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Soccer Fascism: Sports and International Relations in Italy, 1934-1938

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History

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Abstract

This thesis explored the use of soccer in international relations with a focus on the perception of Italy and athletic success within the Anglo-American press. There is an emphasis on the reorganization of the sport during the 1930s as well as on fascist ideals in sports, particularly within Serie A soccer and the Italian national team. Furthermore, I focus on the perceptions of the nation within the press and foreign public opinion through sports journalism; how the narrative surrounding Italian soccer and athletes may reflect the opinions of the nation and its political ideology in general. It was during this period where the popularity of soccer in Italy was entrenched in the political ideology of Mussolini as it became conflated with fascist values and symbolism; this is explored through the Italian athletic participation on a global stage, particularly the 1934 and 1938 FIFA World Cup, as well as the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games.

Keywords:

Sports, Politics, International Relations, Fascism, Soccer, World Cup, Olympics, Foreign Policy, Italy, 1930s, Anglo-American Press

Summary for Lay Audience

This thesis explored the use of soccer and the FIFA World Cup as an extension of Italian foreign policy between 1934 and 1938 through the perspective of the Anglo-American Press.

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In memory of my Grandpa, I miss you. You said I had spunk, I will always try to live up to that.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definitions
CONI	Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano, Italian National Olympic Committee
FIFA	Fédération Internationale De Football Association
FIGC	Federazione Italia Giuoco Calcio
GFC	Gruppo Femminile Calcistico
HJ	Hitler Youth
IOC	International Olympic Committee
OND	Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro, National Afterwork Club
PNF	Partito Fascista Nazionale
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
USA, US	United States of America
UK	United Kingdom

Chapter One: Prologue

The intersection of sports and politics is evident at international, national, regional, and even local levels; this connection allows for sports and sporting events to be used as a vehicle for diplomacy, an extension of foreign policy, a reinforcement of cultural and political norms, and propaganda. This thesis explored how the relationship between sports and politics intersect with that between sports and the mass media to produce an image of the nation domestically and internationally. It discussed how the collective consciousness of state citizens was impacted by propaganda and the use of leisure, common pastimes, and interests to promote political ideology as well as the international perceptions of a nation through mass media and participation in sporting events. I explored the use of soccer in international relations with a focus on the use of sport as an extension of foreign policy by Benito Mussolini particularly during the 1934 and 1938 FIFA (*Fédération Internationale De Football Association*) World Cups and the responses to these events and the political environment within Italy by the foreign press, particularly British and American as Mussolini was a pioneer of sport diplomacy in the modern era.

Sports are often used by governments around the world as a vehicle for diplomacy and international relations as well as for the promotion of ideology in the international arena and the creation and reinforcement of a national identity. For nations where soccer is ingrained in society, the status of the sport has been elevated to a national symbol. Mediterranean nations in particular maintain some of the most influential sports cultures relating to soccer. As a result of the extent to which the sport is ingrained in these societies, the outcomes of the FIFA World Cup and The UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) European Football Championship, as well as the Olympic Games, can have an extreme impact on national self-perception as well as

national reputations in the international arena. This was especially evident in the case of Italy during the 1930s as the 1934 World Cup was hosted by the nation and the national team achieved three international championships at the two World Cups (1934 and 1938), and, as well, the 1936 Olympic Football title. The national team coached by Vittorio Pozzo during this period reinforced the militarism and leadership of Mussolini's governance as the fascist regime exploited the team to reinforce this cult of personality. It was during this era that the Mussolini regime was able to use such a popular sport both domestically and internationally to promote fascist ideologies and images on a global stage. Sports were an integral part of Mussolini's government and the nation's foreign policy; sport was used to distinguish his regime from its predecessor and increase Italy's international status. FIFA performances and sports served to bolster nationalism and promote national identity as well as to present the idea of fascist success on a global stage.

Sport diplomacy and sport as an extension of foreign policy is not apolitical. Rather it has a far reach of ideology in the day-to-day lives of citizens. This places soccer as a metaphor for idealized fascism under an autocratic leader and a selected group of players that were stronger as a unit than they were individually. The central argument is that Mussolini used soccer as an extension of foreign policy to present and promote Italian fascism to the international community and to establish a universal form of fascism through a resurgence of Italian strength and influence. This was done through the conflation of soft power diplomacy and sport diplomacy as the national team represented the state, its values, and ideologies. Penelope Kissoudi states in her article "Sports, Politics and International Relations in the Twentieth Century" that "the interweaving of sport and politics is evident at the international, national, and regional levels. History shows that governments have used international sports events... to pursue their own

interests rather than understanding, friendship, and peace.”¹ Players and athletes may be considered diplomatic agents as they present the strength, skill, and values of their respective nations within international sports. Indeed, international sport maintained, and continues to maintain, a representational aspect as individual athletes and teams become physical and observable embodiments of a nation’s strengths and weaknesses by those around the world. This is observed not only by their competitors but also by the larger global community that watches and consumes sports and entertainment through the media. Indeed, sports participation helps to construct and reinforce national identity. Furthermore, according to Kissoudi, international sporting events allow politicians to, “publicize sports events and associate themselves with high-profile athletes and teams that have been successful in international competition.”² As sports are used to create national identity, they are also used to present national accomplishments on a global scale. This is one of the major uses of sports by Mussolini and his government in the 1930s; particularly visible when the FIFA World Cup is explored as a mechanism for the presentation of fascism on a global stage through the reorganization of *calcio* (soccer or football) within the nation and improvements to infrastructure.

Chapter One discussed Regulatory bodies and politics in the international athletic sphere and the concept of sport diplomacy. It explored the intersection of international sports regulation and how they may be influenced by political ideologies. Focused on Italian domestic policy during the 1930s, particularly 1934-1938, Chapter Two explored various domestic policy decisions that impacted the athletic environment in Italy, how Mussolini’s political agenda impacted gender relations within Italy, comparative global perspectives on gender, and

¹ Penelope Kissoudi, “Sport, Politics and International Relations in the Twentieth Century,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 25:13 (2008): 1692.

² *Ibid.*, 1693.

comparative fascist politics between Italy and Germany during the 1930s. Chapter Three explored the role of Italian foreign policy in influencing the nation and the concept of athletic exchange with a focus on the controversy surrounding the use of *oriundi* players. Chapter Four discussed sports as a vehicle for propaganda through the reinforcement of a national image, one that reflected political aims of Italy and the nation's leadership, stadium construction and infrastructure developments as a form of propaganda and a way to present the strength of the nation to the international community, the symbolic value of sport and how athletic events may be used as a vehicle of propaganda, and the use of ephemera. Finally, Chapter Five then examined the Anglo-American media representation of the 1934 World Cup, 1936 Olympic Games, and 1938 World Cup to offer the press perspective of each event, how the athletic ability and performance of Italy was relayed to the English and American public, and the image of the state through the lens of sports journalism.

Definitions

The following definitions establish the concepts and provide context for the key terms and ideology put forth in this thesis.

Robert Paxton defines fascism as “a form of political behaviour marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity...”³ Similarly, Stanley Payne explores fascism as an ideology that seeks a “new order in foreign affairs, a new relationship or set of alliances with respect to contemporary states and forces, and a new status for the nations in Europe and the world,” as

³ Stanley G Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (Random House INC: 2004), 218.

they establish fascism as a form of political religion.⁴ ‘Mussolinianism’ refers to the fascist and totalitarian ideologies, policies, and goals of Benito Mussolini during his time in power. This form of fascism is characterized by "a left-wing collectivist ideology in opposition to socialism, liberalism, [and] democracy."⁵ Furthermore, this form of fascism is emphasized as "anti-individualistic. The fascist conception of life stresses the importance of the state and accepts the individual only in so far as his interests coincide with those of the state... it is opposed to classical liberalism."⁶ This description of fascism was expressed by Mussolini in 1932 as he aimed to explain, "fascism reasserts the rights of the state as expressing the real essence of the individual... fascism stands for liberty, and for the only liberty worth having."⁷ Italian fascism during the mid-late thirties was a continuation of early PNF rhetoric where they attended to the tradition and sentiment of the nation.⁸ Mussolini was central to the politics of the state; this period was characterized by an extension of the sphere of political influence into social life, extending into the private, familial space as well through gender expectations and youth organizations.⁹

Soccer refers to *calcio*, the Italian translation of the sport widely known as football. Although the sport existed around the globe, England was credited for the introduction of modern ‘football,’ to Italy as by *The Manchester Guardian* in 1934: "Association football was introduced into Italy forty years ago by English residents, but the game has now become truly

⁴ Robert Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 11.

⁵ Benito Mussolini, *Fascism: Doctrine and Institutions* (Rome: 1935) in *Sport Italia: The Italian Love Affair with Sport*, by Simon Martin (New York: I.B. Taurus & Co LTD, 2011), 146-153.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Emilio Gentile, "The Problem of the Party in Italian Fascism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 19:2 (1984), 255.

⁹ Ibid, 263-264.

national, with characteristics peculiar to the country."¹⁰ However, the name of the sport was not adopted; "the word football is not in the Italian dictionary, the Federation corresponding to the Football Association of England assumed the title of *Federazione Italiana Giuoco del Calcio*, or the game of kicking."¹¹ Indeed, "[t]he word calcio which defines soccer in Italian, is not, as in other European languages, a literal or phonetic translation of the English word 'football.' This term covered a variety of games played in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, all over Italy but especially in Florence."¹² I will refer to the sport as soccer throughout this thesis, for continuity and recognition as well as for personal preference.

Azzurri refers to the Italian national team, it is a commonly used nickname alongside the English translation "The Blues." This nickname originated in 1910 at the conception of the national team; the jersey colours were meant to represent the House of Savoy, the monarchy in place prior to the country's political shift towards becoming a republic as the House of Savoy ruled the nation, with interruptions, from 1861 to 1946. The official colour of the House of Savoy was blue, this colour was chosen to be worn by the national team prior to its first match in 1910 and has continued to remain the home jersey colour in reference to the nation's former ruling monarchy.

¹⁰ "Italy's Football Progress, Foundations Laid by Lancashire Players: To-Day's International at Highbury," *The Manchester Guardian*, November 14, 1934, 3.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Pierre Lanfranchi and Stephen Wagg, "Cathedrals of Concrete: Football in Southern European Society," in *Giving the Game Away: Football, Politics & Culture on Five Continents*, edited by Stephen Wagg (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 125.

Methodology and Limitations

The aim of this thesis explored how soccer helped shape the global perception of Italy during the 1934 and 1938 World Cups and the 1936 Olympic Games. Soccer was used to reflect Italian values and political strength to the global community. The sport aided the promotion of fascist-era political and cultural values through the integration of sport into Mussolini's regime as well as foreign and domestic policy.

These events, the 1934 World Cup and Italy-England exhibition match, 1936 Olympic Games, and 1938 World Cup are used as case studies and placed within the context of international relations during this period in order to study media and government perceptions of nation-states through sports and politics. This establishes the explicit use of soccer and the FIFA World Cup as an extension of foreign policy. It was through soccer and the World Cup that the global community was given a consumable version of fascism as the global community participated in creating this version of fascism as well.

Considering the existing literature relating to the topic of sports, political ideology, and international relations, I built on this research by focusing on the Anglo-American press as well as foreign policy documents relating to Italy and international soccer during this period. As such, I focus on media perceptions and cultural politics as I analyze the use of sports in international relations during this specific period. I build on the existing literature surrounding Mussolini's foreign policy and use of sport diplomacy by almost exclusively focusing on newspaper perceptions. Although this will offer a hyperbolic perception of Italy during this period, these news sources will have been the main source of information for the general population on sports, politics, and international events.

Historiography

The historiography of Italian foreign policy and sport diplomacy during Mussolini's regime reflects the concept and creation of "soccer fascism," where there is an emphasis on the conflation of sport and political ideology as well as the explicit use of soccer as a vehicle for the creation and reinforcement of a national identity that aligned with the Duce's ideological goals and aspirations for the nation. The main secondary sources used for this thesis relate to the topic of sport diplomacy and sport in international relations, as well as a more focused study on Mussolini's use of sport in foreign and domestic politics, the use of sport as a vehicle for mass culture and control over the collective consciousness of the state, and as gender relations and inequalities within athletic programs and leagues. For instance, in his book *Sport Italia*, Simon Martin discusses the use of sports to set Mussolini's regime apart from its predecessor and to improve Italian status and influence within the international sphere.¹³ Similar to other authors, Martin's writing reflects the language of war and diplomacy, he argues that athletic 'battles' and victories created an image of an energetic nation that was capable of fighting and winning.¹⁴ In many ways, this language of war reflects that of sport journalism as well as the sentiments put forward by the Italian government that these athletes were not only representing their nation on a global sphere, they were also defending and serving their nation similarly to those in the military.

