

# From Waterloo to Wembley: A Comparison of International Football and International Warfare in Building Nationalism

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## 1. Introduction

At the 57th minute of the game, Michel Platini, the mythical French number 10, sends Battiston towards the goal. The French player is violently hit by Harald Schumarrer, the brutal German goalkeeper, who came out of his box and collided with Battiston in a desperate defensive move. The Frenchman is knocked out and taken straight to hospital. This is the paroxysm of tension in the “*Third World War*”, as described by the French Press (So Foot 2016): the semi-final of the 1982 World Cup between former secular enemies, France and the Federal Republic of Germany. The bitter defeat for the French side generated, in the country, a resurgence of anti-German feelings, unprecedented in the post-war era and embodied by Schumarrer’s demonisation, forcing President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl to publish a common appeasement press release.

This game, still very present in the French collective imagery, shows how much international football can tickle national sentiments. French people were united behind eleven players, seen as the representatives of their nation. They lived the game as a common experience, shared by the whole community. They were defended by mythical characters, such as Platini, against the Germans, an external threat, of which the stereotypes (brutal and mechanical game) were emphasised against the supposed French virtues of beautiful football. The references to war are not fortuitous. Just like football, war is associated with nationalism. While both sides of the relationship have been discussed (Hutchinson 2017), a whole body of literature convincingly studies the nationalist-builder power of warfare (Hutchinson 2017; Comaroff and Stern 1995; Hutchinson and Smith 2000; Hall and Malesevic 2013). International football offers an arena in which national teams face each other for glory. It has often been referred to as a soft way of going to war, a peaceful substitute for conflict-prone nations that would otherwise confront on the battlefield (Marks 1999). “*Football is war without the dead*”, as summed-up by Giroud (1999) in Ghemmour (Ghemmour 2013). This analysis

provides a starting point, but appears frustratingly simplistic. In a time where the rise of nationalism and nationalist political leaders is pointed out as a widespread and potentially worrying phenomenon, it is important to understand precisely what we mean by nations and nationalism, and, crucially, what their key determinants are. This is all the more topical in a time of globalisation, which is thought to bolster nationalism (Keating 2001). As the world becomes more interconnected, with increasing international flows of goods, services and people, deep changes and apparent threats to traditional identities fuel the opposite reactionary phenomenon of willingness to come back to national roots. Under that respect, football is both the most globalised sport and an arena of traditional, national confrontation, and perfectly embodies this tension between globalisation and nationalism.

Therefore, this dissertation will answer the following question: to what extent is international football comparable to international war in building nationalism?

It will argue, adopting an ethno-symbolist perspective, that under the framework of the nation-state, international football is very similar to war in the way it builds nationalism; and that, in times of globalisation, football may have the potential to go even further than war, to build a new form of nationalism beyond borders. The first part of the answer studies elements of myths, shared experience, rituals and symbols that both war and international football forge to foster “*imagined communities*”. The second, more hypothetical, explores football’s capacity to build imagined communities within diasporas and between diasporas and homeland, while allowing diaspora members to construct their complex, multi-layered identities, both in relation to their country of origin and of residence. The “new” aspect matters. While war can also build nationalism for people living outside their homeland, it will be very comparable to the one I analyse under the framework of the nation-state. That is, implying territorial and political claims, following the idea that a nation must have a corresponding political and geographical unit – the state. On the other hand, football can allow for a less conflictual form of nationalism, not necessarily negatively built on the opposition to another group, and not based upon the idea that members of a same national group must necessarily share the same territory, enabling the diaspora to gain a sense of themselves as both part of their new country of residence and proud of their

origins. In short, nations evolve with globalisation and football could be a way to make nationalism change accordingly.

While further definitions and conceptualisations will be made in the main body of this dissertation, it is useful to offer some precision now. A nation is a group held together and animated by a national consciousness. I borrow, here, the definition used by Hutchinson (2017, pp.7) for it is representative of a widely accepted view among scholars: “*nations are considered as named communities, resting on conceptions of common descent, regulative customary practices, the possession of a homeland, and a distinctive culture, that claim or aspire to be self-governing.*” Other recurrent elements include a single-economy and common rights and duties for its citizens. The self-governing element of the definition hints towards our definition of nationalism: the idea that nations are distinct groups that should have a corresponding political unit. In Gellner's words, it is “*the principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent*” (in Hobsbawm 1992). To be clear, nations should have a state. Nationalism requires the nation-state, which further bolsters nationalism (Kohn 2000).

On a different note, because this dissertation explores nationalism, it is exclusively interested in international football – where national teams play against each other, especially in big tournaments such as the World Cup. It will thus use “football” and “international football” interchangeably.

This dissertation proceeds as follows. The first part deals with academic conceptualisations of the nation and conceptual distinctions. It presents different theories surrounding the rise of nations and nationalism, examining, in particular, the debate between primordialism and instrumentalism, and adopts an ethno-symbolist view, considering nations and nationalism largely as modern constructions and inventions, nevertheless rooted in pre-existing cultures and ethnic groups. The second part explains how, under such a perspective, warfare and football are very similar in the way they build nationalism within the framework of the nation-state, essentially being two alternatives using the same nationalism-builder elements. It uses a case study based on the Netherlands and Dutch national identity, made of a limited set of detailed interviews. The third part explores how, in times of globalisation, the role of football can evolve into building a new form of nationalism linking the increasing number of people living outside their homeland, thus forming diasporas, amongst themselves and

with their home country. It illustrates its point with a case study made of a questionnaire conducted with the Portuguese community in France.

## **2. Nations as Modern Inventions, Rooted in Previous Ethnic and Cultural Traditions**

Most people feel attached to a nation (Hutchinson and Smith, 2000). Most states' policies are based on national criteria, used to prioritise some people over others: allocation of welfare benefits, right to vote in local elections, right to reside in the country (Beitz 1983). Nation-states have become the norm, especially in the wave of decolonisation following World War II, to the point where the United Nations (the very name is not accidental) formally uses the word in its texts (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002). Given its importance in current politics, nations and nationalism have become a large body of studies.

The field is so dense that various schools of thought have emerged. While the space of the dissertation impedes a detailed exploration, a detour to present them and adopt the one that I consider most adapted is indispensable, in order to better analyse, in the subsequent sections, the roles of war and football.

