Introduction

One of the most intriguing developments of recent years has been the strengthening of local, regional and national identities in the context of the activities of supra-national structures such as the European Union and multinational business corporations, processes of globalisation, and the emergence of a 'new world order' with the collapse of the USSR. The problem of the resurgence of nationalism in the modern world has attracted much scholarly, as well as public interest, but relatively little attention has been paid to the role of sport in this connection and to the role of the Olympic movement in particular, which is a quintessentially global phenomenon. There is no specifically sociological monograph on this problem.

It is abundantly clear that the Olympic ideal of a non-political Games contributing to international understanding cannot be taken at face value, given the extent to which the Olympic movement, in reality, is subject to the play of political, economic and cultural forces. In particular, symbols of the nation and the state and ritual practices celebrating national identities are at the core of the Olympic Games. However, it is certainly a moot point as to whether Olympism merely reflects the influence of such forces, or whether it exists in a much more complex dynamic relationship with them.

The 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games presented an excellent opportunity to examine the relationship between Olympism and nationalism in the form of a case study. The host city is not only an important industrial metropolis within the Spanish state: it is also the capital of Catalonia, a historic nation with a strong sense of cultural identity. Given the past animosities between Madrid and Barcelona – not least during the civil war when Catalonia fought against Franco on the Republican side and suffered his 'politics of revenge' as a result – and given all that was at stake for Spain and for Catalonia economically, politically and culturally as a result of Barcelona's successful bid for the Games, there were bound to be tensions if not outright conflict between them, in which Catalan nationalism would play a major part.

What follows is an analysis of a specific conjuncture: Olympism had reached its apogee as a global cultural phenomenon and Catalan nationalism was flexing its muscles as part of a contemporary resurgence of ethnic nationalism. Of course, these Games had their own specific features, but hopefully an in-depth examination reveals something of the character of modern nationalism as well as of Olympism.

Chapter 1 analyses the relationship between sport and nationalism in general terms with reference to a range of instances. Particular attention is paid to the need to employ a more rigorous conception of the nation and nationalism than in the past in this connection, to the character of sport as a cultural form, and to the part played by symbols in the relationship between sport and nationalism.

Chapter 2 adumbrates further the conceptual framework for understanding nationalism introduced in chapter 1, and sets the relationship between Catalonia and Spain in a socio-historical context, showing how nationalism became a dominant force in Catalan political life. Thus it sets the scene for the conflict that was occasioned by the Olympics.

Chapter 3 examines the structure of Olympism as a global cultural phenomenon, the political, economic and cultural dimensions of its activities, and its relationship to nationalism.

Chapter 4 gives a detailed account of the nationalists' campaign to Catalanise the Games and how conflict developed between the Catalan nationalists and their opponents in the period between when the Games were awarded to Barcelona and when they actually opened.

Chapter 5 compares the extent to which the Games as a mode of cultural performance were, on the one hand, Catalanised and, on the other, Españolised, in terms of the elaborate, complex symbolic work that went on throughout the length of the Games.

Chapter 6 examines Olympic internationalist ideology and shows how it, together with Europeanisation, Americanisation and globalisation interacted with the process of Catalanisation.

Chapter 7 adduces the factors responsible for the outcome of the conflict between the competing interests that were mobilised around the Games, with particular reference to the strategies adopted by the different agents, the gains they made, and the nature of the political culture that they shared.

Chapter 8 summarises the findings, assesses the significance of the outcome for relations between Spain and Catalonia in the future, and what this indicates about the extent to which the viability of pluralist states is challenged by ethnic nationalism.

1 Sport and nationalism

Introduction

While specialists in nationalism have paid a good deal of attention to central aspects of culture such as language and religion, they have paid remarkably little attention to that other aspect of culture around which nationalism so often coheres in the modern world, namely, sport. Analysis of the relationship has suffered from inadequate conceptualisation as well as ideological bias. There is also an unfortunate tendency in the literature on this question to treat sport as a mere reflection of politics.