Similarly, the existing literature that focuses on sport diplomacy and sports within international relations focuses on sports and international games and tournaments such as the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup as proxy wars and alternative arenas for diplomacy and

¹³ Simon Martin, *Sport Italia: The Italian Love Affair with Sport* (New York City: I.B. Taurus & Co LTD, 2011), 68-69.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 68.

international relations. The strategies, motivations, and goals of athletes and national teams are often impacted by the political desires of the state and thus athletes' behaviour and performances are a reflection of the state. In his article, "About Winning: The Political Economy of Awarding the World Cup and the Olympic Games," Stefan Szymanski argues that these events such as the Olympics and the World Cup offer a way for nations to compete with one another as well as provide an environment for friendly competition and cooperation.¹⁵ However, they are also used as a form of political endorsement and a tool of the state which may be considered problematic when hosting privileges are awarded to non-democratic regimes. There is an established use of sports by governments, one which is important because of the opportunistic characteristics of Mussolini and his recognition of the social and cultural influence of sports. This is explored by Halperin in his book *Mussolini and Italian Fascism* that discusses Italian fascism and the concept of 'Mussolinianism.'¹⁶ These characteristics of the Duce allowed for an extension of government influence on a national and global level as soccer became a vehicle for political propaganda. Furthermore, they argue that Mussolini's rise to power and the establishment of a fascist dictatorship in Italy was a result of personal motivations which were reflected in all aspects of policy creation. These sources offer a plethora of information as they explore the use of sports as a form of cultural diplomacy and vehicle for political ideology. There is a focus on the international implications of national athletic policies and practices as well as the intersection between sports, politics, and ideology.

The literature surrounding this intersection between sport, culture, and politics, as well as the use of sport in controlling the class consciousness centres around the cultural value of sport,

¹⁵Stefan Szymanski, "About Winning: The Political Economy of Awarding the World Cup and the Olympic Games," *SAIS Review of International Affairs* vol. 31, no. 1 (2011), 90.

¹⁶ William S. Halperin, *Mussolini and Italian Fascism* (Princeton: Van Nostrand Anvil Books, 1964), 72.

the reflection of sport on social hierarchies and values, the use of sport to control and maintain a specific status quo, as well as promote national identity and unity. In “Chapter two: Sport, Culture and Ideology,” John Hargreaves explores this intersection and the role sports play in controlling the population, as an extension of government policy on a national level as a way to maintain social hierarchies and ideals.¹⁷ There is an emphasis on political hegemony and class consciousness. Hargreaves states, “there is no sense in which people might quite consciously value sports as meaningful and beneficial aspects of their lives, while at the same being aware that ruling groups attempt to use sport as an instrument of control.”¹⁸ He suggests that there is a false belief in a naïveté of political control of sport as a way to control and maintain the status quo of the community and national population, as it suggests people are not willing to exchange one privilege for another. This naïveté is in reference to the assumption that sport and athletics is often viewed as simply an activity of ‘enjoyment’ or ‘play’ rather than a medium for the transference of political ideology to control the masses.¹⁹ There is a recognition for the importance of cultural and cultural activities as well as interests in social and political life that is explored further in “Chapter three: Highlights and Action Replays — Ideology, Sport, and the Media” by Alan Clarke and John Clarke as they highlight the use of the mass media in relaying ideology through sports.²⁰ There is a connection made between sports and nationalism above local and regional identities as sport is utilized as a cultural symbol, particularly sports that are wildly popular with national populations and associated with the nation, such as American football as well as baseball in the United States and ice hockey in Canada. The focus on the

¹⁷ John Hargreaves, edited, “Sport, Culture, and Ideology,” in *Sport, Culture and Ideology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD, 1982), 30-60.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 43.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 32.

²⁰ Alan Clarke and John Clarke, “‘Highlights and action replays’ – ideology, sport and the media,” in *Sport, Culture and Ideology*, 62.

media's role in sports' perceptions and clear demarcations and spheres of engagement reinforce the use of sports as an ideological tool to enforce specific narratives. Furthermore, the media promotes the pageantry of sport and international events as "the media transform[s] sport from the game itself into (another) example of the greater drama of human emotion, triumph, misery and despair."⁶ In Barbara Keys' book *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s*, she explored the athletic landscape of the 1930s, her discussion on the Nazi Olympics in 1936 provides information on Nazi sports politics and motivations surrounding the 1936 Olympic Games. Keys also explored early in her book the intricate dynamic between international sports, global politics, and the role that sports organizations at domestic and international levels influenced culture, politics, and diplomatic relations.²¹

This use of sporting events in such a way within Italy during Mussolini's time in power is explored by Enrico Landoni, in his article "Propaganda and Information Serving the Italian Sports Movement: The Case of the Periodical *Lo Sport Fascista* (1928-43)." Enrico claims that Mussolini's decision to focus on sport was partially motivated by the 1924 Paris Olympic Games. He states that "with 3,076 athletes representing 44 countries. It was then that Mussolini became fully aware of the importance that sports had acquired on political, social, economic, and cultural levels in most developed countries."²² Thus providing the foundation for the "well structure, broad, and articulated intervention by the fascist regime," into the athletic sphere; a sphere that helped guide popular tastes and habits through the general population.²³ Sports introduced a level of control and unconscious support of fascist ideals through common

²¹ Barbara Keys, *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 41.

²² Enrico Landoni, "Propaganda and Information Serving the Italian Sports Movement: The Case of the Periodical *Lo Sport Fascista* (1928-43)," *Journal of European Periodical Studies* 5:1 (2020), 44.

²³ Ibid.

pastimes, hobbies, and forms of entertainment. This focus on fascist sport policy in Italy intended in part, on building a strong nation through a strong, athletic population. In her chapter, “Sport and Fascism,” from *Sport and society in Italy today*, Patrizia Dogliani states that “physical education instructors were ‘biological engineers and builders of the human machine,’” as they transformed “sports education throughout the nation.”²⁴ These policies and sentiments were created with the intention of a revitalized existence of virility, camaraderie, and discipline within the Italian population.

Although a large part of the discourse on Italian sports politics and sports diplomacy focuses on the 1934 World Cup and other events hosted by the country during this period, the 1938 World Cup is important and holds different implications than other international tournaments within the soccer world. In the context of 1938, there is the increasing tensions between France and Italy as well as the continued implications of the Spanish Civil War from 1936. Furthermore, the connection between fascist European states and politicians — Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany — underscored by the growing relations, treaties, and agreements between the two nations impacted the global political environment and perceptions. The 1938 French World Cup is situated within international relations and sports history discourse through these various topics, issues, and geopolitical events. Because of the growing tension between states and the support or involvement with specific regimes, namely Hitler’s Nazi regime in Germany and Francisco Franco’s rebel forces as they continued the civil war in Spain, the international perceptions of Italy shifted in a more obviously negative direction.

²⁴ Patrizia Dogliani, “Sport and Fascism,” *Sport and Society in Italy Today* 5:3 (2000), 327.

In *Mussolini and Italian Fascism*, Halperin writes on the political motivations of Mussolini and his government in 1938, the larger geopolitical tensions, and the implications of athletic victory on foreign soil. The foreign policy explored throughout Halperin's book as well as the social and economic policies and implications are incredibly important for both World Cups. Halperin's focus on media and propaganda is important as well as his claim to "bring the country glory," glory that Mussolini's liberal predecessors were not able to accomplish through military, political, and social campaigns focusing on the image of the nation, increasing the nation's influence globally, and re-establishing strength.²⁵ Finally, Halperin also discusses the squadrisimo - or black-shirted gangs - associated with Mussolini as his personal militia, those who enforced his politics on the Italian population; these are reflected in the *maglia nera* worn by the Italian national team during the 1938 World Cup final. In *The World's Game* Bill Murray explores the relationship between France and Italy and the tension between states politically and athletically. He emphasizes the bilateral and multilateral relations within Europe and their impact on the World Cup.

The emphasis when discussing the 1938 World Cup is on the growing tension between France and Italy and the implications of their athletic competition on their political and social relations. As France was also the host of the event, Italy's victory over France holds particular significance. Firstly, Murray addresses the absence of some countries as participants and the political reasons for this: the Spanish Civil War was ongoing, Austria had lost their independence and was now formally incorporated into Germany earlier that year, and British countries continued to stand against the FIFA World Cup claiming their championship was

²⁵William S. Halperin, *Mussolini and Italian Fascism* (Princeton: Van Nostrand Anvil Books, 1964), 72.

more.²⁶ Furthermore, Murray explores the changing French-Italian dynamic over the years through political and social events, as tensions between the two nations continued to rise and sport and recreation was used by both governments to insult or oppose the other. The French resentment of Italy was shown through the strong support of all teams opposing the Italians and their vocal disparagement of Italian victory as shown in the match between Brazil and Italy: “a storm of abuse accompanied the Italians from the field after a victory gained by a controversial goal.”²⁷ Finally, Murray explores the dynamics and expectations of Italian athletes as representatives for their nation as well as the links between athletic representation and military service. As playing for their nation had previously been likened to serving their country on a different field of battle there was also the threat of losing their limited autonomy as national team athletes and being sent to serve their country as a result of losing. He states that, “Italians were used to playing high risk high reward games, with the norm being high rewards for winning and the threat of harsh penalties for losing, including the threat of being sent on military service.”²⁸ This explores the win at all cost mentality others report the Italian players possessing as a result of harsh penalties and high expectations produced by the state.

In *Sport Italia*, Simon Martin discusses the history of sports in Italy and the implications of political ideology on the organization, participatory ability, and image of sports and athletes produced by the nation. He discusses racialization and racial policy in Italy, the absence of explicit racial supremacy and attempts at ethnic cleansing, and the constant presence of national and ethnic superiority over foreigners, particularly when representing the nation. Martin states that, “The victorious 1938 squad was living proof of Fascism’s futurist inspired theory of racial

²⁶ William J. Murray, *The World’s Game* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 64-65.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 79.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 80.

regeneration through conflict, permanent change and the consistent introduction of new blood.”²⁹ In this Martin explores the presences of *oriundi*, referring to foreign born players, on the national team, particularly the victorious national team that represented the nation in both the 1934 and 1938 World Cups. He also discusses the importance of the 1938 World Cup politically in protecting the national image and “defending the nation’s honour.”³⁰ As tensions grew and Italian political actions and policies were not seen favourable by a large portion of the international community, particularly western liberal democratic states, Italy needed to recreate and maintain a positive image of the nation as well as promote the country’s strength. There is a focus on the French-Italian relations and the events prior to August 1938 that impacted both countries’ perceptions of one another. These arguments build on the foundation created when discussing the 1934 World Cup in Italy as well as the athletic policies and programs created and promoted by Mussolini’s regime. Alternatively, the participation and support of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, as well as Italy’s continued success at international soccer, provides an expanded perspective of Italian sports diplomacy by the host nation and regime.

The 1936 Olympics are often discussed when the topic of international relations and sport diplomacy is brought to the forefront. The relationship between sport and the Third Reich mirrored that of sport and the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (PNF) in Italy as both nation-states promoted a totalitarian authority over the athletic sphere and leisure activities. Politics and ideology permeated every aspect of life and there was mutual recognition between the government of Adolf Hitler and that of Benito Mussolini. The 1936 Olympic games are significant for Italy as the state continued to cement its authority and legitimacy within the

²⁹ Martin, *Sport Italia*, 68.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 71.

international sphere through soft power diplomacy and victory; these games are especially important as they promoted a continued international supremacy within international soccer as the Italian national team gained another victory during these games, especially by virtue of finishing fourth overall in terms of the medal count.