The first school of thought is primordialist. It essentially believes that nations are natural, primordial, part of human condition (Hutchinson and Smith, 2000). They represent a naturally given sense of nationhood (Conversi, 2000). Nations evolve differently throughout history as they are "biologically" different: they are some kind of big family in which people's sense of belonging is fostered by a sense of recognition of common culture, affinity, and similarity. The ethnic myths of origin supposedly reflect real lines of descent. This last point is very much empirically false, notwithstanding the fact that no real argument can explain why there would be natural family-like ties between the members of a same nation in the first place. An evolution, thus, is perennialism. According to this school, while nations are not natural, they have existed at every period in time. However, for centuries, there was no real sense of belonging to a same community, apart from within the aristocracy of a country (Anderson, 2006). It is, indeed, hard to think that the 15th century serf working the land in the South of current France thought of himself as French or even belonging to a community wider than his village. Even the concept of language, which is central to the

idea of a nation, is, in part, the product of nationalism, as Billig (1995) convincingly argues. This is not to say that people did not communicate in the old days, but that the notion of language implies a degree of conscious separateness between people that did not make very much sense for most of history. It is possible to acknowledge that, to a certain extent, a fraction of the population had a sense of national identity prior to what modernists would concede (18th century and revolution). However, as it did not concern the majority of the population and was not followed by the political project of uniting the nation under a single body politic, it can hardly be considered as universal and atemporal manifestations of nationalism.

Therefore, this leads to the opposite view: modernism. It gained importance under the influence of heavyweights such as Hobsbawm (1983, 1992) or Anderson (2006). While the views about what exactly has brought about the rise of nations diverge, there is one agreement: they are recent, modern era (late 18th century) inventions. Some link it to the rise of capitalism (Gellner, in: Hutchinson and Smith, 2000), and the destruction of traditional kinship that creates the necessity of new forms of social ties. Others apply a top down approach with intellectual agitators spreading the concept of nationalism to the masses. Sometimes it is seen as state-led (elites trying to homogenise a nation to legitimate their rule), sometimes as state-seeking, with people looking for a state corresponding to their group (Tilly, 1995). In any case, the emergence of the desire for nation-states is, in all those views, characteristic of the modern era.

While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to arbitrate between those competing theories, a striking point about nations is that they lack an objective criterion that would allow anyone to identify them at first sight (Billig, 1995). Nations differ in size, geography, population, number of languages, number of ethnic groups. This clearly hints towards the idea that subjectivity is a key element of nationalism (Calhoun 2007; Billig, 1995) and gives weight to the notion of imagined community as the principal basis for nations and nationalism.

The idea of imagined communities was pioneered by Anderson (2006). The point is that a “nation is an imagined political community, imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” (Anderson 2006, pp.6) The idea behind “imagined” is that most people will never meet each other and be aware of each other’s existence, yet they feel

part of the same community, believing they share common elements, mostly cultural. The limitation aspect is crucial to nation-building: a nation constructs a sense of itself because it knows it differs from other nations, which begin beyond its own borders. The political sovereignty is also important to make it different from any kind of group organisation that existed in history. Nations are cultural artefacts. They developed with the end of classic languages such as Latin, progressively replaced by vernacular languages that, thanks to the massive diffusion of print capitalism (books and newspapers), developed each community's sense of distinctiveness and fostered people's sense to belong to the same community as those who read in the same language. Notably, a sense of simultaneity and homogenous timeframe emerged.

For Hobsbawm (1983, 1992) those imagined communities were fabricated artificially by elites, as a way to channel and discipline masses. He believes that nationalism is such an unprecedented phenomenon that it had to construct from scratch its own historical continuity. Traditions, myths and semi-fiction build the sense of imagined community. Those invented traditions are defined by their vagueness and broadness (concepts such as patriotism or loyalty to nation) which employ emotionally charged symbols (flags for instance), and a set of acceptable practices (singing national anthems) that contribute to the universality of the concept. National flags, anthems and emblems are the way a country shows its independence and sovereignty, and allows it to command respect and loyalty. Those traditions enable to awake one's consciousness of the community.

These theories share the idea that nations are cultural artefacts. They hint towards an accurate depiction of nations, but need to be nuanced. Anderson gives too big a role to the literary word, which is often disconnected from the masses' way of communication, and thus needs to be completed by more elements of popular culture. A variant of this criticism applies to Hobsbawm, who overlooks the role of popular myths and traditions, in a purely top-down approach that wrongly leaves people entirely passive (Hutchinson and Smith 2000). For example, the myths of the Gaulois as the ancestor of French people, albeit promoted by public officials referring to the "hero" Vercingetorix, was very much popularised by the best-selling cartoon *Astérix et Obélix*, depicting Gaulois as churlish, undisciplined but fiercely independent ancestors of the French nation.

This is where ethno-symbolism comes in (Hutchinson and Smith, 2000; Smith 2000, 2005). It does not deny that nationalism is a modern invention, nor that nations in the sense of a majority of people seeking national sovereignty is also recent. Both are grounded in pre-existing cultures and ethnic groups. The sense of ethnic identity, defined as a shared culture, history and language, is the basis of national identity. There are cultural elements of myth, symbol, memory, value and tradition, that explain modern nations' emergence and shape. Nationalists often resurrected them but they existed. It seems that those views are, in general, not necessarily contradictory and complement each other rather well. Once we acknowledge the fact that myths and ethnic groups were not invented in the late 18th century, which explains why some embryonic national identity emerged before that period, we can still believe that nations are imagined communities in Anderson's sense, with traditions that evolve constantly, and, if not totally invented, take a selective look to history to pick up elements most likely to build national cohesion. Moreover, both approaches (Smith, 2000; Anderson, 2006) emphasise the fact that nationalism acts as a secular substitute for religion, for people to make sense of themselves, of mortality, and of the continuity between the past and the future, in a time where rationalism partly discredits religious totems.

This is, therefore, the vision of nations and nationalism we shall adopt. This detour was necessary because, as I will show in the next section, the importance of war and football through myths, rituals and tradition building is crucial. This corresponds to a vision of nationalism where the ethnic group is the basis and where symbols play a key role in fostering the sense of the imagined community.