In realist international relations theory, if nationalism permeates international relations, then we should expect the conduct of sport at the international level automatically to reflect this state of affairs (Kanin, 1981). From Marxisant perspectives sport provides a ready vehicle for diffusing nationalist ideology to the masses and diverting them from their true interests. Thus the celebration of the American nation in the 1984 Los Angeles Games has been interpreted as promoting American ideals and values in a nationalist mode that helped to conceal and mitigate the effects of major divisions in American society (Lawrence and Rowe, 1986). References to sport and the nation in the British mass media are taken to represent the hegemony of 'banal nationalism' (Billig, 1995) and successive Conservative governments in Britain are held to have used sport for 'nationalistic purposes' (Houlihan, 1997). Globalised sport is said to have legitimised British imperialism and nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Holt, 1995) and to be helping to foist Western rationality and values on the non-West today (MacAloon, 1996; Houlihan, 1994). Such accounts are deficient, not only because they have little if any conception of sport as an autonomous cultural form, but also because they have no clear conception of nationalism.

The prevalence of loose conceptions of nationalism where sport is concerned is a major source of confusion. The term has come to signify ideas, sentiments and policies, including state policy, international conflicts and supportive public opinion. Often it means no more than an irrational,

atavistic form of politics, or obnoxious and aggressive policies pursued by governments. If all policies that states and nations adopt and their consequent actions in pursuit of what they conceive to be 'the national interest' are regarded as nationalist, then the use of the term is emptied of any specific meaning and it is rendered useless as an analytical tool (Breuilly, 1993). The nub of the confusion is a common failure to distinguish nationalist politics from other forms of politics, and this stems from the propensity to equate the state with the nation, and nationalism with the behaviour of the 'nation-state'. A vast diversity of cases of sport supposedly getting tied up with nationalism can thus be adduced, making it difficult, if not impossible, to formulate a theory which would encompass all of them, and indeed making it difficult not to find a connection between sport and nationalism. When it is claimed that cases as diverse as the role played by gymnastics clubs in the process of German unification in the nineteenth century, the nineteenth-century British cult of athleticism, hooliganism among English football supporters today, the Nazi-organised Berlin Olympics of 1936, Olympic politicking between the US and the USSR during the cold war, and public references to cricket by the last conservative prime minister, John Major, all reveal the machinations of nationalism at work in sport, there is plainly a need to be clear about what is meant by nationalism.

Nationalism is a specific type of politics generated where political movements seeking or exercising state power justify their action by attributing a specifically nationalist meaning to the symbol 'nation' (Brubaker, 1996). Essentially, nationalist ideology takes the form of a claim that there exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character, one of a world of nations, each with its own individuality, history and destiny. The nation is the source of all political power: loyalty to it overrides all other allegiances and its interests take priority over all other interests and values. Human beings must identify with the nation if they want to be free and realise their potential. If the nation is to be free and secure it must have sovereignty: that is to say the nation must possess its own state so that state and nation coincide (Breuilly, 1993; Smith, 1991). The idea of the peculiar nation is the explicit foundation of nationalists' political claims: statements in these terms, often incorporating the idea that the nation is seriously threatened, constitute the central ideological assertions deployed by nationalist movements and organisations.

Confusion about nationalism results when the elementary analytical distinction between the state and the nation is ignored and the two entities are elided. The concept of the state refers to the institution which successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a given territory (Weber, 1948). Nations, on the other hand, are population

groups held together by a particular kind of enduring identity which encompasses common myths of origin, historical memories, a common culture, conceptions of common rights, duties and economic opportunities and, above all, attachment to a given territory.[1] Modern states attempt to minimise and overcome internal divisions by fostering a sense of national identity, and governments typically claim to act in the national interest. Consequently, the two terms, 'state' and 'nation' are taken to be synonymous, as in the tendency to refer to the modern polity as the 'nation-state'. It should be clear, however, that it is possible for nations to emerge and exist for long periods without having states of their own. And the corollary of this is that many modern states – in fact the majority of them today – despite their nation-building ambitions, are multinational, rather than one-nation states. Of course, states and nations are often nationalistic, but they are not necessarily so, for nationalist movements emerge and nationalist strategies are adopted only in certain conditions and these vary tremendously.

Lastly, it should be clear that nationalism may function in support of or against the state. States may encourage nationalism in response to perceived internal or external threats, or they may be taken over by nationalist movements emanating from below. Alternatively, a nationalist movement may be generated among a national minority seeking to enhance its position within, or gain its independence from, its host state.