The literature surrounding the 1936 Summer Olympic Games in Berlin Germany focuses on the dynamic between the Nazi party and the west as well as rising tensions within the European continent. For this research however, the historiography of the 1936 Olympic Games will focus on comparative fascist politics, the environment of international relations, Italian participation and athletic success, as well as the dynamic between Mussolini and Hitler. Furthermore, the arguments surrounding fascist sport policy in Nazi Germany parallel those regarding fascist Italy during this period. Although there are differences, for the approach to propaganda during and leading up to the event, there are many similarities in the utilization of such a large international event as a means to a political end. This comparison to the Olympic Games is limited however, as the event is much larger, has more national participation, and offers competition for such a large number of athletes as a result of its multisport status. Duff Hart-Davis writes in his book *Hitler's Games* that Hitler was able to benefit from hosting the Olympic Games in 1936 in a similar way as Mussolini had two years prior in the World Cup. He states that, “[Hitler] was able to persuade the world that the New Germany... was a well organized, modern and above all civilized society.”³¹ This suggests that the promotional aspect of the Games and the pageantry of the event removed the global focus on the segregationist

³¹ Duff Hart-Davis, *Hitlers Games: The 1936 Olympics* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1986), 9.

policies the nation had towards Jewish residents, among other religious minorities and political dissidents.³²

In *Performing the Nation in Interwar Germany: Sport, Spectacle and Political Symbolism, 1926-36*, Nadine Rossol writes on the politics of sport in Germany prior to the Second World War. There is a focus on the political value of sport through art, messaging, and propaganda as well as in creating and reinforcing a national identity and political ideology. Rossol explores artistic interpretations of events such as the Olympic Games through cinema and theatre performances.³³ Propaganda is a large part of national sports leagues and clubs as these campaigns help shape the narrative of athletes and teams as well as events into one that supports and promotes the nation. In *The Nazi Olympics* edited by Arnd Krüger and William Murray there are three chapters relevant to this study; Chapters One and Two: “Germany: The Propaganda Machine” and “United States of America: The Crucial Battler” by Arnd Krüger and Chapter five “Italy: Mussolini’s Boys at Hitler’s Olympics” by Gigliola Gori. Chapter one, “Germany: The Propaganda Machine,” explores the athletic policies and programs supported and created by the Nazi Party in preparation for the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, as well as the propaganda the government produced and sponsored domestically and internationally.³⁴ Chapter two, “United States of America: The Crucial Battler” also by Krüger, explores the tension between the US relationship with the Olympics and the rising political and social tensions between the US and Germany through political opposition and warring ideals.³⁵ Chapter 5 is important for this study because of the focus on the Italian athletic delegation sent in 1936. “Italy: Mussolini’s Boys at

³² Ibid.

³³ Nadine Rossol, *Performing the Nation in Interwar Germany: Sport, Spectacle and Political Symbolism, 1926-36* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 122-125.

³⁴ Arnd Krüger, “Germany: The Propaganda Machine.” in *The Nazi Olympics*, edited by Arnd Krüger and William Murray (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 28-30.

³⁵ Arnd Krüger, “United States of America: The Crucial Battle,” in *The Nazi Olympics*, 45-47

Hitler's Olympics" explores the various motivations for Italian participation and support of the Berlin Olympics, including but not limited to a continuation of Italian athletic supremacy as the national team built on their victories at the 1932 LA Olympics and the 1934 World Cup.³⁶ Furthermore, participation was seen as an act of friendship and good-will as Mussolini's government showed explicit support of Hitler through support of this event. Italian participation and success at the 1936 Olympics may have helped to distract the global community from the country's political actions and aggression in other regions.

The Olympics offer Italy an opportunity to compare fascist policies as well as expand on the perceptions of the Italian national team. The literature used to explore sport diplomacy and politics, the 1934 World Cup, 1936 Olympic Summer Games, and 1938 World Cup, there exists in these books and articles discussions of comparative gender relations, the national gendered hierarchies present in fascist Italy, and the use of sport by women to gain autonomy, oppose the government, as well as publicly support Mussolini. The books and articles dedicated to female participation in sport in Italy during this period, provides a narrower focus on the *Gruppo Femminile Calcistico* (GFC) and *tifosine* — female soccer fans. Women are briefly mentioned periodically throughout the literature on sports in fascist Italy, focusing more on the limitations, the idealization of the fascist woman, and a highly patriarchal approach to female participation as women's bodies were policed throughout athletic and leisure in attempts to 'protect them,' their fertility, and thus, the future of the nation. Furthermore, the roll of generational translation and reinforcement of traditional gender roles through instructions and guidance of young women and the Italian youth by older generations as well as their peers was a major facet of Italian gender relations and the role women were relegated to within society.

³⁶ Gigliola Gori, "Italy: Mussolini's Boys at Hitlers Olympics," in *The Nazi Olympics*, 114-123

In *Sport Italia*, Martin writes on female athleticism in Italy, their participation domestically as well as internationally as representatives of their country, their activism, and the contradictions present in Italy's gender relations. He explores the changing expectations and approaches to female autonomy in day-to-day life as well as in athletic and leisure spaces. He also discusses the ideal female form and the female opinion on gender politics and expectations through the words of female athletes. The evolving gender expectations severely impacted women's ability to participate in athletic competition as the original liberal approach to female athleticism was replaced with severe limitations and discrimination towards women who were previously freely able to participate in sporting events and opportunities. Similarly, in *Mussolini's Italy*, Halperin writes on the feminine ideal within the nation as well as the changing gender dynamics as a result of fascist politics and social reconstruction. There are distinct spheres of influence and allowed spaces for women and men to interact within political and social life. For instance, he illustrates the *donna madre* as the ideal fascist woman. Halperin continues to outline the expectations and rules of engagement for women in fascist Italy; what they were and were not allowed to do and the level of supervision necessary for participation in social and political life. Although *Mussolini's Italy* does not detail all circumstances of female sport participation Halperin does discuss the gendered dynamics of Italy as well as the limitations to female participation in social and political life, including sports and leisure activities.

In *Sport, Culture and Ideology*, edited by Jennifer Hargreaves, there are two chapters significant to the study of gender politics in sport; "Chapter 4: Women and Leisure" by Christine Griffen et al, and "Chapter 5: Women in Sport in Ideology" by Paul Willis. In Chapter 4 "Women and Leisure," the authors focus on the relationship between women, gender, and leisure

in an attempt to define characteristics of leisure as they pertain to white, working-class women in three separate spaces: school, work, and home.³⁷ Although the authors do not address the intersections of race and class in addition to womanhood, there is a direct attempt to produce a “critique and analysis of leisure from the specific point of view of women.”³⁸ Through this analysis, the authors explore patriarchal aspects of leisure and society, various age-groups and the various life stages and transformations between these stages, ethnography, and Marxist literature. There is a focus on how age impacts perceptions of opportunities for leisure throughout a woman’s life as they transition from school-age, to joining the workforce, and eventually the private sphere through marriage and family rearing.³⁹ In “Chapter 5: Women in Sport in Ideology,” Willis explores comparative sports performance between women and the ideological effect on female participation and image in the athletic and competitive sphere. The authors also discuss the impact and significance of the media and communications in sports entertainment, particularly the media’s “operation in [our] society,” and how this combined with ideology pertains to women in sport.⁴⁰ There is a focus on meanings, values, and social explanation in order to identify “the basic characteristics of how sport is seen in [our] society,” and how patriarchal values and ideology are built into its foundation.⁴¹ This chapter is important for this thesis as it explores the limitations and autonomy of women in sports as well as media and common perceptions assigned to female athletes in a liberal society. Female fanaticism in Italy led to the creation of the first female soccer league in Italy as the women who created the GFC were self-proclaimed fans of the sport.

³⁷Christine Griffin *et al.* “Women and Leisure,” in *Sport, Culture and Ideology*, edited by John Hargreaves (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD, 1982), 88.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 89.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 102-13.

⁴⁰ Paul Willis, “Sport and Youth Culture,” in *Sport, Culture and Ideology*, 118.

⁴¹ Willis, *Sport and Youth Culture*, 120.

The focus on sport as an extension of foreign policy in Italy during this time is underdeveloped within the field of historic exploration. Although sport diplomacy is well studied in other areas of social science, I have found that the interdisciplinary dynamics and characteristics of this subject created a lack of focus on the use of sports and international events as a vehicle for foreign policy by Mussolini, instead choosing to use these instances as evidence to support a wider argument or exploration into the regime. For instance, authors focus on larger political shifts and focus on ideological policy changes while briefly mentioning this impact on sports policy and athletic program development. As a result, there is not as much focus on the international value of sports and the impact that domestic athletic policy has on international events. I looked specifically at how sports were used as diplomatic tools as well as the conflation between the national team and the state's aims and desires. There is a focus on soccer specifically as an extension of foreign policy and government ideology as the sports national and international popularity within mass culture allowed for a unique approach to controlling class consciousness and the majority population as well as providing an opportunity to influence foreign populations, sports fans, and governments.

Chapter Two: Regulatory bodies and politics

The intersection between sport regulation and political ideology in the international sphere is seen through the multifaceted dynamics of competition, political ideology, the preservation of national identity, and the use of sports for diplomatic pursuits. Soft power politics and cultural politics provide alternative methods of diplomacy and foreign politics as sports tournaments and athletes act as extensions of their states as well as vehicles for policy and propaganda. This phenomenon can be explored through each organization independently as well as an overarching trend within international sports organizations and regulatory bodies. This chapter explored the rules and regulations governing sport bodies, the politicization of sport, and the concept of sport diplomacy.

The World Cup and the Olympic Games

Sports, especially the World Cup and the Olympics, served as proxy wars as well as an alternative forum for political expression and interaction in the international sphere. As organizing bodies, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and FIFA continuously bring attention to the sheer number of national sports organizations tied to their respective bodies as they attempt to facilitate interactions between nations multilaterally. Despite these organizations' respective claims and regulations that aim to maintain apolitical status within international competition, politics permeate every aspect of life, including sport. The fact that these international events, the World Cup and the Olympic Games, emphasize national identity and national representation creates an environment wherein states promote their nation to the international community at political and social levels.

Although the World Cup and global soccer is technically an apolitical space, the possibility of international interactions between states and the creation of relations and goodwill is distinctly possible. There is a universal recognition of the impact and utilization of sport as an extension of national policy, particularly foreign policy in international sport. This aspect of global sport has existed since well before the inauguration of the World Cup in 1930 and continues to impact the event through historic and contemporary geopolitical tensions as well as the environment for international relations; every aspect of life is political, including sports, particularly global sport. The main difference between the period of the 1930s and today is that of is the level of global participation and the access to live sports through television, streaming services, and live broadcasting around the world. The politicization of sport during this interwar period was believed by some within the media and general population to tarnish these competitions.

There are different characteristics and opinions held concerning the status of international sport as apolitical. For instance, Hoberman argues that, “Sport, it is assumed, constitutes an ideological *terra nullius* which defuses political conflict by virtue of its power to symbolize the very antithesis of thought itself.”⁴² In doing so, Hoberman suggests that sport represents the action itself and holds no underlying motivation or ideological purpose other than athletic participation and competition. Although this is easily observed to be false as a result of the overt politicization of sporting events and the conflation of national identity with national athletic success and representation, the argument holds value in the creation of global sport as an alternative measure for international relations; one that has the privilege of claiming to be

⁴² John M. Hoberman, “Sport and Political Ideology,” in *Sports and International Relations*, edited by Benjamin Lowe *et al* (Champaign: Stipes Publishing Company, 1978), 224.

apolitical and encouraging non-political cooperation as well as interactions between states and athletes. This offers cultural exchange as well as social and ultimately political exchange.

The main principals of the Olympics were to promote the development of those fine physical and moral qualities which are the basis of amateur sport; to bring together the athletes of the world in a great quadrennial festival of sports thereby creating international respect and goodwill; helping to construct a better and more peaceful world.⁴³ These four rules and regulations outline the purpose of the Olympic games as an arena for interaction between states as well as opportunities for amateur athletic competition in an attempt to garner cultural exchange, friendship, and respect amongst nations. Furthermore, Rule 26 of the Eligibility Code states that, “a competitor must always have participated in sport as an avocation without material gain of any kind.”⁴⁴ This suggests that athletes and national teams must participate for the sole purpose of athletic competition, there can be no ulterior motives for participation that may potentially impact their strategy and national allegiance or loyalty. This rule was flouted by Mussolini’s government during the 1936 Olympics in an attempt to maintain a specific image of their state or promote athletic strength and superiority. Governments throughout history have used international events to promote the image of their state to the international community. Although Mussolini fits this pattern, what makes his approach unique is that not only was that in many ways it can be argued that Mussolini’s approach to fascist politics, foreign policy, and sport diplomacy provided the inspiration for those following. He set an example for other governments, both democratic and non-democratic, to utilize these events as arenas for foreign policy as well as opportunities to showcase national strength and prestige. What made his

⁴³ James A.R. Nafziger, “The Regulation of Transnational Sports Competition: Down from Mount Olympus,” in *Sports and International Relations*, 163.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 167.

approach to sport, particularly soccer, uniquely fascist was the high level of government control to athletic programs, the use of athletes as a reflection of the Duce as well as a reflection of the state, the devotion expected of the government for the national team, and the use of the sport as a tool to control the population.