### **3. Warfare, Football, and Nationalism**

Now that we have established our conception of the nation, let us turn to the core of the topic: how warfare and international football are comparable in the way they build nationalism. Most nation-states, nowadays, have been, at least in part, forged by war (Howard, 1994). This section will focus on two points: nation building via myths, symbols, selective history and common experience, which give the nation the power to demand citizens to sacrifice for it, and nation building via the opposition to other nations.

A nation's consciousness comes from shared meanings and visions based on myths (Hutchinson 1994, 2017; Smith 2000, 2005). Miller (2001: Introduction) defines them in the following way:

*“Myths are not total delusions or utter falsehoods, but partial truths that accentuate some versions of reality and marginalise or omit others. They embody fundamental cultural values and character-types and appeal to deep-seated emotions. Myths depoliticise social relations by ignoring the vested interests surrounding those stories that become ascendant in a given culture. And critically, myths disavow or deny their own conditions of existence: they are forms of speech that derive from specific sites and power relations, but are passed off as natural and eternal verities.”*

Those myths can be genealogical - biological filiation with founders or ancient people, which implies the community's roots are found in old, almost family-like kinship - or, cultural – where the spiritual proximity with those ancients is emphasised (Smith, 2000). As Smith explains, those myths are often based around a founding time (for instance, the Rutli oath in Switzerland first uniting cantons), a founding place (to legitimise the control over land), some ancestors which give society a sense of filiation and provide it with a justification for primordial links and kinship (again, the Gaulois for French people, despite lack of historical evidences about Gaulois in the way French people picture them). Crucially, nationalism also uses myths of grandeur and decay, forging heroes that embody the nation's values and raising the spectre of decline if those virtues are forgotten. Those are used to foster the myth of regeneration, the nation becoming again true to itself.

The importance of myths explains why war is crucial for building nationalism. Memories and myths of war are key elements of national discourse. In particular, the commemoration of the war dead becomes central (Hutchinson, 2017). As emphasised by Anderson (2006), there is nothing more representative of the imagined community building power of war than the tomb of unknown soldiers. As a mix of anonymity - thus making it universal and appropriable by everyone - and heroism, hence building virtues of courage and sacrifice into people's mind, it speaks to everyone in the national community.

Wars provide heroes, which act as moral models of virtues and values for subsequent generations, emphasising the qualities that should inspire every member of the nation (Hutchinson, 2017). Those heroes, and wars, take an almost sacred character. A clear example is Jeanne d'Arc, seen as a martyr and almost a saint by the French, in addition to a supposed decisive role in beating the "English" in the Hundred Years War, despite historical evidence for her to be nothing more than a religious fanatic with reckless military tactics, who at best improved the soldiers' mood (Minois, 2010). This war is symptomatic of the narrative building of nationalism insofar as it is nowadays presented as the English versus the French, despite national identities not being really developed at the time, and wars fought essentially by mercenaries on a territory (France) over which the "national" king mainly lacked control and that looked nothing like France's current shape (Minois, 2010). Moreover, wars can refer to periods of golden age or decay that are crucial to myth, and therefore, nation-building (Smith 2000; Hutchinson 2017). References to times of military splendour stimulate the national sentiment and incentivise people to seek ways to come back to those times of glory. Of course, those elements are carefully selected to fit the national narrative: not only are they preferred to less glorious historical facts that also constitute a country's history (e.g. the French prefer to emphasise their role as Republican enlighteners, during the French Revolution, rather than the role of collaboration during World War Two), but they are also deprived from their most controversial elements: the Spanish cheerfully celebrate the Reconquista of their country, despite the expulsion of Jewish people that happened at the same time. However, and perhaps less intuitively, defeat memory can also bolster nationalism (Kissane, 2013), if this defeat is suffused with moral values that honour the losing side, marks the beginning of the nation's regeneration, or if nationalists can use it as an illustration of what happens when a nation loses its moral values.

This is where the first link to football comes: national mythmaking through sports, among which football is the most popular, is common (Miller, 2001; Cronin and Marall, 1998; Maguire, 2009). Sports help glorify, mainly through media coverage, national heroes that represent and battle for a larger body, the nation, in stadiums all around the world. We naturally cheer in sporting competitions for our fellow countrymen and women: Wimbledon is made more memorable when British players

are through to the second week, football game victories are a matter of national pride (Billig 1995). Individual players become national icons, like Zidane in France (Ghemmour, 2013). When national teams win, they win for the homeland. The 1966 World Cup-winning team in England is still seen as heroic, with legendary figures such as Alf Ramsey or Bobby Robson. Its importance has increased over the decades, since at the time, England's mood was characterised by national decline discourses, nostalgically looking back to the Empire, the domination over the world and a flourishing economy (Porter, 2004). While nationalists emphasised the progressive disappearance of English virtues of courage, organisation, determination to overcome obstacles, the national team precisely won using those supposedly English qualities, which was a crucial factor in building national pride again (Porter, 2004). Moreover, Hutchinson (2017) emphasises that war myths, albeit in part elite-driven, are also rooted in popular culture (songs, cartoons, movies). This, again, relates to football, which follows exactly the same pattern. For instance, in the 1998 World Cup won by France (1999), the myth of the united Black-Blanc-Beur country (Black-White-Arab) was exploited by President Chirac to assert his popularity, but also expanded through popular cultures (books or documentaries, such as "Les Yeux dans les Bleus" narrating the exploit). Finally, even defeat can be praised as part of national identity, as shown by Dutch beautiful losers, considering themselves as moral winners (Lechner, 2007).

Warfare also builds nationalism through the memories and rituals it inspires (Hutchinson, 2017). There are formal elements – remembrance days, monuments and places, national anthems, national symbols. The end of both World Wars constitute holidays in France. Trafalgar Square commemorates the exploits of Nelson. Obviously, football has less formal powers – nobody gathers every July 12th in France to celebrate the final against Brazil. However, it still constitutes an arena in which nationalism is celebrated to a degree that has little equivalent (MacClancy, 1996; Bradley, 2002). Military brass bands playing the national anthem in front of a crowd waving the national flag, often under the eyes of the nation's political representatives (Presidents or Prime Ministers), are ostensible displays of nationalist fervour at international football games that parallel formal war commemoration ceremonies.

