 2015). However, even if large-scale disorder did not occur in Brazil after the tournament, the preceding protest, the dubious political response to it, and FIFA’s tendency to disclaim any responsibility for problems associated with the staging of a World Cup, increased, and took to a new level of public awareness, the already substantial stain on the tournament’s name as recognised over the years by critics in the media and academia.

A prominent critical academic voice on the World Cup and FIFA is that of Alan Tomlinson (for example, Tomlinson, 1986; Sugden and Tomlinson, 1998). Given the acknowledgements and footnoting in his work, it appears fair to say that Tomlinson’s research has benefited, unlike that of most other scholars, from first-hand access to primary documentation, made possible by officers within FIFA itself. His most recent book, *FIFA: The Men, the Myths and the Money* (Tomlinson, 2014), presents a scathing critique of FIFA, barely stopping short of indicting its more recent leaders of corruption and, proclaiming it as totally unsuited, in its present workings and organisational arrangements, to be responsible for overseeing the running of international football and the sport’s major globe-wide tournament. The book’s publication pre-dated the arrests and legal investigations into the activities of FIFA officials and subsequent suspension of FIFA president Sepp Blatter in 2015. Although not predicting the exact turn in events, Tomlinson’s book makes valuable reading for an understanding of what has since transpired.

The dedicated chapter in his book on the World Cup is, provocatively, entitled ‘Cash Cow’. It commences with a dissenting voice of public authority, that of the mayor of Rio de Janeiro, stating that Brazil ‘lost a great opportunity’ to improve public services in tandem with its hosting of the World Cup in 2014. Tomlinson sets this claim against the ameliorative view of Blatter, who claimed, against the spirit of protest, that football should not be used within campaigning for urban improvement or social betterment (Tomlinson, 2014: 108–9). While indicating sympathy to the particular political case advanced by protesters, Blatter essentially offered himself and FIFA an escape from debate by invoking a version of the ‘sport has nothing to do with politics’ old chestnut.

Be this as it may, this stance conveniently distances business, as well as football, from politics, and, in doing so, ignores the extent to which the World Cup has become – the point of the case made by Tomlinson – a money-making vehicle for FIFA. The primary attention on financial gain has arguably put football itself and the World Cup as an occasion of cultural significance into a position of secondary importance. While FIFA, even in the earlier years, may never have planned the World Cup as a significant ‘moment in modernity’ (Hughson, 2016), the present organisational emphasis has moved the tournament largely beyond the relevance of such possibility in contemporary times.

A particularly controversial matter for FIFA has been the selection of the Gulf state Qatar to host the World Cup in 2022. Apart from being entangled within allegations of solicitation and bribery in the voting process, the selection of Qatar has been criticised because of the country’s extremely warm weather conditions during the northern hemisphere summer, which is the time frame within which the World Cup would normally be played. Subsequent consideration being given to pushing the tournament date back to the latter months of 2022, with the attendant unsettling of various domestic leagues this would entail, has only served to sharpen the criticism of those who claim the award should not have been made to Qatar when such a problem was obvious enough from the outset (Insight, 2015). Whatever the merits of criticism, holding the World Cup in Qatar fits plausibly within FIFA’s long-established agenda to have the tournament played on the different continents and regions of the globe. Brazilian Joao Havelange came to the FIFA presidency with a ‘manifesto’ to enhance the spread of football via
tournament holding (Tomlinson, 2014: 121). Among other developments this led to the holding of the first FIFA Women’s World Cup in China in 1991. Junior men’s tournaments played under FIFA’s auspices also carried Havelange’s ambition. The first under-20-year-old men’s world tournament – known as the FIFA World Youth Championship until 2005, when it became the FIFA U-20 World Cup – was staged in Tunisia in 1977. Japan hosted the tournament in 1979; a prelude to hosting the World Cup in 2002, in partnership with South Korea. Australia hosted the tournament in 1981 and, again, in 1993, but failed in a bid to host the World Cup in 2018. Saudi Arabia became the first Gulf state to hold a FIFA tournament when it hosted the World Youth Championship in 1989. Qatar hosted the tournament in 1995, following the withdrawal of hosting duties from Nigeria due to an outbreak of meningitis in that country. The tournament was played, exclusively in the capital Doha, in the month of April on that occasion.

Havelange’s ascendancy to the presidency of FIFA was based on his stated ambition to see improved conditions for the playing of football and an extension of organisational representation into Africa and Asia. The extent to which this reflected a genuine globally democratic belief or a strategy to garner support within the expanding FIFA organisation is a moot point. When Havelange competed for the FIFA presidency against the incumbent Stanley Rous, he was regarded as the candidate with a global vision. Rous’s failure to oppose apartheid in South Africa by not supporting sporting boycotts had him adjudged as non-progressive on matters regarding Africa in general. According to Tomlinson (2014: 58) football administrators in the third world regarded Rous as a British imperialist. Rous’s inability to anticipate the strength of Havelange’s threat to his leadership perhaps reflects why he gave this perception. Colonial prejudice came to the surface in the commiserations extended to Rous by some of his ‘European colleagues’ who referred to ‘dark forces’ being behind Havelange’s victory in the presidential election. Although Havelange may have engaged corruptly in his courting of votes – Tomlinson (2014: 58) is one critic to contend that he did so – assumptions about the motives of delegates from Africa and Asia voting in his favour were seemingly based on prejudice. Ahead of the 2014 World Cup Sepp Blatter accused the British media of being ‘racist’, mainly in regard to the criticism of the awarding of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar. Blatter was suggesting that criticism of both Qatar’s suitability as a host nation and the voting for Qatar to come from FIFA delegates from African and Asian countries was racist. The typical response to his accusation within the British press as ‘astonishing’ cast an editorial opinion that there could be no merit in such a claim (Gibson, 2014c). However, although Blatter may well have overstated the accusation of racism in an attempt to offset criticism of corruption within FIFA’s election processes, his position was supported by a resolution passed by the Confederation of African Football. A thoroughgoing dismissal of Blatter’s claim can only serve to heighten suspicion of the British media operating in the manner of his accusation and to reinforce a general view of a lingering British colonialist mentality. This has implications for academic criticism of FIFA, much of which relies on media reports, given the difficulty of gaining access to primary data via FIFA and its confederations. Although ‘critical’ academics would be loath to be accused of colonialism, their work may well suffer this fate from the perspective of the global south when seen as being based on ready assumptions that administrators from certain countries are easily bribed for payola of some kind by financially better-off parties within football.