Nationalist and non-nationalist constructions of sport distinguished

Having cleared the ground conceptually as to the specificity of nationalist politics, it is possible to determine which kinds of cases can be classified as genuinely nationalist constructions of sport and which cannot. Let us first take the case of gymnastics and German nationalism. In the early nineteenth century, Johann Friedrich Jahn invented *Turnen*, from which German gymnastics, the modern form of competitive gymnastics, developed as a means of strengthening and directing the German national will

[1] The attempt to define the nation and use it as an analytical category is challenged by Rogers Brubaker (1996) on the grounds that to treat nations as 'real' substantial entities is to mistake a category of practice for a category of analysis. It is to reify a category that is a constructed, ideologically manipulated, fluid and continually changing aspect of political practice. In his opinion we would be better off referring to 'nationhood' or 'nationness'. Defining the nation is undoubtedly difficult and full of traps, but without a definition one cannot get anywhere and, as he admits, most commentators recognise that nations are not fixed entities. Of course, the same objection could be made with respect to the state, and he is inconsistent in not doing so. Also, in any case, the same objection could surely be applied to 'nationhood' and 'nationness'.

in the cause of German unification. The *Turnen* movement advocated the superiority of everything German over the foreign. Immensely successful in creating a network of clubs throughout Germany, *Turnen* became a pillar of German nationalism – so much so that when football spread to the continent from Britain it was denounced in Germany as 'the English disease', as un-German, a symptom of Anglo-Saxon superficiality and materialism, the product of a land without music or metaphysics. English games were considered rational, international and semitic, lacking 'higher values' such as reference to *Volk* and *Vaterland* (Dixon, 1986). Here we have an unequivocal case of sport being used to mobilise nationalist forces against the existing state structures and helping to produce a new, modern and highly nationalistic German state.

Contrast this with the cult of athleticism in Britain at the time. In Britain, it was to a significant extent through the cult of athleticism promoted in the public schools as the second half of the nineteenth century wore on, as the empire grew, and Britain came close to achieving global hegemony, that a sense of national superiority, tinged later with jingoistic sentiment, was diffused, especially among the dominant classes (Hargreaves, 1986). An important cultural aspect of the expansion of Britain's power was the export of sport to large areas of the world and especially to the empire, where it provided a source of social solidarity for the British in an alien environment and a means of enculturing their subjects.

It has been argued that British nationalism thus concealed itself under the cloak of racist imperialism which, it is claimed, was a prominent feature of the cult of athleticism (Holt, 1995). The cult of athleticism as a child of its times was, no doubt, permeated by imperialist sentiment, but the claim that it was racist–nationalist is based largely on the fact that social Darwinist notions of racial superiority were currently in fashion. However, British imperialism was not a unitary phenomenon: it was driven as well by a variety of other ideal and material interests, from religious conviction, strategic considerations, economic advantage and philanthropic motives to liberal and progressive ideas. Even if we were to accept that racist imperialism inspired the cult of athleticism and that racism and imperialism could be equated with nationalism, there would still be a problem. The cult of athleticism was largely restricted to the elite's sports, and so could not possibly have been used to help mobilise a mass nationalist movement.

The promotion of sport in Britain differed fundamentally from the pattern in comparable countries like Germany and France at the time. There was no centralised state direction of sport, or any ambition to encompass the whole population, let alone a concerted drive to promote

sport for military preparation and national unity. Those who favoured such policies in ruling circles were a small minority who failed to obtain the requisite support for their programme (Hargreaves, 1986; Kruger, 1996). Sport was, in the main, firmly in the hands of elements within civil society – the public schools, the churches, and the voluntary associations – whose efforts to spread a suitably modified version of the cult of athleticism, through the rational recreation movement, were limited to targeting only certain sections of the population deemed to be in need of social order and discipline. Sporting activity in Britain before 1914 may often have had patriotic overtones but it hardly amounted to the kind of nationalistic mobilisation we see at the time in Germany and France.