In general, football, just like wars, forms part of the traditions that underpin nationalism. Nationalists, indeed, are seeking to adapt to modernity by grounding it

into its past: modern practices are naturalised in reference to former myths. Football plays a similar role as war in that respect. Nationalism in the Basque country is rooted in Athletic Club Bilbao which constantly claims to be faithful to its (British and Basque) founders in terms of game identity, and operates a strict Basque player only policy (McClancy, 1996). This shows how football is part of the invention of tradition, of the modern embodiment of past values. Football allows people to cling tighter to what they believe is their identity. It becomes an anchor of meaning for a nation, found in the national myths surrounding the national team. For instance, uniform kits often have a meaning rooted in invented tradition, carrying the national colours in stadiums around the world, with the national emblem on the chest. An example, easily applicable to national football kits, is the New-Zealand rugby All Black shirt, implying an appropriation of strength, mystic, and in general of Maori symbols, equally perpetuated by the Haka performed by all players, whatever their skin colour, giving the image of a nation transcending ethnic differences (Smith, 2005).

Nevertheless, critiques argue that war loses its nationalist power because of people being increasingly disinterested in those nationalist high masses. This point is moot, and, even accepting it for the argument's sake, disregards the everyday power of nationalism, an ideology so strong that we end up forgetting it. Billig (1995) shows ostensible national celebrations (what he metaphors as flag waving) are only the visible part of nationalism. What really maintains nation-states is banal nationalism, which we do not notice. It consists of everyday expressions such as “we”, without even mentioning it, refers to the nation, “the weather” without referring to where (as it is obvious that we are talking about our nation) etc. Banal nationalism can be as insidious as leisure parks, which tend to promote selective visions of each country's history (Sangiorgi, 2014). Warfare shaped the long-term collective goals, and more importantly, thinking framework of nations (Hutchinson, 2017), and also forms part of the unconscious process of nationalism. It becomes a national secular “religion”, that makes sense of mortality and generates a continuity between the alive and the dead, and defines shared collective meanings that bind people into a nation. Arguably, football does not have such a power, but it still very much corresponds to Billig's point because of its inherent duality between being an entertainment and a highly politicised activity. Most people boisterously singing the national anthem before football games are not

thinking consciously about the nationalist dimension of their act, but do it as part of a football ritual. By being both an ostensible display of nationalist ideology – just by the very fact that it is nations, and not, say, continents, facing each other - and part of the unconscious process of banal nationalism, football has a nationalist building power that echoes the one of war.

Moreover, nationalism is often built in opposition to another nation. It is as much a negative concept – emphasising what the nation is not – as a positive one (defining what it is). Nationalism is built on interactions with others (Harrison, 2003). For instance, Scottish Nationalism is very much based upon the idea of not being English (McIntosh et al, 2004; Bradley, 2002). Nations rely on otherness, on boundary creation and maintenance, whether physical (for instance, territorial frontier), or symbolic (Conversi, 2000), which allows for the development of self-stereotypes of national identity and stereotypes about others.

Warfare is a crucial determinant in the building of nationalism based on opposition (Hutchinson, 2017). War polarizes different populations, enhances stereotypes and national self-perceptions (Hall and Malesevic, 2013). It emphasises the sense of national difference. The “we versus them” stereotypes are created by competing national propaganda, and this turns into self-image built in contrast to the enemy. Moreover, as armies progressively switched from mercenaries to massive conscriptions, not only did we witness the emergence of proper nations fighting each other, but this also favoured the development of clichés about the enemy coming right from the front and spread by the conscripted, who were normal citizens, to the rest of the country (Smith, 2000). In France during World War I emerged the image of the brutal and heartless German soldier, symbolised in the collective imagery by the spiked-helmet they wore, which became a symbol of brutality. This reflects the mix of official propaganda and clichés from the front that turn into general stereotypes. Napoleonic wars, too, were key in forging national identities among those nations who fought him fiercely, not least in England: their soldiers started differentiating themselves from the French, and in turn this became part of the national self-imagery, based on this contrast with Napoleonic armies. Polarised images progressively became part of a repertoire of national antagonisms (Hutchinson, 2017). In fact, the England-France rivalry is emblematic of this way of building nationalism. Centuries of wars led

to clichés that are still very much used nowadays. Recurrent key-words coming back in English mouths to describe French organisations are indiscipline and mess, whether it is to describe yet another strike or the Azincourt battle. On the other hand, the “nation of shopkeeper”, idea which emerged during Napoleonic wars, is still alive when it comes to describing English people on the other side of the channel, while actually having been adopted by some English as a motive of pride.

Again, football clearly uses similar determinants to build nationalism. As nations face each other, oppositions and stereotypes (both about “us” and “them”) flourish. By definition, a football match is the embodiment of the “we versus them” logic. It provides an arena for the expression of national identity. Sport is, in general, a powerful identity marker, the concrete embodiment of an imagined community (Hobsbawm, 1983; 1992). The idea that English people are “battling” is very much constructed and perpetuated through their style of play (McClansy, 1996). Maguire (2009) shows how sports contribute to the emergence of distinct national identities in the British Isles, each constructed in opposition to other nations. By distinguishing how the Welsh play in comparison to the English, the distinctiveness of both national identities is reinforced. Traditionally, in sports, the English are depicted as brave and gentlemen, the Welsh as gifted, the Irish as combative and having flair, the Scottish as less creative, and in general, the Celts as more tribal than rationally organised. There is a mutually reinforcing process where pitch performances are described according to stereotypes nations have about themselves and others, which in turn are maintained by the very description of sporting performances in those terms. The way a national team plays is seen as reflecting the national lifestyle (Lechner, 2007), a point we shall return to in our case study on Dutch national identity. This style of play is contrasted with that of other teams, in a rather exaggerated fashion, which, nevertheless, corresponds to nation-building, a sense of itself in relation to others, just like in war.