The promise of benefits and compensation for athletes and teams proffered during the 1936 Olympics by Mussolini's government as well as the threat of punishment if athletes were unable to secure a win for their nation soured the sentiments surrounding the games. This practice explicitly opposes the sentiments of free, fair, athletic competition in good faith promoted by the Games. Furthermore, Hitler's overt politicization and use of the games as a propaganda tool created negative sentiments and an impending sense of doom for the future of international sports by liberal democratic nations such as the United States of America. Indeed, "There is a danger of increased political pressure resulting from subtle diplomatic ploys designed to pollute the non-political atmosphere of Olympic competition..." as the politicization of sport became increasingly more apparent and impossible to ignore.⁴⁵ When the Olympic Games are overtly used as political propaganda by the state it becomes impossible to ignore the politicization of a space intended to be apolitical; a space intended to provide a sense of sportsmanship amongst governments and athletes from around the world.

Sport Diplomacy

International sports are often used as a form of diplomacy by nations with athletes representing their country, its interests, politics, and population. Italy under Mussolini

⁴⁵ Nafziger, *The Regulation of Transnational Sports Competition*, 172.

recognized the value of sport diplomacy in international relations, he used them to both promote ideology as well as to exacerbate tensions and gain symbolic victories over those he opposed. Although these spaces are intended to be apolitical throughout history they have been steeped with underlying political tensions and purposes. From the Olympic Games to the World Cup, international events represent an alternative forum for international relations and politics. Although they may not be recognized as legitimate forms of politics and diplomacy, they have been used for decades as arenas of soft power, cultural, politics that may be utilized to create and maintain international relations. Alternatively, they occasionally act as proxy wars during eras of increased political tension such as the years leading up to the Second World War and the Cold War. Indeed,

International sport organizations have implicitly diplomatic missions: to find commonalities so that the sporting encounter can take place; to seek consensus, however idealistic and transient, between deeply entrenched political entities; and to find a shared language of communication and interaction in the reciprocally recognized rituals of sport.⁴⁶

This suggests that sports organizations and events on an international scale offer a forum of public diplomacy, referring to “forms of international networking and lobbying that have been recognized for a very long time.”⁴⁷ These events are able to take advantage of global consumerism, the popularity of sport, and the sensationalism of international events such as the World Cup and Olympic Games to subtly promote ideology to the world through a common understanding of sport.

Global soccer is entrenched with consumerism and political propaganda as both these aspects are major aspects of international sport. The period of the 30s may be recognized as a

⁴⁶ Alan Tomlinson, “Diplomatic actors in the world of football: individuals, institutions, ideologies,” in *Sport and Diplomacy: Games within Games*, edited by J. Simon Rofe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 49-50.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 49.

point of conception for the contemporary era of global sport because of the increase in participation and consumption as well as the increase in global commercialization and focus on the World Cup in the years following. There were pre-existing conditions built into this framework that reflected this spirit of consumption, the 1934 World Cup experienced a global focus that the 1930 World Cup did not receive, a focus that included countries that were not participants. The World Cup, although meant to provide an environment for friendly competition between nations, has long been entrenched in themes of financial gain, as well as a parading of national financial prosperity through opening ceremonies, the constructions of stadiums and temporary living quarters for participating athletes, and award ceremonies. Although Sandvoss argues in the above quote that what is at stake is not a struggle for power but the environment of interactions between diverse nations and cultures, during the early period of global soccer, the struggle for power within the athletic world was vigorous and shaped the organization of the World Cup. Furthermore, the geopolitical tensions present, particularly within continental Europe, shaped the organization of the games, the media narratives, the propaganda, and those who opted to participate in the 1934 and 1938 World Cups. The struggle for power within the continent directly reflected on attitudes of and towards athletes and national teams. The American aspect of this characteristic of global soccer in the 1930s surrounds its inclusion in the Games and participation in the competition. This is important because of the rising financial prowess of the nation as well as its evolving position as the leader of the free world, in essence, a powerful liberal democratic nation embracing a large, vocal portion of its population that opposed the fascist and populist movements in Europe that was choosing to interact at a cultural level, inadvertently helping to legitimize the politics of these states.

The 1930s in sport regulation and international politics saw a conflict between political ideologies and the explicit use of international sports for political means. The World Cups of 1934 and 1938 and the Olympic Games of 1936 all witnessed overt politicization of athletes and matches by fascist governments. Italy during this period experienced global attention as the 1934 World Cup hoisted the nation into athletic success and the eyes of the world. The state's continued display of skill and determination throughout the remainder of the decade allowed Italy to use their athletes as diplomats and representatives around the world. These arenas reflected the global, geopolitical, national, regional, and local conflicts that defined this era, influencing and being influenced by domestic policy, including sports policy, and foreign policy as governments used international events as vehicles for propaganda and national identity.

Chapter Three: Domestic Policy

The 1930s in Italy witnessed a drive to consolidate power, influence and mold society according to a political ideal, and utilize various aspects of public and social life to serve Mussolini's political objectives. Throughout this era domestic policy helped shape the collective consciousness of the population through the harnessing of sports, such as soccer, to further the regime's goals. This chapter explored the centralization of soccer and leisure in Fascist Italy, showing how something so innocent as athletic participation were tools to control the population and align citizens with Mussolini's regime. Furthermore, there were efforts to create and enforce the concept of an ideal man and woman within the Italian population. Domestic gender relations enforced the concept of an 'Ideal Man' and 'Ideal Woman' within the Italian population, ideals that impacted the athletic landscape of the nation. Finally, this chapter explored comparative fascist politics through the policy approaches of both Italy and Germany as these two nations not only aligned themselves politically but hosted international sporting events in the 1934 FIFA World Cup and 1936 Olympic Games.

Sport Diplomacy and National Regulation

Sport diplomacy and domestic policy are major aspects of governments' use for sport and leisure, particularly in consolidating a population and aligning different groups across one main cultural value or practice. In fact, "Since sport implies basic cultural values, it has the potential to pass these values on to its participants."⁴⁸ This holds implications for socialization and youth athletic programs as well as labour organizations and arenas for group discussion and interaction.

⁴⁸ Gunther Luschen, "The Interdependence of Sport and Culture," in *Sports and International Relations*, edited by Benjamin Lowe *et al* (Champaign: Stipes Publishing Company, 1978), 28.

Sports and common leisure activities are able to bring large groups of people together to participate in a common interest. These gatherings may lead to positive or negative outcomes; whether they are able to bring people together and bridge cultural and social gaps or create staunch rivalries and further tensions between opposing teams and fan bases.

Sport also offers an opportunity for interaction between social and economic classes within a nation. However, certain sports appear exclusively accessible to the upper class while others are considered lower class sports. This may be due to the cost of equipment and competition or even the access to those things necessary to play, the space, equipment, among other things. In the case of Italy during the 1930's, sports were utilized by the state as an extension of both the home and the workplace. They were organized alongside workers and labour unions and allowed working men leisure time to engage in friendly competition. They also provided socialization for the nation's youth, as well as opportunities for political indoctrination and physical training: "Mussolini himself regularly explained that the key to his regime lay in its harnessing of youth, trade unionism and leisure through the instrumentalities of a single ubiquitous party."⁴⁹ Through the indoctrination and control of leisure by the political regime Mussolini influenced the Italian population and promoted his ideology throughout the nation and social hierarchy, from youth, to women, to working men, to the political and economic elite; he used sport and leisure as an extension of state policy, the tight control of leisure by the Fascist party allowed widespread indoctrination through soft power and culture politics. The mass phenomenon of sports played at the professional level were widely enjoyed by

⁴⁹ R.J.B Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy: Life Under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915-1945* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 3.

all through fanaticism, spectating, and observation as a nonparticipant. This is especially present during major events such as the World Cup and the Olympic Games.

Sports represent mass culture and social mobility in many regions; they offer advancements for the underprivileged as well as further opportunities for education and expansion of one's social network. Sports and leisure offer opportunities for socialization and bonding with those within an individual's direct social circle as well as those outside one's social, economic, and cultural sphere. Maheu argues that,

Sport... has reached its heights in the classes which are often the least privileged; it thus represents, in class societies, a form of social advancement... it is because the sports movement has been one of social, and sometimes even political, advancement that it is a mass movement.⁵⁰

This suggests that the mass culture of sport allows groups and individuals from lower classes accessibility to a form of social mobility they would not otherwise be privy to; it allows groups to move forward and gain influence socially, culturally, and politically. This may become dangerous as within anti-democratic regimes and politics takes on a conservatist value as sport reflects the politics of the state. This suggests that sport is utilized by the state to promote 'traditional' conservative values and politics. As a cultural phenomenon, it also possesses the ability to promote conservative values to a large population as well as foreign populations, potentially promoting dangerous beliefs and harmful opinions. Sport opens up nations and their governments to the global population and vice versa, thus, providing an opportunity to control mass culture as well as impact the private sphere through personal leisure and interests.

Mussolini heavily emphasized the importance of athletics prior to and following the 1934 World Cup, especially soccer which was not only incredibly popular within the national

⁵⁰ Rene Maheu, "Sport and Culture," in *Sports and International Relations*, 15.

population and in the international sphere but was also a favourite pastime of Mussolini. There is a positive value for political leaders and dictators to be recognized as fans of sport, in this case, soccer. In fact, there is “no negative label is attached to this form of public commitment.”⁵¹ It is almost expected because football or soccer is universal. Within the Italian peninsula, the sport is as universal to national and cultural traditions as religion and family.⁵² As a result of this “Mussolini’s fascist regime was the first to use sports as an integral part of government...”⁵³ As he influenced all sports, including soccer, Mussolini was, according to *The Manchester Guardian* in 1934, “the force behind this organisation... whose word in relation to the appointment of the officials is taken as a command.”⁵⁴ However, he was not and still is not the only totalitarian leader to recognize the positive value of sport diplomacy and state-controlled leisure. In the 1930s “dictators discovered sport, manipulating the masses with the aid of the latest technological developments and writing sports into the programs of national regeneration as a way of distracting the workers from more serious concerns.”⁵⁵ There were a variety of athletic programs and organizations organized underneath CONI (*Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano* or the Italian National Olympic Committee), virtually an offshoot of the fascist government and the PNF, for the Italian youth as well as other members of the population. Furthermore, “sports were also used as a source of national pride and fitness for the average citizen and as a means of impressing other nations with victories in international

⁵¹ Alessandro Dal Lago and Rocco De Biasi, “Italian Football Fans: culture and organization,” in *Football, violence, and social identity*, edited by Richard Giulianotti, Norman Bonney and Mike Hepworth (New York: Routledge, 1994), 76.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ William J. Murray, *The World’s Game* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 65.

⁵⁴ “Italy’s Football Progress, Foundations Laid by Lancashire Players: To-Day’s International at Highbury.” *The Manchester Guardian*, November 14, 1934, 3.

⁵⁵ Murray, *The World’s Game*, 65.

competition.”⁵⁶ Soccer offered a way to create and maintain social relations between communities, classes, the government, and the people.⁵⁷

Although the use of sports in domestic and international policy was recognized by other political leaders, the conflation of sport with fascist ideology is the focus of this paper. Within Mussolini’s Italy, “there was a general wish to explain and justify activities in Fascist terms...”⁵⁸ as “Fascitized leisure became another important strand in the totalitarian mix.”⁵⁹ Although there was recognition in the political value of sport, there was also an understanding of the value of sport and athleticism at a national level; in promoting health and physical leisure to the population, particularly the male populations. Indeed,

‘Fascism... has never thought of sport as an end in itself. Rather it has always considered and still considers it a means of collective physical education, fundamentally assisting the physical and moral elevation of the race.’⁶⁰

This suggests that in Mussolini’s attempts to create a strong, physically, and racially superior population through his ‘New Man’ project, similar to the goals of Hitler, the government promotion, regulation, and intervention within sport and leisure was a major pillar of the government domestic policy approach. Italy’s success at the World Cup in 1934 helped solidify Mussolini’s role in office and with the public as the 1934 home victory “was one of the high points in an astonishing sequence of successes for Italian football in the 1930s...”⁶¹ Italy’s continued athletic success on the international stage helped bring international attention to the

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Dal Lago and De Biasi, *Italian Football Fans*, 79.

⁵⁸ Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy*, 128.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 410.

⁶¹ Robert S.C Gordon and John London, “Italy 1934: Football and Fascism,” in *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup*, edited by Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 41.

country's athletic policies as well as maintain support and popularity within the majority population in terms of leisure; the system of political intervention within sport was supported by the continued success of the national team globally.