Today, great national sporting events like the FA Cup Final, enveloped in rather elaborate ritual and ceremonial activity, deploy powerful symbols of the nation – the presence of royalty, flying the Union Jack, playing the national anthem, singing 'Abide with me', etc. – and thereby celebrate national unity, but this is far from constituting a mobilisation of nationalist sentiment as such. It is true that English football hooliganism today is tinged with xenophobia and ethnocentrism, but this involves only a minority of supporters and hardly amounts to the significant manifestation of English ethnic nationalism that some commentators are wont to detect. Nor should the vociferous support given by immigrant groups to visiting cricket teams from their countries of origin, when they play against England, be necessarily taken as expressions of anti-British nationalist sentiment, although clearly questions of ethnic and national identity are involved here (Werbner, 1996).

In fact, paradoxically, the way that indigenous nationalism manifests itself in sport in Britain is predominantly in the form of minority, peripheral nationalism directed against the British state. Apart from Welsh and Scottish nationalism, which tends to be given vent in football and rugby matches against England, and which is of limited political significance (Jarvie and Walker, 1994), easily the most important nationalist construction of sport within the British state concerns Irish nationalism. The thinking of leading Irish nationalists like Archbishop Croke lay behind the foundation in 1884 of the Gaelic Athletic Association. He complained of 'the ugly and irritating fact that we are daily importing from England not only her manufactured goods . . . but her fashions, her accents, her vicious literature, her dances and her pastimes to the utter discredit of our grand national sports, and to the sore humiliation, as I believe, of every son and daughter of the old land' (Holt, 1995: 45). The Gaelic Athletic Association established itself as the most important sporting body in Ireland in the struggle for Irish independence that culminated in the formation of the Irish Republic in 1921. It pursued a policy of promoting exclusively Irish

sports, like hurling and Gaelic football, and refused to play English sports on the grounds that they undermined Irish culture. It plays a prominent part in the Irish republican, nationalist movement in Northern Ireland today (Sugden and Bairner, 1986; 1993). Indeed, sport is one of the most important ways in which divisions between the Catholic nationalist and Protestant unionist communities are maintained. Although rugby, cricket and hockey are organised on an all-Ireland basis, i.e. their governing bodies embrace the British North of Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (with which Irish nationalists north of the border want to unite), these particular games are played mainly by members of the Protestant unionist community. The most popular game in both communities – soccer (football) – despite much governmental effort to make it function in a way that breaks down communal barriers, divides the two communities, since clubs increasingly tend to be exclusively identified with one or other community (Sugden and Bairner, 1993; Bairner and Darby, 1999).

There are many other instances of stateless nations and peoples systematically cohering around sport against their host states, including Quebec nationalism against Anglophone Canada (Harvey, 1999), Norwegian nationalism directed at Sweden before the two countries separated (Goksøyr, 1996), Flemish nationalism against Francophone Belgium (Vanreusal *et al.*, 1999), the Finns against Tsarist domination, the Slav nationalist Sokol movement against their Austro-Hungarian, Tsarist and Ottoman oppressors in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Guttmann, 1994), and independence movements among the many peoples emerging from colonial rule in Asia and Africa in the twentieth century, such as South Africa, India and the West Indies (Guelke, 1993; Guelke and Sugden, 1999; Appadurai 1990; James, 1976; Monnington, 1986; Stuart, 1996).

Sport has played an important part in the development of African nationalism and one of the most striking, and in some ways unusual, cases is that of the emergence of the new South Africa (Guelke, 1993). Under the apartheid regime the sense of identity of the white community, and in particular the Afrikaners, cohered to a considerable extent around a fanatical attachment to sports, especially to rugby and cricket. Tolerance of the regime in international circles was achieved to a significant extent through its international sporting contacts. Consequently, the international sports boycott of South Africa from the 1970s onwards proved to be a potent weapon in the hands of the anti-apartheid movement: it reinforced black nationalism and pan-Africanism, helped to demoralise the whites, and was a major factor in the demise of the regime.