Consequently, caricatural clichés have become the norm to describe national teams, especially opponents, in mainstream discourses. It is worth quoting Dutch journalist Kuper, describing a 1988 Euros game (in: Miller, 2001) at length, as an illustration of this:

*“Holland vs Germany. Good vs Evil. Our shirts were bright, if unfortunately striped; the Germans wore black and white. We had several coloured players,*

*including our captain, and our fans wore Gullit-hats with rasta hair; their players were all white and their fans made monkey noises. Our players were funny and natural; A thousand Years of German Humour” is the shortest book in the world.”*

A similar text was written by a French journalist after the 1982 loss against Germany, contrasting French “poetry, imagination, finesse, inspiration and humility” to the Germans “blind brutes”, making use of “stupid force” and being nothing more than a “mass of muscles” (Ghemmour, 2013). The power of football in building nationalism relates to its popularity, and widespread media diffusion. The media, in general, are very auto-centred, using words such as “we” or “the nation” without further precision (implying everyone knows what the nation is), seeing the world under the national prism, and having categories such as foreign news which clearly separate “our” nation from others (Blain, 1993; Billig, 1995; Roosvall, 2014). The press has a key role in perpetuating those stereotypes, just like it spread the official demonisation of enemies during World War I, for instance. Maguire (2009) describes the coverage, in both countries, of an England-Poland game before the 2006 World Cup, as stereotyping, especially with regards to the opponents, combined with an assertiveness in terms of group identity. The English journalists stressed on the Cold War history and legacy, describing the Polish city where the game took place as gloomy and depressing, the supposed backwardness of Polish society and culture, and the hostility of the fans, supposedly tribal and primitive. Polish newspapers seemed to recognise the English cultural superiority, professionalism and wealth, but emphasised the arrogance and undue pride coming with it. Similarly, Alabarces et al (2001) describe the coverage, in Argentina and England, of the 1998 World Cup game opposing those two teams, as full of references to the antagonistic past of those countries, in addition to their diametrically different way of playing football, supposedly reflecting cultural differences. Implicitly, antagonising the opponent means that “we” are their complete opposite. The media reinforce the myths of specific characters associated with each country, and football is a privileged way of doing so. In the European press, there hardly is a football game which is not described, for the French, as characteristic of their “flair”, as tough and contact-based for the Spanish, as suffused with fighting spirit for the English, and as mechanic and efficient for the Germans (Crolley et al, 2000).

Note that each of those stereotypes perfectly apply to those country's supposed lifestyle or primary moral qualities in general. Football, via national press, contributes to constructing nationalism, in contrast to other nations. Finally, note that rivalries are not devoid of links to the idea of tradition creation or resurrection by nationalists, analysed earlier: a rivalry is not natural and nationalists portray games between antagonistic nations as "not to miss" dates on people's calendar, as illustrated by the case of Australia and New-Zealand (Smith, 2005).

Before turning to our Dutch case study, it is necessary to provide answers to some objections. The first one is basic but intuitive: football is nowhere as serious a matter as war, and therefore, the comparison is silly. This dissertation is not trying to argue that football is of the same historical importance as war, but that it can build nationalism using the very same mechanisms. Being a world-wide phenomenon, common to almost all societies, gathering billions of viewers when national teams face each other in the World Cup, and being important creators of a feel-good factor in a nation when it wins major trophies (Porter, 2004), such as England in 1966 or France in 1998, up to the point where, in France, the suicide rate had sharply declined after the World Cup triumph (Encrenaz, 2012), is enough not to dismiss it under the pretext that it is, at first, a sport and leisure.

This leads to a subtler, and more robust, criticism. Nations are defined as communities of self-sacrifice (Hutchinson, 2017), that is, a sentiment powerful enough for citizens to sacrifice their welfare for the nation – the ultimate illustration being young people willing to die on battlefields. This willingness is not the result of a rational choice, for people often stick to it in times where the costs are high and the defeat likely (Stern, 1995). It is, additionally, striking, given those kinds of self-sacrificial behaviours are normally reserved to kinship relations, primordial links (for instance, a mother sacrificing herself for her daughter). It must therefore be that the emotional appeals of nations are strong enough to generate this kind of primordial links between fellow members, and that, while memories of collective sufferings, myths of national heroism in times of war, remembrance of the dead are powerful enough to do so, football is not. A young French soldier could go to the front to perpetuate Vercingetorix's virtues, but not Zidane's memory.

This argument underestimates the sense of national duty related to sports, both for players and citizens. National press, as Billig (1995) shows, is full of sacrificial vocabulary to describe a player's performance, and praises above all those who put their body in danger for the team's sake. Players defending their national jersey in Wembley are very much seen as representative and defenders of the nation, like soldiers. Cristiano Ronaldo's willingness to keep on playing at the last European Championship finals, despite being severely injured, is enough to understand the commitment a national team game represents. This very same Cristiano Ronaldo, despite winning all major club and individual trophies, being a multi-millionaire and a worldwide icon, was never as happy as the day after the Portuguese triumph, which he described as the best moment of his life (Europe 1, 2016). Playing for the national football team is commonly referred to, by players, as the highest moment of a career and the highest duty that can ever fall on their shoulders. The public sees it very much the same way and witnesses with incredulity those players who refuse to play for the national team. I obviously do not mean that playing with an injured knee is as sacrificial as dying on a battlefield, but that we can at least consider football as an alternative system to the sacrifice-based nation. Marvin and Ingle (1999) themselves, having developed the idea that the nation's survival is based on sacrifice and memory thereof, to keep people cohesive, believe an alternative sacrificial system could challenge that kind of nationalism, and under this perspective, there is no reason to dismiss national football.

The last objection is that football is becoming every day more capitalist and globalised, participating in the destruction of local identities (Miller, 2001). While this is true for club football, where indeed a team like Chelsea often does not play with anybody from the London borough, or even from the United Kingdom, national football still remains very impermeable to globalisation (despite the case of bi-national players, strictly regulated), and is an arena where nation-state representatives face each other.

Let us now turn to our case-study. Lechner (2007) describes how the Dutch imagined community is partly shaped by football and the national-team. Memories of great teams, such as that of 1974, still remain, alongside myths embodying the whole nation (Cruyff, mainly). The Dutch also emphasise a unique, distinct style of play (total

football - a very offensive and revolutionary game based on technical quality, short passes and versatile players) which stresses the distinctiveness of the Dutch nation in general, in addition to being one of the teams most strongly associated with its colours. I conducted 6 detailed interviews with Dutch people from diverse backgrounds, found amongst my contacts, with written answers to the document I sent them, to study that claim further.