At the December 2015 meeting of the FIFA executive in Zurich a set of proposed organisational reforms was put forward to the full FIFA congress in February 2016. The proposals included, three- to four-year mandates for leading FIFA office holders, a defined separation of powers between FIFA’s day-to-day operational division and its elected office
bearers, an increased focus on the promotion of women in the sport via greater gender diversity in organisational rules, and establishing the requirement that each FIFA confederation elect at least one woman to the organisation’s governing board (Borden, 2015). The FIFA meeting also raised discussion of the possibility of the World Cup being expanded from thirty-two to forty teams. This would allow for greater representation in the tournament of countries from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The meeting and the proposed reforms it discussed were overshadowed by the arrests of a number of delegates at a Zurich hotel. Those arrested included the president of CONCACAF (Alfredo Hawit from Honduras) and the president of CONMEBOL (Juan Angel Napout from Paraguay), the latter of whom was also FIFA vice-president. The charges which brought about the arrests were issued from the US via an investigation into corruption by the Department of Justice, the Internal Revenue Service and other agencies. These arrests followed a similar raid on the same hotel prior to FIFA’s congress in Zurich in May 2015. On this occasion fourteen arrests of international FIFA delegates, again on behalf of the US authority, were made by Swiss police. Indictment of the officials was explained by the US Attorney General at a news conference in New York: ‘They were expected to uphold the rules that kept soccer honest. Instead they corrupted the business of worldwide soccer to serve their interests and enrich themselves. They did this over and over, year after year, tournament after tournament’ (Gibson and Gayle, 2015). Despite this vague reference to a longevity of corruption, the US legal initiative was aimed particularly at alleged corruption in the awarding of the 2010 World Cup and the 2011 FIFA presidential election. This coincided with supposedly independent proceedings against FIFA officials by Swiss federal prosecutors into the awarding of the 2018 and 2022 World Cups to Russia and Qatar respectively (Gibson and Gayle, 2015). The timing and underlying motive of the requests did not go unquestioned. Prominently, Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that the activities of football officials from foreign countries should be outside the jurisdiction, and beyond the interest, of US legal authority (MacFarquhar and Roth, 2015).

In the final weeks of 2015 it is quite reasonable to question whether or not FIFA can survive its present crisis. The question prompts another. Should FIFA collapse what organisational arrangements for the continuation of international football might replace it? A body that could step in to fill the vacuum is the European Club Association (ECA) (Tomlinson, 2014: 150). The ECA represents major European clubs affiliated to UEFA. Given the financial strength of European clubs, the popularity of the UEFA Champions League and the preponderance of the world’s elite players in the squads of European clubs, an interest by the ECA in assuming formal control of world football and, in particular, the World Cup is understandable. But such an arrangement would surely reinforce the power base of football in Europe and put elite clubs in the ascendancy in regard to decision-making about international football contests, particularly the World Cup. Under the control of an organisation such as the ECA world football would also be subject to the prerogatives of multinational corporations that sponsor leading clubs, thus increasing commercial interest encroachment on football beyond the already significant influence placed on FIFA by sponsors.

The inauguration of the World Cup in 1930 coincided with the emergence of the ‘international style’ in architecture. The influence can be recognised, to some extent, in the new stadiums built in locations such as Montevideo, with the emphasis on a combination of functionality and skilful use of concrete in a way to effect a weightless appearance. The World Cup itself, if rather inadvertently on behalf of FIFA, fitted into the modernist ambition of an international trend in urban development coinciding with festival holding. Yet, like the trend in architecture, the World Cup was open to the criticism of ‘Eurocentric’ bias (Frampton, 2007). Whatever problems may have emerged following the Havelange agenda, the criticism
was somewhat alleviated by the 1970s as the World Cup was steered to becoming a more genuinely global competition and FIFA's representation was more meaningfully expanded beyond Europe. Academic commentary does well to remain mindful of its responsibility to scrutinise the present media representation of FIFA as corrupt rather than just applying a theoretical layer to the condemnation offered by journalists. Otherwise, claims of Euro or Western centrism may come to bear. Furthermore, such work will result in a better analytical contribution to the study of FIFA, rather than joining in with a soap opera-like obsession in removing this or that official from office. It will also result in fair and fuller consideration being given to the FIFA initiatives in football development and in regard to the increased emphasis on the importance of the Women’s World Cup. Well may we agree with the claim that a ‘half-baked investigative approach’ does not serve us best when researching the ‘FIFA story’ and its connection to the world of football (Tomlinson, 2014: 180).

References


FIFA and the World Cup