One of the major changes to soccer in Italy under Mussolini was the *Carta di Viareggio*, or the Viareggio Charter, which revolutionized the sport and imposed a fascist hierarchy that established revolutionary changes for soccer in Italy.⁶² This allowed for the overt and explicit politicization of soccer in Italy. Leandro Arpinati, a politician and leader of the Bolognese Fascists, he eventually became the head of the FIGC, the *Federazione Italia Giuoco Calcio*, or the Italian Football Federation. Arpinati recognized early on that the popularity of soccer allowed widespread national and international promotion of fascist ideology.⁶³ Where Mussolini saw the use of conflating sport with politics, his early focus was on upper class sports such as boxing, fencing, motorsports, among other 'nobler' pastimes. It was between 1925 and 1926 when the *Viareggio Charter* was being constructed, establishing that soccer was a theater for fascism. Mussolini and his administration used fascism to organize soccer in an era of disorganization and chaos; they used the sport to reflect the ideals they believed society should be organized alongside as well as the concept of the 'traditional' Italian family.⁶⁴ This charter helped distinguish a distinctly Italian style of play during this time as the fascist influence subverted the game. For instance,

Spanish and Italian football began to develop an alternative way of playing...
devised a style of football more adapted to the dry pitches of the Mediterranean

⁶²Simon Martin, *Sport Italia: The Italian Love Affair with Sport* (New York: I.B. Taurus & Co LTD, 2011), 67-8.

⁶³ Ibid, 52.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 67-8.

area, based on short passing and intensive technical training... strong defensive trio.⁶⁵

This culture and style of play specific to the nation and the region provided a version of the sport that was 'specific' to Italy; one that citizens could associate with themselves and their community. Mussolini saw sports, especially soccer, as a way to unite and control the majority of the population, helping to establish his dictatorship through cultural politics. This restructuring of the Italian league into Serie A coincided with extensive stadium projects as well as training programs. The recognition of the sport and its popularity among the general population as a vehicle for political propaganda as well as foreign and domestic policies allowed Mussolini and his administration to reach over 200,000 citizens directly, the approximate number of citizens and residents who would go out and watch the matches live every weekend across the nation, along with those who did not watch live but were interested in the sport at varying levels.⁶⁶

Not only was the *Carta di Viareggio* important to the fascist reorganization of Italian soccer, but Vittori Pozzo was also a central figure to the success and image of the national team. Pozzo, the only manager in history to win two World Cups, coached the team to victory in 1934 and 1938 as well as the Olympic victory in 1936. According to *The Manchester Guardian* in 1934, Pozzo was wildly popular within the fascist party in Italy, "The Italian football authorities prefer the judgement of one man to a committee in choosing their teams for international matches... the commissario urico per la squadra nazionale... commendatore Vittorio Pozzo, a gentleman of Turin, who devotes all his leisure to the fascinating hobby of team building."⁶⁷ He was popular within Italy; other officials within the athletic sphere were not respected or thought

⁶⁵ Pierre Lanfranchi and Stephen Wagg, "Cathedrals of Concrete: Football in Southern European Society," in *Giving the Game Away: Football, Politics & Culture on Five Continents*, edited by Stephen Wagg (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 133.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 130-131.

⁶⁷ "Games and Players: Italy's Selector." *The Manchester Guardian*, November 13, 1934, 4.

of as highly as Pozzo, including the CONI President Achille Starace. Pozzo was also a major figure in the Anglo press as many articles and pieces discussing Italian soccer and the Italian national team, or Azzurri, specifically referenced Pozzo and his abilities as a coach. The success of Pozzo's national team helped consolidate the fascist influence within government and Italian society. Pozzo was not only wildly popular within Italy and the fascist party he was also well known internationally,

Signor Pozzo... has travelled the world over and seen football in most climates... after some years' absence and repeated refusals to return to the game he responded to the urgent wish of Signor Mussolini and became the selector of all Italy's teams, including even the B teams, or the younger players regarded as candidates for the great games to come.⁶⁸

Pozzo's acclaim grew following the 1934 Italian victory at the World Cup. He was described as equitable, someone who saw everyone on the pitch as an equal regardless of their position on the team or in society.⁶⁹ Sport was the equalizer between nations that may not necessarily be within the same sphere of influence.

The sport was easy to conflate with the national identity of Italy because of the region's long history of the sport in various forms and the culture surrounding it. In fact, "Soccer in the form of Roman *harpastum* and Florentine *calcio* has an ancient history in Italy, and so the British influence there has been muted by long indigenous traditions."⁷⁰ Indeed, in Italy "the first organized game of soccer there is said to have been arranged in 1887." This version of "folk football" was thought to "embodied their ideals..."⁷¹ according to Lanfranchi and Wagg as soccer culture in Italy is, and was, local, the sport is an autonomous realm, independent of class

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Murray, *The World's Game*, 30.

⁷¹ Lanfranchi and Wagg, *Cathedrals of Concrete*, 125.

disparities, political opinion, and religious value; it bridges social, political, and economic hierarchies and creates a forum for interaction between all population demographics within the nation.⁷² Mussolini seized the opportunity to promote political ideology subtly to the Italian public as soccer became an extension of the state during the 1930s. The Duce recognized the sports ability to bridge social, political, and religious gaps and create a space where. The sport maintained a constant presence in the collective consciousness of the Italian general population as,

The intensity of the emotional and political investment made in the game of football in many Mediterranean societies... footballs central cultural place in southern European societies, its association with popular notions of art, physical beauty and technique, along with the acquisition of many of the world's best players, have conferred on Italy and Spain in particular a reputation for flair and sophistication among the football cultures of the world.⁷³

Italy's strong, pre-existing, culture and fascination with soccer allowed the government to use it as an extension of both foreign and domestic policy. In doing so, it was used as a vehicle for political propaganda as well as a forum for social and political interaction between classes, genders, and populations.

Italian domestic policy during this period followed the trajectory of Italian politics through the desire for total conformity in all aspects of life.⁷⁴ Those who did not meet the standard were placed on the periphery of social and cultural life, ostracized from their communities. There were many factors of the Italian policy approach in order to achieve conformity within the national population, through media, propaganda, religion, political ideology, traditional beliefs and ideals, as well as sport and leisure. In doing so, they utilized

⁷² Dal Lago and De Biasi, *Italian Football Fans*, 75.

⁷³ Lanfranchi and Wagg, *Cathedrals of Concrete*, 135.

⁷⁴ William S. Halperin. *Mussolini and Italian Fascism* (Princeton: Van Nostrand Anvil Books, 1964), 51.

sport and leisure as extensions of state policy, conflating political ideology with characteristics glorified within “athleisure.” Furthermore, athletes were celebrated by the state, receiving “official acclaim as exemplars of fascist prowess and were exhibited to the crowds as evidence of the new Italy’s manliness.”⁷⁵ Although Mussolini himself claimed to exemplify this ideal Italian man, the contradictory nature of Fascist ideals promoted opposite and ever-changing images of gender ideals, roles, and attributes. Because of soccer’s presence in all aspects of life and the rich culture surrounding the game, the reputation of the sport and its close tie to Italian national identity, engendered attempts to denigrate the British influence as the pioneers of the sport. As stated by Lafranchi and Wagg:

purging of the British roots of the sport in Italy remained a feature of Italian football culture well into the twentieth century. Within this autonomous development, football as a spectacle, the crowd and the tactical and technical aspects of the game were intimately connected. From the 1930s onwards, Italian football was considered, both in Italy and generally on the continent of Europe, to be the antithesis of English football...the mark of a latin style was developing.⁷⁶

This is partially a result of the high level of interest in soccer within the state, the *Carta di Viareggio*, and the reorganization of the national leagues under Mussolini.

The social hierarchy of sport was relevant to the use of sport in foreign and domestic policy by Mussolini’s regime. Although he began with an interest in more elite sports, those reserved for the upper political, social, and economic class, Mussolini recognized the ability to appeal to the masses through sport and utilize sport as a means of reinforcing political ideals within the general population. The *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro* (National Afterwork Club, OND) was an institution created in fascist Italy that consisted of leisure and recreation clubs

⁷⁵ Halperin, *Mussolini and Italian Fascism*, 49.

⁷⁶ Lanfranchi and Wagg, *Cathedrals of Concrete*, 126.

among other networks and institutions that made up Italian social life. The OND helped organize the Italian public into recreation and leisure activities that helped connect labour workers and communities as well as enforce fascist politics outside of the workforce, in the social and personal lives of citizens. Soccer held a central position as,

the place of football in the culture of Southern European societies, and how the fascination for a football team may represent some of the essential characteristics of industrial societies in the region.⁷⁷

This suggests that the sport, the local identification of clubs, and the community involvement in the sport promotes athletes as representatives of the population on local, regional, and eventually international scales as “in Italy, leisure was meant to be totalitarian in purpose.”⁷⁸ The sport remains popular within working class communities and is an afterwork leisure activity in terms of the act of playing while workers are also able to participate in terms of observation through radio and television. Soccer is a sport that anyone is able to enjoy; in terms of expense it is a low-cost activity and one that does not require an abundance of equipment or even organization, “The middle class remains the essence of Italian football support.”⁷⁹ The sport was able to bridge not only socio-economic gaps but also cultural, gendered, and political ones as well, this ability to bring large, diverse groups together offered politicians such as Mussolini a medium for covert, and overt, political propaganda and influence.

Gender relations

The gendered implications of the sport following World War One are important to this paper as,

⁷⁷ Ibid, 127.

⁷⁸ Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, 410.

⁷⁹ Lanfranchi and Wagg, *Cathedrals of Concrete*, 129.

The soccer craze in the postwar years extended to women, and just as the war brought them to work in previously male strongholds in factories and essential war activities, so it brought them to traditionally male leisure pursuits on an unprecedented scale.⁸⁰

Women participated in the sport at a participatory level as well as organizational and even athletic level. Although there were restrictions on the positions and activities that women were allowed to perform and female athletes were under strict observation, Italian women organized a female league as early as the 1930s. However, the sport overall was used to reinforce ‘traditional’ gender norms and the idealized fascist man through physical attributes as well as attitudes and expectations. Football culture in Italy during this period was a highly political sphere that was “able to influence and direct the social behaviour of ordinary people,” helping to control the collective consciousness of the public as well as create and maintain a national identity that appealed to all regardless of class or gender.⁸¹

Although this is not the main focus of this thesis it is important to explore comparative gender politics and expectations through sports and day-to-day life, particularly the liberal-fascist dichotomy. Furthermore, there was less of an obvious international aspect to Italian gender relations within the sporting world. Major comparisons may be drawn between female and male body ideals and the role that sport, leisure, and athletic programs played in producing these ideals and reinforcing the gender binary. Italian women participated in various sports and leisure activities as a result of fascist policies. However, in terms of soccer organization and the right to play, women were greatly discouraged and limited in terms of what roles they were given and allowed to fill within the sport. As a result, Mussolini and the fascist, totalitarian organization of the sport limited female participation and aided the creation and recreation of what were

⁸⁰ Murray, *The World's Game*, 44.

⁸¹ Dal Lago and De Biasi, *Italian Football Fans*, 76-77.

considered to be traditional Italian gender norms within the household as reflected in the athletic sphere.

The gendered politics of Mussolini's administration strengthened the previously strained relationship between Mussolini's government and the Roman Catholic Church. Although there was tension between the Catholic Church and Mussolini's government as a result of the anti-clerical attitude and beliefs of the Duce, this tension between the government and the church was largely a result of Mussolini's opinions on religion as a false sense of security as well as the brutalization of priests and religious persons by those who ascribed to Italian fascism. The differences and strong opposition between the Vatican and Mussolini were bridged by the common opinions in gender politics. For instance,

[the] Fascist state and catholic church were generally in patriarchal concord about the proper place of women in society... that young female fascists should always be escorted by an older woman... and that they should also be banned from military parades and unbecoming sports.⁸²

These institutions found common ground in their sentiments towards female autonomy, gender roles, and spheres of influence. There was an enforcement of conservative gender values and a reinforcement of patriarchal social norms and hierarchies. In terms of Italian soccer, female symbolism remained on the periphery during this period as the focus surrounded male strength and virility. The iconography of the country, the images chosen to promote the national image, were those of the ideal Italian man. This ideal man was meant to be a reflection of Mussolini, the 'New Man,' was a hypermasculine individual with fortified "characters and will" as a result of experiences in the Great War.⁸³ This Italian Fascist 'New Man' reflected a revolutionized psyche as a result of the war, resulting in the decisive choice made between "heroism and cowardice,

⁸² Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, 264.

⁸³ Jorge Dagnino, "The Myth of the Nblaew Man in Italian Fascist Ideology." *Fascism* 5:2 (2016), 134.

idealism and selfishness.”⁸⁴ However, women remained ever present in Italian society as they filled imperative and irreplaceable roles within the national equilibrium through child-rearing, and the apprenticeship of younger women, among other social responsibilities. The image of the *donna madre* was exalted as the ideal woman, a strong, big-boned, sturdy woman who was above all else fertile; there was an emphasis placed on motherhood and homemaking.⁸⁵

Within Italy there was a focus on youth athletic programs in order to build a stronger nation through the adolescent population. The youth were the future of the nation and thus the focal point of certain policies. Dogliani explains in her chapter “Sport and Fascism,” that,

the Fascist regime’s interest in sport was largely confined to boys to strengthen physique, character, and virility. For girls, sport was deemed a secondary occupation, advisable during adolescence to prepare them for their future role as strong healthy mothers.⁸⁶

This attitude of gendered differences in expectations and participation in the strength of the nation reflected gender relations of the country during and following this period of Mussolini’s time in office.