When asked whether the Dutch national team had a distinct style of play, Patrick, a student based in London, answered: “Yes, the whole distinction with total football sums up Dutch football. No other team, other than Spain recently, has nearly as distinctive a playing style”. Mirroring Remmert’s answer, a 29 years old man who arrived in the UK three years ago answered: “a very distinctive football style, characterised by playing very offensively, with right - and left wing backs who basically play as left - and right wing strikers. Dutch football, is, together with the Brazilian, Italian, and Spanish football styles, one of the most famous ones.” While most respondents acknowledge this style has fluctuated, and that, especially in recent years, the team has not always been able to live-up to that standard, all of them reckon there is or at least has been a very strong distinct Dutch way of playing football, which dates back to the 70’s, and the invention of Total Football. Most respondents also think there is some truth to the idea that the way the national team plays reflects in part the wider Dutch lifestyle, in particular, the capacity to organise and manage life in limited spaces, and that there is a distinct type of Dutch player. So in general, there are close links between football and the idea of a nation’s uniqueness, which fits our general analysis well. Another very interesting aspect is the mythical character of Johan Cruyff and the 1974 national team. It is worth quoting, again, Patrick at length:

*“He is a national hero. He brought us so many finals and won Euros for us. Then when he retired he did so much for Dutch football and football in general (...). He created total football in Holland and made the Netherlands what they are today - probably the best team ever to win the world cup in my opinion.”*

Other respondents have similar enthusiasm: Isabel, a 19-year-old Dutch woman says “Johan Cruyff was the talent of the Netherlands. I cannot think of a player that can beat him in that aspect.”. Samuel, 26 years old, who moved to London 8 months ago, thinks that “Cruyff is the greatest Dutch football player of all time, and played a very strong

role in shaping the [footballing] identity of the Netherlands, but also football in general". For Maarten, a 26 year old man, "Johan Cruyff is most definitely a national hero to me and is probably one of the greatest football minds the world will ever know". Cruyff is thus a mythical figure Dutch people can refer too, even after his death, as having done a lot, not only for Dutch football, but for the country in general. His virtues (not only his talent, but his embodiment of Dutch creativity and willingness to privilege the style of play over raw results) are akin to what nationalists use when they refer to heroes of the past to build national sentiment. He shares this mythical aspect with his 1974 team, narrowly defeated by the Germans in the World Cup Final, despite playing one of the most beautiful and revolutionary football to this day. This team's story is narrated from generations to generations as a source of national pride, in families, the press and via documentaries and clips. Patrick, who heard it via his father and video clips, reckons it is "still very present in Dutch people's imagination", as "our greatest team". Isabel, similarly, learnt the story from her dad: "we had an amazing national team who played very well together." All the respondents think it is still very present nowadays in the Netherlands. It is striking to note that none of them were even born when this team played! However, they had all heard of its story, a sign that this team is really part of a national narrative.

Moreover, football in the Netherlands, just like in our main analysis, bases its identity not only positively but negatively, in opposition to another team/nation, the Germans. All the respondents emphasise the rivalry with Germany and how important it is for them to win those games, compared to confrontations with other nations. Maarten, when asked whether beating the Germans is better than beating anyone else, answered: "Yes. Without a doubt! Beating Germany in an important game is the best". Michiel, a Dutch man in his 20s, replied "absolutely" and Isabel said "Yes, of course!". The opposition in style of play is mentioned too, between the traditional Dutch creativity and the German efficiency, but less than I could imagine. However, all the respondents are very young and the clichés associated to Germany's mechanical game were a lot stronger in the 80's and 90's, while, under the impulse of coach Low and the integration of sons of immigrants in the squad, their game has diversified a lot.

Finally, all the respondents say that when they talk with non-Dutch people, football is mentioned almost immediately: great Dutch clubs, players ("Marco van

Basten's volley against USSR, or Robben according to Patrick), and the national team. Football is a clear marker of Dutch identity for foreigners, according to our respondents. Isabel says that after people learn where she is from "the first reaction that I get is: Sneijder, Van Persie, Robben [Dutch players]. Yes, when they think of the Netherlands, the first thing they think of is football." Samuel thinks that "We're a very small country, and the things we are most known for are clogs & windmills, our tolerant mind-set, and football." All my respondents were self-declared football fans, so when asked whether football was part of their identity, they said yes. When asked whether this was part of Dutch identity more generally, responses were more divided. Patrick says yes ("it brings people together"), but others are more nuanced, emphasising the point that not everyone is a football fan. That being said, all but one mention the fact that during World Cups, everyone is interested in the national team's performance, which means the analysis of football as nationalism-builder is still robust, as, despite an uneven interest from the population, it generates a nationalist fever at least once every four years, that clearly binds people behind the eleven representatives of their imagined community.

Overall, this case study illustrates how football, via myth building and the development of stereotypes of opposition and rivalry, builds nationalism, corresponding to our main analysis and to the comparison we made between football and war. This overall comparison has proven robust in the framework of the nation-state: a national group occupying a delimited homeland under the rule of a corresponding political unit. We now turn to the cases of diasporas to see how, in times of globalisation, with many national groups leaving behind those borders, football has the potential to play a role different from that of war.

#### **4. Football, War and Nationalism In Times of Globalisation: A Case Study of the Portuguese Diaspora in France**

In this section, I analyse the case of the Portuguese community in France. After a brief reminder of the context, I present evidence from the French press showing that Portuguese people generally have a positive image in their country of residence. I then analyse results from a questionnaire I conducted online and with a Portuguese association in Gentilly (Val-de-Marne, Paris suburb) to show the role of football in

building an imagined community and the Portuguese identity. The key takeaway from this more hypothetical and empirical section is that football, in a time of globalisation, can foster a type of nationalism beyond the homeland borders, not limited to the nation-state, that links diaspora members amongst themselves and the whole body of nationals (diaspora and homeland citizens).

Before turning to the main arguments, because this dissertation is about comparing football and war, it is useful to consider the objection saying that war also has the power to build nationalism within diasporas. The point is, indeed, valid. There is no conceptual reason to believe that myths, traditions, rituals, emerging from war and linking a national community, should not apply to the members of this community living abroad. However, this fosters a kind of nationalism that primarily links diaspora members to their homeland and the memory and celebration thereof, rather than amongst themselves: it is very much the same type of nationalism analysed in section two, praising a national group and legitimising its right to have a homeland. This leads to the second point: football can build a type of nationalism that shapes an imagined community within the diaspora as much as with the homeland members, that is less conflictual - less based on opposition to other national stereotypes, and that has an integrative potential for diaspora members in their new country of residence, which in the end allows them to make sense of their double identity. This very last aspect clearly lacks with war which celebrates the national community and its legitimacy to occupy their homeland, but does not have any integrative potential for the diaspora in their new country. Football seems to accommodate the necessarily multi-layered identities of diaspora members. Finally, at least in Western Europe, where peace between nation-states has been established for more than half a century now, and where values of cooperation and fraternity between nations are very much at the heart of state-building in the post-war era, it is not unreasonable to think that war commemoration increasingly fulfils a “never again” educational mission, emphasising the need of peace as the basis of prosperity, as much as a nation-building purpose (witness the recurrent presence of German officials at French World War commemoration days). In that case, non-war myths will be increasingly relevant, in a world where traditional nation-states evolve under the influence of globalisation and the need for peace and cooperation

(again, in Western Europe at least), and I contend that football has the power to be one of them.