The fact that South Africa was so heavily implicated in, and reliant upon, the globalised sports system was absolutely fundamental to the

successful outcome of the anti-apartheid struggle. Every international sports body, from the IOC and FIFA to individual international sports federations and virtually every government, was persuaded through an extensive world-wide campaign lasting for thirty years to boycott South African sport. Campaigns around globalised sports like rugby and cricket, and around the Olympics, possibly did more damage to the South African apartheid regime in propaganda terms and did more to mobilise opposition to apartheid world-wide than any other form of action. That regime collapsed, not primarily from internal opposition which, important as it was, was relatively ineffective against South Africa's formidable security apparatus, but from globally organised pressure in the political, economic and cultural spheres, and global sport proved to be, in many ways, South Africa's Achilles' heel.

The African National Congress (ANC) government now in power regards sport as one of the main instruments for building a multiethnic nation, although there is little concrete evidence that it actually performs that function, given the enormous divisions between the different racial groups (Guelke and Sugden, 1999).

Nationalism has been the ideological bedrock of fascist and quasi-fascist regimes and they provide some of the most outstanding examples of the subordination of sport to state nationalism. Mussolini's Italy pioneered the process whereby sport and leisure institutions for the mass of the population were thoroughly integrated into the corporate state (De Grazia, 1981), and top-level sport was systematically developed with the objective of producing successful national teams for the greater glory of the fascist nation-state. Thus the international prestige of Italy was enhanced when it took second place in overall terms in the Los Angeles Olympics of 1932 and when it won the FIFA World Cup in 1934 and 1938 (Kruger, 1996).

Although Franco's Spain cannot be classified unequivocally as a fascist regime, its overall character places it closer to that type of political system than any other. Sport, and in particular football, was made to serve the cause of *franquista* nationalism in the most thorough attempt in Spanish history to create a centralised, homogeneous Spanish nation (Shaw, 1987; Burns, 1999; Duke and Crolley, 1996). The Spanish League clubs were taken over and administered by Franco's placemen with the intention of transforming the football stadium into a kind of nationalist church where the nation and its values could be celebrated through nationalist propaganda, ritual and symbol.

Japanese fascism lacked the degree of coordination and a mass-based party that characterised Italian and German fascism, but like them it was virulently nationalist. Sport was accordingly structured with the aim of

producing a fit and healthy population ready for war, and elite sport was generously supported by the state with the objective of enhancing Japan's prestige through success in international competition (Abe, Kiyohara and Nakajima, 1992).

German nationalism was at the root of national socialism, and in terms of planning, organisation, political control, ideological content, techniques of presentation (particularly the use of the media) and financing, the manner in which the Nazi regime staged the Berlin Olympics of 1936 probably represents a watershed in the relationship between sport and nationalism, in that it revealed how effectively international sport could be used by a ruthless state nationalist machine (Mandell, 1971). One aspect among many that exemplified the Nazis' mastery of sport for nationalistic purposes was the Olympic torch relay, now a standard feature of every Games. Invented by the 1936 Olympic Games organiser and classical scholar Carl Diem, like these Games as a whole it was designed to mobilise German nationalist sentiment in the most unprecedented, spectacular way. For the first time the sacred Olympic flame was conveyed by a torch lit at Olympia, the birthplace of the ancient Games in Greece, and carried by a relay of hundreds of athletes through the intervening countries to the host city, Berlin. Mythology, classical scholarship, costume, architecture, dance, music, images of the countryside, sport and recreation, were all integrated into an elaborately staged exercise, involving complex ceremonies and ritual practices, which was intended to symbolise the supposed links between the Nazi state, German culture and the origins of European civilisation. The exercise was brilliantly filmed for propaganda purposes by Hitler's favourite filmmaker, Lenni Riefenstahl. In this context the torch relay functioned as a symbol of Germany's greatness and her role as a leader of European civilisation. In subsequent Olympic Games it would come to signify quite different things.

In common with national socialism, communist forms of totalitarianism attempt to obliterate civil society and thoroughly to incorporate sport into the service of the state. Although the former German Democratic Republic, the Soviet Union and, today, Cuba have been enormously successful in using sport to represent them favourably on the world stage, it would be a mistake in most cases to assimilate fascist and communist uses of sport to the same nationalist category. With the exception of Cuba, which is a rather special case,[2] the meaning of the nation is different in

[2] Arguably, the nationalist element in Cuban communism is at least as important, if not more important, than socialism. The official slogan *Patria o Muerte* ('Homeland or Death') is one indication of the regime's strength of commitment to the politics of nationalism.