Throughout history sports have allowed for the development of domestic and international activism at an athletic, organizational, and viewer level. Within Italy during this period women filled the role of athlete activists as they opposed and actively resisted the division of labour and limitations placed on female athletes within the athletic sphere. Women fought for their individual and collective rights to participate in popular leisure activities as well as common pastimes at a local and national level; they fought for their right to participate in organized sport regardless of the beliefs of the effect that certain activities may have on their femininity and

⁸⁴ Ibid, 135.

⁸⁵ R.J.B Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy*, 267-8

⁸⁶ Patrizia Dogliani, “Sport and Fascism,” *Sport and Society in Italy Today* 5:3 (2000), 330.

bodies as well as their social status and reputations. There were female athletes Isabelle Crivelli-Masazza, although vocal in their support of Mussolini and his politics on the world stage; who voiced their opinions on national policies surrounding female athletic participation. The contradictory policies and opinions surrounding female strength and fertility were prevalent in this discourse.

As male athletes were intended to reflect the fascist ideal in terms of physical and mental fortitude, this produced a contradictory nature of their reality in terms of political embodiment through the dichotomy between Mussolini and the fascist ideal. For instance, though “the Duce was portrayed as the embodiment of the idealized, national figure, the reality was that Italian fascist identity was often a complex, contradictory mix.”⁸⁷ This suggests that although the Duce was the idealized figure, he did not meet the physical expectations for the fascist man. These differences in physical attributes were allowed through the emphasis placed on uncompromised loyalty — “But so long as loyalty towards fascism was not compromised, different identities and ideas were permitted and even encouraged.”⁸⁸ Diversity in identity and physical ability were tolerated. This facet of fascist male identity is especially important when discussing the use of foreign-born players on national and regional teams. The toleration for the differences in the male population was permitted amongst women as well. However, as the years progressed and the Italian political landscape became more rigid and authoritarian, women experienced more obstacles for equal access to opportunity and their ability to participate in social, political, and leisure life; “Women became heroic fascist figures, awarded medals of honor and incrementally increasingly cash prizes... unsurprisingly, fascism’s idealized woman was round, rural, and

⁸⁷ Martin, *Sport Italia*, 73.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

prolifically fertile.”⁸⁹ The *donna madre*, the ideal woman, was meant to be “”stocky, large hipped, big-bosomed and, above all, fertile.””⁹⁰ This conflicted with female athletes' physical characteristics as many did not fulfill the image of a traditional Italian woman despite their ability to train and compete at a high level while also maintaining their homes and raising their children. In 1929, prior to the rise in obstacles, limitations, and controls to female sport in Italy, Isabelle Crivelli-Masazza spoke on women’s physical abilities, their health, and the natural process of pregnancy and childbirth. She inquired on women’s physical abilities, strength, and fortitude despite beliefs that femininity implied fragility; stating,

how many women have been unable to support the weight... [of the unborn child]... because of constitutional and growth weaknesses...when sport and the open-air life would have strengthened and prepared them for their dividend function: maternity!⁹¹

The narrative promoted by the Italian government was that sports, athletics, and other activities could possibly have a negative impact on women’s fertility and reproductive health due to the strength, training, and athleticism required. Although women were capable to compete, train, and pursue athletic goals while maintaining their femininity and ability to raise the nation’s next generation, the image of the *donna madre* and rigid gender roles enforced during Mussolini’s time in power restricted female autonomy and athletic participation.

As time progressed into the mid 1930’s changes and limitations were placed on the Italian population in order to encourage cooperation and consensus with the political aspirations for the population. There were expectations for behaviour that aligned with the fascist government’s values that became more necessary to meet and were further extended to the

⁸⁹ Martin, *Sport Italia*, 76.

⁹⁰ Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, 267-268.

⁹¹ Martin, *Sport Italia*, 79.

population. These changes in social expectation encouraged and enforced by the government were present in leisure and athletic life as well, changes that disproportionately impacted marginalized and minority groups within the population, including women. Martin states that “Indicative of a changing wind in Italian sport, female athletes were increasingly discriminated against.”⁹² This disproportionate impact was a result of the changing political landscape as policies became more patriarchal, conservative, and restrictive of female autonomy. These limitations disproportionately impacted women and minority groups’ social and athletic mobility in an effort to control the public image of the state and present a nation of the ‘New Man’ to the international community, building of racial policies, and reinforced gendered spheres of influence and interaction. Although initially, the approach to gender politics was to fully incorporate women and to give them,

‘Full freedom in choice of reading, the freedom to flirt, to smoke, to cut short their luxuriant locks, to wear masculine-looking clothing, to engage in violent sports like football, fencing, javelin-throwing and skiing.’⁹³

However,

The regime’s initially liberal approach to female sport is therefore surprising. With sport considered solely an expression of male strength and virility, those few female athletes who competed at an international level received no financial support whatsoever. Despite this discrimination, it was impossible to exclude them.⁹⁴

This helped motivate female dissent within the Italian population through sports and athleticism. In order to mitigate the gendered resistance, the Italian government made concessions such as allowing female participation while regulating their athletic abilities and opportunities as seen through the GFC.

⁹² Ibid, 77.

⁹³ Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy*, 267.

⁹⁴ Martin, *Sport Italia*, 76.

Comparative fascist politics

One of the only other countries at this time that recognized this role of sport and leisure in nation creation was Nazi Germany.⁹⁵ Although Italy and Germany differed in approach to leisure and sport diplomacy as a result of the goals of their regimes, they offered one another respect and support within the international sphere. The 1936 Berlin Olympic Games provides an opportunity to explore fascist politics within Europe and the different approaches to athletic event organization as well as athletic policy. Berlin was an opportunity for Adolf Hitler to present Nazi Germany as a peaceful world power, one that should be tolerated by the international community and the liberal world powers. While both Germany and Italy placed an emphasis on athletic superiority as well as the use of sports as an extension of foreign policy their styles and levels of politicization differed. However, Italy did hold pride in its role as an inspiration for German innovations in sport policy in the international sphere.⁹⁶

The German policy approach to sports politics followed the Italian model of state sanctioned sport and state control over sport organization and leisure activities as Hitler revolutionized German physical education as well as leisure within three years.⁹⁷ International sports were considered a way to assert dominance in the global community; to exhibit national strength and prowess.⁹⁸ Although physical education in Germany was controlled by the state for a large part of the country's history in the modern era, the Nazi parties strengthened the sport system within schools and tightened state control over athletic and leisure clubs. According to

⁹⁵ Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, 410.

⁹⁶ Murray, *The World's Game*, 65

⁹⁷ Gigliola Gori, "Italy: Mussolini's Boys at Hitlers Olympics," in *The Nazi Olympics*, edited by Arnd Krüger and William Murray (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 121.

⁹⁸ Barbara Keys, *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 4 & 7.

Barbara Keys in her book *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s*:

Organized physical activities to promote fitness and military preparedness assumed great importance as a result of the regime's drive for militarization. Physical education programs at various levels of schooling were centrally mandated, and a physical fitness test became a requirement for higher education. The philosophical rationale for participation in sports and physical education programs was defined strictly in terms of service to the state.⁹⁹

Similar to Italy, sport was a national duty, a way for the German public to serve their nation. The indoctrination of the youth was a major part of Nazi policy, much of which was achieved through sport as it was in Italy through fascist policies. For instance, as the 1936 Summer Games began, all youth athletic organizations and clubs were dissolved, except for the Hitler Youth (HJ). This had two levels of impact on the German athletic sphere. On the one hand, the dissolution of all youth clubs except for the HJ left the German youth no choice but to join this club in order to continue to pursue athletic competition. Alternatively, it created a vacuum of athletes and competitors between the ages of 12 and 18. This allowed the Nazi party complete control over the physical education of Germany's young people as they chose the coaches and leaders, explicitly choosing those who aligned themselves with Nazism.¹⁰⁰

Domestic policy in Italy during this period and the state involvement in all aspects of life helped Mussolini consolidate power within the state and establish his regime in the international sphere. National regulation of sport and leisure influenced both the public and private sphere in Italy. Gender roles were cultivated and reinforced through sport participation, youth organizations, and the control of female athletic autonomy, an aspect especially present in soccer

⁹⁹ Ibid, 126

¹⁰⁰ Arnd Krüger, "Germany: The Propaganda Machine," in *The Nazi Olympics*, edited by Arnd Krüger and William Murray (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 28.

organization. Furthermore, there were parallels and distinctions between Italy and Germany during this period of sport diplomacy and international soccer. Overall, the latter half of the 1930s in Italy were a period of intricate domestic policy maneuvering, the continued and increasing enforcement of political ideology and social norms through sports and gender relations.

Chapter Four: Foreign Policy

The period between 1934 and 1938 were marked with shifting international relations and tension within the international community. For Italy there was a need for a balance between expansionist policy and the desire to create an empire, promoting the concept of universal fascism, and a need for diplomacy and the promotion of good will between states. The tension over Ethiopia was a central theme during this period as Italy's actions and desire for expansion brought the nation into conflict with those such as the United States and England. Furthermore, the controversy surrounding athletic exchange and *Oriundi* brought additional insight into the relationship between Italy and the nation's growing diaspora. This chapter explored Italy's, and Mussolini's, complex relationship with the international community as it discussed the concepts of loyalty and nationalism through politics and sports.

Italian Foreign Policy

Political tensions within the European states and their international presence had implications for the cultural politics and sport diplomacy during this period as these specific events occurred in the months leading up to the World Cups in 1934 and 1938 as well as the Olympic Games in 1936. Relations between major states help contextualize athletic policy decisions, strategies, as well as the reactions of fans and event participants. Not only was sport used as an extension of foreign policy during the World Cups and Olympic Games of the 1930s but the environment of international relations, especially the political environment within continental Europe and between Western countries, influenced these decisions and the policy direction surrounding athletic events. The states that had tense relationships with Italy during this

period were the United States of America, France, Argentina, England and the United Kingdom. Similarly, the relationship between Italy and Germany was also important to the social and cultural environment as it influenced international relations between these nations.

Italy's foreign policy following Mussolini's rise to power and especially during the 1930s focused on shaping the country into a global power through colonial projects. In 1936, this was achieved through the occupation of Ethiopia and Eritrea, or as it was known at the time, Abyssinia. Mussolini claimed that following this 'victory' that "Italy [was] now a satisfied power," and "the new Roman Empire would be "an Empire of peace because Italy wants peace for herself and for all."¹⁰¹ Although there was expressed concern with the Italian presence within the African continent and much opposition to the Italian colonial project, there were also attempts to maintain fair relations with Italy in attempts to mitigate damage that may be caused by German expansion and anti-bolshevism. Indeed, there were concerns for Italy's position within the League of Nations as well as its stance on alliances and peace treaties, especially given the growing relationship between Hitler and Mussolini. However,

Mussolini's speech in Milan is received with approval here, not merely because of his formal signature to the Italo-German agreement and his declared adhesion to anti-Bolshevism but for the onslaught on the League of Nations and the Idea of collective peace.¹⁰²

This approval from British media and political officials helped to promote the concept of good relations with Italy. Furthermore, British and Italian interest in the Mediterranean sparked hopes from British political figures that Mussolini's recognition of this common interest would

¹⁰¹ "Hail, Ceasar!" *The Manchester Guardian*, May 11, 1936, 8.

¹⁰² "Reasons for German Approval of the Speech, Mussolini's Hesitations about the League," *The Manchester Guardian*, November 3, 1936, 11.

instigate a “return to normal Anglo-Italian relations.”¹⁰³ There were attempts to bridge political and cultural gaps through political and athletic means as England and Italy continued to play exhibition matches against one another. This reciprocal good will would not continue throughout the decade as Italy became more closely tied to Germany and increased their aggressive operations in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The Italian motivation to participate in the 1936 Berlin Games, and in many other international sporting events, was to maintain its national image within the international community. The athletic delegation however had the obligation to maintain the strength that the Italian athletes obtained during the 1934 World Cup as well as the 1933 International University Games, and the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games. Furthermore, Italy needed to rebuild its image both at home and abroad following the Ethiopian conflict. This conflict and the ongoing intention to ‘rebuild’ the Roman Empire and reinvigorate Italian strength within the international community was a long-term goal of Mussolini, one he constantly referred back to and attempted to reach through various means, but especially through increased intervention in Africa.