The world is increasingly globalised (Keating, 2001; Held, 2003). The nation-state, while still very relevant, is weakened in its traditional form (Mann, 2005). International flows, including migrations, have constantly increased throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to such an extent that today almost 3 per cent of the world population are migrants (190 million, OECD). In particular, World War Two belligerents used immigration significantly in order to rebuild after the conflict. France is an example of this, having witnessed massive arrivals from its former colonies and poorer European countries in the early post-war decades (McDonalds, 1969).

In general, international flows lead us to consider the mechanics of attachment to a territorial space or unit that is not ours, or no longer ours. Famously, in club football, it is very possible to have a deep sense of belonging to a team that does not represent one's own city. Such de-territorial supporters are common in Europe and in the world: Londoners supporting Liverpool, Celtic Glasgow fans in the US, or Marseille fans in Paris (Lestrelin and Basson, 2009). It is therefore logical to extend that reasoning to national teams: they form a vector for imagined communities and identity building for diasporas.

Those flows multiply people's possible senses of belonging (Waters, 2000; Pultar, 2014). It is very possible to feel an attachment to both the country of origin and of residence. Football allows a form of nationalism exportation, beyond the original state's borders. Haitians in the Dominican Republic provide an illustration (Wise, 2011): they constitute an important community, often facing deep prejudices and problems of integration. Football is a way, for them, to build their sense of community and keep their national roots alive. It is a genuine catalyser of imagined community for a diaspora: not only does it build the links between immigrants in another country, but it also preserves a form of relation between them and their fellow citizens who stayed at home. A similar case is made about Croatians arriving in Australia after World War II (Hay, 1998). Croatian football clubs there allowed them to build their identity and preserve their pride in their origins, but also provided them with places of socialisation, and helped them integrate the Australian society at large, the social link given by those clubs not only helping materially (support to find friends, a home, a job) but also

contributing to gaining a sense of oneself, and to making sense of the dual identity between homeland and country of residence.

The Portuguese in France (or French with Portuguese origins) represent a very interesting case for us. They fulfil most criteria to be considered a diaspora (dispersed in many countries, strong ethnic consciousness, collective memory; see Ibrahim and Ibrahim (2014) for more precision). The Portuguese constituted a significant share of the post-war newcomers. Most came between 1970 and 1974, escaping from Salazar's dictatorship and seeking better economic conditions. From 50.000 right after the war, the community grew to 700.000 in the middle of the seventies. Today, they are between 800.000 and 1.2 million people (Mediapart, 2010; Le Monde, 2016). In general, the Portuguese represent a very important community, around 600.000 or 700.00 in Ile de France (Paris region), thus constituting the largest foreign community there. This is more than Lisbon's municipality (Le Parisien, 2002).

A quick analysis of the French press confirms a widely-shared view in France: the Portuguese are well integrated and seen positively. Let aside the clichés on their so-called traditional jobs – construction industry, cleaning services – they are seen as “hard working, brave” (Mediapart, 2010), and making their way up in the French (rather fossilised) society (Le Parisien 2002). In general, their double-culture is seen as “peaceful” (La Croix, 2016), and even their celebration of Portugal's victory over France in the last Euro final was calmly accepted by French people. This hinted to a form of rare happiness between France and its diversity (Challenges, 2016). Not only are the Portuguese respected, but they also see themselves as part of France: many of them feel, at least in part, French, love their country of residence (which for many is their country as much as Portugal), while keeping an affective attachment to Portugal.

However well integrated, the Portuguese community massively and unambiguously supported Portugal during the last Euro, rather than France (La Croix, 2016). The final victory triggered demonstrations of joy all around the country. This is why I wanted to study this particular community: football constitutes the main vector of nationalism for them, the main builder of their imagined community and link with their home country. In the words of the historian Victor Pereira, at Pau university, quoted by Le Monde (2016), football and the Portuguese national team is:

*“a mean to assert themselves in their host society, a link constantly refreshed with the Portuguese imagined community, and, finally, a support of transmission of a Portuguese identity across generations, especially masculine. For the past decades, the National Team and the main football clubs in the country have been bearing the role of ambassador, of link between the Portuguese nation and the diaspora”.*

I thus conducted a questionnaire at the Paroisse Portugaise de Gentilly (Portuguese Catholic Church in Paris suburb), then online, to increase the number of answers to 46 overall. A key question was how the respondents self-evaluated their integration in France. 30 of them (65 per cent, an overwhelming majority) said they were “perfectly integrated”, 12 that they were “well integrated” and 3 that they were “integrated”. Interestingly, none of them said they were not integrated. This illustrates the point made above: Portuguese people manage to make their way through French society and feel comfortable there. However, they still feel very attached to their culture: a vast majority (around 70 per cent) say that Portuguese culture is at least important, if not very important, for them, especially in very closed circles such as family. In this cultural aspect, football is undoubtedly crucial: nearly half of the respondents (22) said they were playing and following the game closely, while almost everyone else either plays or follows closely. All respondents had, under that respect, a favourite club, most of them in Portugal (23).