Although Italian influence on the African continent remained extremely low compared to its European neighbours such as France and England, they did increase their influence on the African continent through the conflict in Ethiopia as well as the continued occupation in Eritrea. However, because of these actions, the Italian influence pressured other European nation-states with neighbouring colonies and settler societies. This pressure had a negative impact on the Italian reputation in the international community and did not have the intended effect in terms of

¹⁰³ "British Attitude Toward Mussolini's Speech, No Clash of Interests in Mediterranean: Beginning of A Return to Normal Anglo-Italian Relations," *The Manchester Guardian*, November 3, 1936, 11.

improving strength and creating an equal playing field among the great European economic powers and Italy.

French disapproval of Italian actions through social, political, and cultural events was apparent. In the years and months leading up to the World Cup, both nations routinely postponed, pulled out of, or refused to participate in events. For instance,

two years earlier sports and other relations between France and Italy had been strained when Italy refused to send cyclists to the Tour de France and then in April 1937 canceled at the last minute an international soccer match to be played in conjunction with the Paris exhibition of that year. Mussolini wanted to insult France's Popular Front government, but his excuse was the safety of his players.¹⁰⁴

These actions were considered an offense to the French as it appeared as though Mussolini, and thus Italy, had no desire to participate in free and fair competition in good faith; instead, international events were used as tools to manipulate and insult the French government. Indeed, Mussolini was motivated to end French authority in the Mediterranean and 'rebuild' Italian strength and influence in the region. Franco-Italian relations and Anglo-Italian relations were impacted by the Stresa Front and the agreement to reinforce the Locarno Treaties as well as halt the German attempts and changes to the Treaty of Versailles. This however collapsed following foreign policy decisions between Britain and Germany as well as Italy's invasion in Ethiopia, as briefly explored in the above section. Mussolini procrastinated on the expansion of Italy's influence into Africa on the basis of French and British presence within the region in order to avoid alienating the two nations that were at this time allies with Italy. However, the desire to create a new Holy Roman Empire and Italian colonial projects overruled any desire to respect the presence of European Powers in the region. The Anglo-German Naval Agreement also motivated

¹⁰⁴ Murray, *The World's Game*, 79.

Mussolini to pursue closer relations with Hitler in Germany as well as abandon the conditions of the Locarno Treaties. In doing so, Mussolini expressed his support of Germany's acquisition of Austria as a satellite state.

The Locarno Treaties became a source of contention within the international community as the relationship between Hitler and Mussolini and their respective nations grew stronger. Despite the support of German annexation of Austria, the relationship between Italy and Austria appeared to remain the same. "Italy remains still the friend of Austria, and even if a tacit agreement between Italy and Germany exists it has not been effected at the expense of Austria."¹⁰⁵ However,

It was authoritatively stated yesterday in Rome that Italy is prepared to take part in any new conference of the Locarno signatories which may result from Herr Hitler's reply. Such participation, however, will be on the understanding that Italy reserves her attitude on any of the issues involved. Italy is not to take part in the staff talks.¹⁰⁶

A mutually beneficial relationship remained between the two fascist countries as western democratic powers maintained similar concerns and positions towards Germany and Italy and their policies and presence internationally. Mussolini held a desire for Germany to act in Austria prior to the meeting of the committee of thirteen because there would be leverage as well as advantages, not only for Italy, but also for the negotiations and calls for peace.¹⁰⁷ This put Italy in a strong position for the discussion of Germany's Locarno violations.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ "Austria not Surprise," *The Manchester Guardian* March 9, 1936, 14.

¹⁰⁶ "Italy's Position," *The Manchester Guardian*. March 9, 1936, 11.

¹⁰⁷ "Geneva and the Denunciation of Locarno: Covenant and Treaty: Legal Position," *The Manchester Guardian*, March 9, 1936, 14.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Although Italy was a member of the League of Nations, in 1934 there was tension within the League regarding her actions internationally, particularly in relation to the Italian colonial project and Italy's close relationship with Germany. The tension within the League of Nations towards Italy continued to grow as aggression in Ethiopia continued.

To this end there must be no throwing away of League principles either to Hitler or to Mussolini. Hitler must agree to the pact of non-aggression on the east and with Russia, as well as on the west. And Italy must be compelled by effective sanctions to cease her war of piracy and aggression against Abyssinia.¹⁰⁹

There was expressed concern for Italy's behaviour, occupation, and policies in Abyssinia,

It is almost certain that the Abyssinian Government will appeal to the League of Nations if the Italian Government does not agree to arbitration or to give my Government satisfaction in regard to the attack on our forces...¹¹⁰

Furthermore, there were expressed concerns within the British House of Lords regarding Italy's military actions and England's potential responses to them.¹¹¹ However, the British media believed that a resolution would be met as,

Signor Mussolini has always stated that he is a man of peace... It may be true that the Italians have settled at Ual Ual¹¹² for five or six years, but that does not give them the right to the territory, which belongs to Abyssinia.¹¹³

On March 18, 1934 Mussolini gave a speech on Italy's "Spiritual and material expansion" into Asia and Africa that reflected a desire for global fascism, one that caused other nations tied to Italy through regional proximity and shared populations to feel threatened. A few days prior to this speech both Italy and Abyssinia accepted the open invitation for peace negotiations "Italy 'in

¹⁰⁹ "Hitler on Interpretation of Treaties," *The Manchester Guardian*, March 31, 1936, 20.

¹¹⁰ "Abyssinia and the League, Italy's Attitude," *The Manchester Guardian*, December 15, 1934, 6.

¹¹¹ "Italy's Use of Bombs and Gas: Great Outrage on Civilisation, if True; Primate Calls for 'Solemn Protest'" *The Manchester Guardian*, March 31, 1936, 6.

¹¹² Ual Ual refers to a fort built in the Walwal Oasis of Eastern Ogaden in the 1930s.

¹¹³ "Abyssinia and the League, Italy's Attitude," *The Manchester Guardian*, December 15, 1934, 6.

principle' and Abyssinia 'as subject' to the provisions of the covenant being respected." both are amplifying their formal acceptance with detailed replies..."¹¹⁴ This was impacted by,

Signor Mussolini's acceptance of the mediation plan is a victory for peace, and it is reported that Italy will now urge (1) that the Versailles treaty should be modified in her favour; (2) that Great Britain and France are still bound by the 1906 Agreement¹¹⁵ and by the 1925 exchange of Notes; and (3) that sanctions shall cease.¹¹⁶

On March 31 it was announced that, "Following the Italian Government's decision on Saturday to accept in principle the League of Nations appeal for peace, Italian troops have been ordered to stop all military, including air operations."¹¹⁷ This acceptance was conditional to the immediate halt of sanctions imposed by other European politics, however the assumption that this was the main reason for the military halt was questioned and instead the focus shifted towards change in European politics.¹¹⁸

Italy entered the 1936 Olympic games as an imperial power, placing the nation within the same political, economic, and athletic sphere of other European nations such as Britain and Germany. However, the Ethiopian conflict was not supported by a large part of the international community, especially by other members of the League of Nations. As such, Italy did not appear at the 1936 Berlin games with support from the international community or public, aside from their fellow fascists in Germany. This conflict made it necessary for Italy to continue to promote its strength and politics to the international community through athletic prowess and victory as

¹¹⁴ "Peace Negotiations," *The Manchester Guardian*, March 9, 1936, 10.

¹¹⁵ The 1906 Agreement between Great Britain and France refers to the Tripartite Treaty intended to prevent the possibility of conflict in and over Ethiopia.

¹¹⁶ Letters to the Editor, Italy's Acceptance of Mediation: The Proposed International Conference on Colonies," *The Manchester Guardian*, March 9, 1936, 18.

¹¹⁷ "Italy Proclaims a 'Truce': A Sequel to the New Crisis in Europe? 'Stop Fighting' Order to Troops," *The Manchester Guardian*, March 31, 1936, 11.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

well as propaganda. Foreign policy became more aggressive in the late 1930's through attempts to satisfy on the goals and aspirations of Mussolini, a man who,

came to power promising a foreign policy very different from the one pursued by his liberal predecessors. He would bring the country glory, new possessions, and greater influence in international affairs.¹¹⁹

Italian foreign policy centered around the 1936 Berlin Games aimed at maintaining the upward trajectory of Italian athletic success, particularly in sports the nation excelled in, such as soccer. The Azzurri's success in the World Cup just two years prior the 1936 Olympic team composed of the Italian university students, athletes who had experienced international success in earlier tournaments and events precepted public confidence in Italy. There were also the implications of the Spanish Civil War which began just weeks earlier in the days leading up to what was meant to be the Barcelona People's Olympiad. The Spanish Civil War brought forth increased tension between Fascist parties, Liberal Democratic Parties, and Republican Parties as Spain became yet another threat to the relative peace and security within continental Europe.

The Battle of Berlin refers to the battle and controversy surrounding the Berlin Olympics, not the 1945 Berlin Strategic Offensive Operation carried out by the Soviet Union at the conclusion of World War Two in Europe. There were protests, mainly from the United States, of the Berlin Olympics in the months leading up to the Games.¹²⁰ This was in response to Hitler's cooption of the Olympics, organized as they were for the increased power and influence of the Nazi Party in the nation and region. Furthermore, there were international concerns for the Nazi's increased marginalization of the Jewish population in Germany and the fear that Jewish athletes from other nations felt in appearing at the Games: their freedom, safety, and equal

¹¹⁹ William Halperin, *Mussolini and Italian Fascism* (Princeton: Van Nostrand Anvil Books, 1964), 72.

¹²⁰ Barbara Keys, *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s*, 140 & 156.

opportunity to training areas were concerns. For instance, in 1936, anti-fascist protests were held in Barcelona as a response to the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. The Barcelona People's Olympiad was an international Olympic alternative to the Berlin Games. An anti-fascist protest was registered by many of the athletes intended to participate, members of workers unions, socialist parties, trade associations, and communist parties.¹²¹ While this alternative to the Olympics gained popularity it inevitably did not occur as a result of the Spanish Civil War. The manifesto for the Barcelona Olympiad states that the event was meant to revive "the original spirit of the Games and accomplishes this great task under the banner of the brotherhood of men and races."¹²² The organizers of the Barcelona Olympiad believed that it would promote equality, international unity, and camaraderie, something that the Olympics no longer and were instead dominated by political propaganda and ideology. States such as Italy and Germany pledged to send teams made up of political exiles while teams in part composed of Jewish athletes from other nations also registered to participate. Due to the onset of the Spanish Civil War the event was canceled at the last minute with some athletes having already arrived while others were unable to do so due to closed borders. Those who arrived made hasty exits or alternatively joined worker's militias.¹²³

The Spanish Civil War began in mid-July of 1936, impacting the changing political landscape in continental Europe. Francisco Franco became a fascist dictator following the end of the War in 1939, joining Mussolini and Hitler in their political sphere of influence as both Italy and Germany supported Franco's militia for various reasons. However, France did not offer

¹²¹ Ray Physick, "The Olimpiada Popular: Barcelona 1936, Sport and Politics in an Age of War, Dictatorship and Revolution," *Sport in History* 37:1 (2017), 54

¹²² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 69

support during the Second World War and would instead remain neutral. Italy's motivation for involvement in the Spanish Civil War was its desire to create a *Mare Nostrum*, to reestablish the Roman empire and evolve the nation into an imperial power. They also supported the Catholic Church and the maintenance of traditional religious values. The Spanish Civil War represented increasing tensions within Europe between competing political ideologies as well as a precursor for what would come in the years to follow with the onset of the Second World War. The implications of the Spanish Civil War and impending Second World War are necessary to consider because of their influence on international politics.

German and Italian relations during this period were imperative to understanding the larger European continental dynamic as well as the geopolitical environment of the rest of the globe and participating states. These two totalitarian states held similar beliefs with regard to the use of sport in national image making and mass culture. They also maintained the appearance of support for one another during the hosting of their respective events, the 1934 World Cup in Italy saw strong German support as well as direct approbation from Hitler. The 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin experienced similar support from Italy and Mussolini. Italo-German protocol of 1936 and the Rome-Berlin axis reflect the relationship between Italy and Germany during this period of time. As the nations built on their existing friendship through similar political environments and ideologies, they also supported each other through sports. The Italo-German protocol of 1936 refers to a nine-point protocol document drawn up by the Italian and German governments which addressed friendship and rapprochement. It was intended to align the two nations across issues regarding the Spanish Civil War, the League of Nations, and the Locarno Treaties and create economic cooperation between the two states.