Here comes the interesting bit. While the fraction of respondents saying they feel more Portuguese than French (59 per cent) and that saying they feel more or equally French (41 per cent) is roughly balanced, all but three respondents say they support Portugal when both national teams play against each other. This shows the importance of football for Portuguese people, a result bolstered by the fact that more than half of the respondents consider that this sport plays an important or very important part in their pride of being Portuguese. Imagined communities are also about building myths that hold the nation together, and, under that respect, nearly 40 per cent of respondents reckon Eder, the striker who scored the winning goal at 2016 Euros, is a national hero, while roughly 30 per cent believe Cristiano Ronaldo is more important than the Prime Minister. Obviously, those results, limited in sample and confounded (by education for instance), shall not be taken as representative of all the Portuguese in

France. However, they nonetheless provide a snapshot of their spirit, and illustrate the arguments made above. The Portuguese are well integrated, and balance their identities between their roots and their country of residence. But, when it comes to football, national feelings take over: they massively support Portugal and Portuguese clubs, which provide a way to assert their identity, and, more importantly, build imagined communities, both with fellow immigrants in France and with the nation in general. Importantly, this support for Portugal does not come as a rejection of France, an expression of unease towards the French society, of desire not to be identified as French, because, as we saw, the relationship between the Portuguese community and France is rather happy and smooth. It implies that this form of nationalism is less conflictual and oppositional than the one analysed in Section II. It is a way for Portuguese people to gain a sense of themselves in the French society. This more appeased nationalism is confirmed by the fact that no clear result emerged to the question “do you have a team that you prefer beating in particular”. While, as we saw, the Dutch dream to beat the Germans, there is no such rivalry and oppositional construction here. It is still, though, nationalism and not merely national identity, for the Portuguese still defend the legitimacy of their nation, and its right to be represented by a national team.

However, the most interesting part comes from the interaction with people at Gentilly, allowing to ask more detailed and specific questions, and react to the respondent’s answers. This meeting was also particularly stimulating because it provided a snapshot of Portuguese immigration in France. Gentilly is, indeed, a suburb in the heartland of the Portuguese community in France, the Val-de-Marne département (Le Monde, 2016). The Portuguese are catholic and quite religious. There, I met all the generations of Portuguese immigration, from those born in France to those who arrived at adult age to find better jobs.

In general, the results are very similar to the entire questionnaire ones. Interviewed people feel very integrated, but support Portugal in football, a sport which gives them pride and builds their link with the rest of the Portuguese community. Interestingly, most respondents (53 per cent) were born in France, which means football acts even more powerfully in their collective imagination of Portugal, as they never actually lived there. They mostly stopped education before university: I talked to

construction workers, nursery employees, secretaries. Interestingly, many of them smiled at the question of whether Eder was a national hero, or Ronaldo more important than the Prime Minister, answering spontaneously “oh no, let us not exaggerate their role”. This is the reverse of what one could expect intuitively, that is, less educated people being more prone to following myths. In a similar fashion, those who arrived recently are actually less likely to place France among the countries they prefer to beat in football. The rather high fraction of people who said they love to beat France (36 per cent) was actually mainly constituted of people born there, who, on the other hand, define themselves as perfectly integrated and, having gone through the French education system, speak the language perfectly. This, again, shows the importance of football in the assertion of their identity as a community, and their link with Portugal: fresher immigrants perhaps need football to lesser extent when attempting to gain a sense of national belonging, while those who are born here use football as a means to build it. Finally, a useful precision is that I talked to almost as many women and men, and that most women were also very interested in football. It would thus be simplistic to say it acts as an imagined community builder for a masculine sub-sample of the community only, as often implicitly thought. It has a universal community-building power.

To finish this section, let us focus in more details on two cases - the only two people I met at Gentilly who completed higher education. One is a woman, born in France, who went to university there and now has an executive position. She defines herself as perfectly integrated, and, despite the Portuguese culture being “very important, with Portuguese being spoken as much as French and most of her relatives being of Portuguese origins”, she feels as much French as Portuguese. However, her relation to football clearly exemplifies my point: she follows the game closely, supports a club in Portugal and not in France, and supports Portugal over France when both countries face each other. Football, she says, “plays a very important part” in her pride of being of Portuguese origin, while she considers Eder as a national hero, and Cristiano Ronaldo as more important than the Prime Minister. This illustrates the idea that football as identity builder is crucial for second generation Portuguese people in their relation to their nation, and that this is not the case for less educated people only. Similarly striking is the case of this man, born in France, educated in French

universities and now a manager in the private sector. He also thinks he is perfectly integrated, feels as much French as Portuguese, and, goes as far as saying that Portuguese culture only has a “moderate influence” on his everyday life, being “important but not more than culture and social relations” of the country where he lives. Again, football is important for him: he “plays and follows closely” the game. He has a favourite club in both countries, and football, albeit still playing a role, is only moderately important in his Portuguese pride feelings. And, yet, despite this very balanced record, he supports Portugal against France when both countries face one another, and reckons Ronaldo is more important than the Portuguese Prime Minister. The national myth of the Selecao captain and best player thus has an influence on him, and the national team is his main, if not only, powerful link to his country of origin and national community.

Summing-up, this case showed that football, in time of globalisation and international human flows, might build a form of nationalism beyond the borders of the nation-state, that allows diasporas to form an imagined community and be part of the national imagined community, while integrating into their country of residence, and building their double identity. This has the potential to differ from the type of nationalism bred by warfare.

## **5. Conclusion**

This dissertation explored the question of whether international football is comparable to international war in building nationalism. To answer, it first took the time to define what perspective to adopt on understanding nations, picking-up an ethno-symbolist view - seeing the nation as a modern invention rooted in pre-existing cultures - as the most accurate. This led to the emphasis of the role of war in building nationalism, since what matters is culture, traditions, rituals, myths, commemoration, and an idea of distinctiveness of the nation, warfare plays a crucial part in building heroes, virtues, history that binds the nation together, as well as in developing national stereotypes, both positively and negatively defined (in opposition to another nation). Under that perspective, football builds nationalism in a strikingly similar way. As illustrated by our Dutch case-study, myth-building, national narrative history, fierce rivalry and opposition to the enemy are all part of football. However, globalisation means nation-

states are evolving. In the post-war era, at least in Western Europe, they are increasingly emphasising peaceful values, hence the importance of appeased national myth-making, and often host large diasporas, thus the need for a nationalism that accommodates multi-layered identities. The case study on Portuguese people in France provides a first idea of how football can play that role. Larger sample sizes and control for confounders can test that claim empirically more robustly. Due to space limitation, this dissertation could not address all the issues related to the topic. Just like the relationship between warfare and nationalism is studied in the other direction (how nationalism causes war), it is possible to approach the nationalist influence on football. It would also be interesting to consider football, nationalism and immigration from the perspective of the home country. Many players do not represent their parents' nations nowadays, and the effects on national cohesion, varying in times of success and defeats, are worth exploring.

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