American relations with totalitarian states during this period were strained. However, what was most important to note is that despite a strong resistance to the German political environment and antisemitic actions as well as concerns for the publicity the Games offered Hitler's emerging regime. Regardless of some support from within North America, the United States posed the main propaganda struggle for Nazi politicians and their propaganda organization because of the fierce opposition to political actions within Germany by American citizens, political officials, and athletes. This was largely a result of American athletic strength and success during previous Games. The focus of the American press campaign its political declarations then revolved around the American media.¹²⁴ The United States' public as well as some politicians were extremely critical of the Nazi Olympic Games. Although the color barrier existed in most respects for racialized and visible minorities in America, particularly black athletes, Americans prided themselves on a commitment to equality of opportunity in sports and threatened an international boycott of the games, one that came close to succeeding.¹²⁵ The 1936 Berlin Games were clouded by threats of boycott by other international actors. Furthermore, existing economic sanctions on both Italian and German economic bodies were reinforced as a result of each respective nation's actions in the international sphere leading up to the Olympics. Although the threat of boycotting the Games and athletic sanctions were mainly targeted towards Germany and German Chancellor Adolf Hitler, Mussolini's decision to tie his state to German politics and sports implicated Italy in tension between Germany and states such as the United States and Britain. There was extreme dissatisfaction with Germany hosting the Olympic Games given its current political ideals and the subjugation of religious and ethnic minorities,

¹²⁴Arnd Krüger, "United States of America: The Crucial Battle," in *The Nazi Olympics*, 44.

¹²⁵ David Clay Large, *Nazi Games: The Olympics of 1936* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 69.

particularly Jewish residents within the nation.¹²⁶ There were claims that because of the oppression of religious and ethnic minorities within Germany the games hosted by the nation were in direct violation of the IOC's rules and regulations laid out by the *Charter of the Olympic Games*.¹²⁷ In fact, the American Jewish community, motivated by the abuse and antisemitic rhetoric within Germany promoted by the Nazi party, sent representatives to the American Olympic Committee to appeal the games and request the possibility of moving the 1936 Olympics out of Berlin to a more liberal nation.¹²⁸ However, this request failed as the AOC president Avery Brundage had no desire for the Olympics be moved out of Berlin.¹²⁹

The international response and opinion surrounding fascism as a political ideology in Italy began to shift in the time leading up to the 1936 Berlin Games. Although in 1936 Britain had assumed to some extent that their relations with Italy and Mussolini's government were warming, particularly in regard to their shared interests in the Mediterranean, the continued occupation of Abyssinia led to tensions between the two nations. The main issue with the trajectory of Italian politics from the Anglo-American point of view surrounded the close Italian relationship with Hitler as well as a mirroring of Nazi racial policies and the arrests of political opposition leaders and officials and the intellectual elite: "There has recently been a renewed campaign of political terrorism in Italy, coinciding with the Italian Government's move towards better relations with the Western democracies."¹³⁰ These arrests in *The Manchester Guardian* were discussed as,

¹²⁶ "Olympic Games in the New Germany: Case Against Taking Part BARRED by RULES? Nazi Treatment of Jewish Athletes," *The Manchester Guardian*, 1935, 9.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Large, *Nazi Games*, 70.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ "More Arrests in Italy," *The Manchester Guardian*, May 3, 1938, 6.

On April 10 and subsequent days many well-known Milanese were arrested and taken to prison without any explanation or even an explicit charge... At the same time the police arrested several workers in Milan to give the impression that there was a connection between the workers and the intellectuals which did not in fact exist.¹³¹

Furthermore,

The most eminent of the arrested men is a well-known lawyer and author, Signor Antonio Greppi... formerly a member of the Socialist party, but retired from politics in 1926 when the parties were suppressed by the Fascist Government.¹³²

In terms of the close relationship with Herr Hitler, when he visited the nation and was in attendance at sporting competitions and other major cultural events there was a frenzy of activity. Italy was quick to show their support of Germany through their early confirmation of participation in the 1936 Games. Leading up to the Olympic Games Italy was in the public international eye as a result of its annexation of Abyssinia that took place in May of 1936, an attempt to rebuild and create the new "Fascist Empire."¹³³ The reactions to this increased fanaticism of Mussolini's politics and speech were distinguished in foreign media as,

The Abyssinian triumph seems to have had a stimulating effect on Signor Mussolini's oratory... Signor Mussolini announced the annexation of Abyssinia without any reservations and promised that Italy would "defend it against anyone," but there were other and more startling touches.¹³⁴

This decision by Mussolini to expand Italian influence in Africa and attempt to rebuild the "roman empire" alienated both England and France because of the proximity to English and French Somaliland.¹³⁵ However, while England was an outspoken oppositional force in the international community against the Italian military actions, France was placed in a difficult

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² "Signor Greppi," *The Manchester Guardian*, May 3, 1938, 6.

¹³³ "FOREIGN," *The Manchester Guardian*, May 11, 1936, 8.

¹³⁴ "Hail, Ceasar!" *The Manchester Guardian*, May 11, 1936, 8.

¹³⁵ "War in Ethiopia by September!: Italy Defies World, 'Honor' is at Stake," *The Chicago Defender*, June 15, 1935, 1.

position as a result of its continued colonial presence in its African colonies. As a result there was an attempt by the French to prevent unanimous sanctions.¹³⁶ The possible responses by the international community to the initial annexation included the possibility for sanctions to be dropped and Italy expelled from the League of Nations in order to address the blatant disregard for the ethics of the league of nations.¹³⁷ In May there was a meeting in Geneva "to face the problem of the apparent triumph of Italian aggression."¹³⁸ However, as time went on there was an understanding that international organizations were not strong enough to halt Italy's expansion.¹³⁹ It was following the annexation that there was a clear shift in politics and rhetoric in Italy by Mussolini, one that reflected the intention of imperialism and status as a global power with colonial strength. "Mussolini proclaimed the annexation of the Empire of Abyssinia from the balcony of the Piazza Venezia to-night to an audience of over 200,000 people assembled in the square below and the Duce's short speech, which was broadcast throughout Italy and to the army in Africa, was received with thunderous applause."¹⁴⁰ It was throughout this speech that he expressed "Italy has at last her empire -- a Fascist empire." and that "The people of Italy have created this empire and will defend it against all comers."¹⁴¹ There was a belief that this speech served as a warning to other republics and global powers that Italy, at least at this time, was dedicated to maintaining her empire through any means.

¹³⁶ Metz Lochard, "Panorama of World News," *The Chicago Defender*, September 7, 1935, 11.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ "Mussolini Announces Seizure of All Abyssinia: King-Emperor To Visit Africa: The league Council Meets Today To Face the Situation," *The Manchester Guardian*, May 11, 1936, 9, and "Expelling Italy from the League," *The Manchester Guardian*, May 11, 1936, 9.

¹³⁹ Metz Lochard. "Panorama of World News," *The Chicago Defender*, September 7, 1935, 11.

¹⁴⁰ "Italy Celebrates the Birth of Her Empire," *The Manchester Guardian*, May 11, 1936, 9.

¹⁴¹ "Mussolini Announces Seizure of All Abyssinia: King-Emperor To Visit Africa: The league Council Meets Today To Face the Situation," *The Manchester Guardian*, May 11, 1936, 9.

The relationship between Italy and Britain strained as a result of differing political ideologies and values, nevertheless reflected optimistically that the political environment would return to normal as a result of Mussolini's "recognition of the common interests of Britain and Italy in the Mediterranean."¹⁴² However, the speech given by Mussolini on November 1, 1936 was not clear whether or not the intention was to reignite a friendship and shared interests in the Mediterranean between Britain and Italy. Indeed, a central theme of Mussolini's speech was the country's friendship with Germany, regardless of potential rivalries.¹⁴³ Although there was an English understanding of the opportunistic nature of Mussolini's foreign policy this also made the country consistently unreliable in policy decisions as, "the only safe way to estimate Italian policy is by reckoning up what Italy might gain by a particular course of action..."¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, the declarations and speeches given by Mussolini were taken lightly in the English Press, "he has no fixed ideas to which everything must be subordinated, unless the greater glories of Italy can be counted as one," and, "it follows that Signor Mussolini cannot be believed or trusted."¹⁴⁵ This was not necessarily positive for Mussolini given that his "declarations do not carry the weight which he would like them to carry."¹⁴⁶ This allowed the Duce to navigate within a known space, regardless of the inconsistency and the lack of security given by his word and the information of his administration and foreign diplomats. There was also the understanding that Italian policy would always reflect what Mussolini believed to be the best interest of his ideological goals and the maintenance of his authority, occasionally under the guise of the best interest of the state, regardless of international opinions or rules of engagement.

¹⁴² "Foreign," *The Manchester Guardian*, November 3, 1936, 10.

¹⁴³ "Mussolini's Speech," *The Manchester Guardian*, November 3, 1936, 10.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Italian foreign policy in 1938, in the months leading up to the World Cup represent a change in Mussolini's rhetoric and policy, particularly with regard to the German invasion of Austria. As Mussolini had once been a staunch defender of Austrian independence, and Italy an ally of the nation, he now believed that for Italy the best course of action was to support the annexation of Austria in order to remain in the good favour of Germany.¹⁴⁷ There was a desire for fascist leadership and support of fascist countries as well as a desire for a form of global fascism, "For us fascists, the frontiers, all the frontiers, are sacred. We do not discuss them; we defend them."¹⁴⁸ This shift not only justified the Italian colonial project but also justified German expansion and annexation; a justification of German policy that although there had been hints of support by Mussolini despite allyship with Austria, was not overt. The future, as seen through rhetoric, reflected both Italian and German supremacy. Mussolini stated in his speech of March 16, 1938 on Anschluss that,

Italy has one single will, a strong soul, and marches straight forward. We are so little impressed that we calmly admit that in some years' time, simply owing to the natural growth of the population, there will be fifty million of us and eight million Germans.¹⁴⁹

The Duce also expressed the opinion that regardless of political alignment the event was inevitable and the position that the nation was taking would be more beneficial in the long run.¹⁵⁰ Following the World Cup there was also an increase in racist and antisemitic rhetoric that matched Nazi Germany. Although there were previous racial policies present on the oppressed marginalized groups and visible minorities, Mussolini's Speech of September 18, 1938 on Racialism was an explicit stance against the Jewish community as well as other racial

¹⁴⁷ *Mussolini Accepts Anschluss: Speech of March 16, 1938 Documents on Internal Affairs: 1938*, vol. 1 edited by Monica Curtis (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 236-237.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

minorities.¹⁵¹ Mussolini stated that, "the Jewish problem is therefore merely an aspect of this phenomenon... world Jewry has for the last sixteen years been an irreconcilable enemy of Fascism."¹⁵² This placed the Jewish community and Judaism itself as an opposition to fascism, therefore an enemy of the state. This stance helped legitimize antisemitic and anti-Jewish policies and actions.

A major point of contention for the US government was the emerging race problem in Italy as the Italian government began to mirror the anti-Jewish politics of Germany, even though to a lesser extent. Mussolini imposed defining characteristics of Italian identity, claiming that Jewish persons could not be Italian; he argued that "the European physical and psychological characteristics of the Italian race must not be altered in any way."¹⁵³ For instance,

the Fascist attitude toward the race problem... it may be pointed out that this represents the first official or semiofficial pronouncement in respect to a race question and may well be considered as a possible point of departure for positive action.¹⁵⁴

As a result of this, the belief that different human races existed, were biological and existed within a racial hierarchy of "greater and lesser," was promoted within Italy. There was a conscious effort to establish a pure Italian race and support the racist policies that existed elsewhere. Furthermore, "A distinction must be made between the European Mediterranean races on one hand and oriental and Africans on the other," and "Jews do not belong to the Italian

¹⁵¹ *Mussolini Accepts Anschluss*, 236-237.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with regard to discrimination between American Citizens: The Ambassador in Italy (Phillips) to the Secretary of State*, (Document 455: 865.4016/31, Telegram: Rome, July 15, 1938).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

race.”¹⁵⁵ This overt shift in political ideology and explicit racial policy not only emphasized the existing tension between liberal democratic states such as the United States and Italy, it also supported the belief in the close relationship between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in ideology and political structure. It also confirmed the assumptions made by U.S. government officials and foreign ambassadors on the direction that the Italian nation-state was heading towards in terms of racial policy and antisemitism. This helped to

prove that the racial principle has always been a basic doctrine of the Fascist regime and demonstrating that the strength of a nation is lost when its racial purity is weakened through the introduction of other racial strains which cannot have the same consciousness of the local origins, traditions and essential characteristics of the nation.¹⁵⁶

The policy-imposed limitation upon freedom of movement, expression, and other civil rights as,

...they would not henceforth be allowed to have any “political or social influence” in Italian life and by that he meant that no Jewish newspapers would be permitted to circulate, no Jewish literature would be printed and Jewish theaters would be forbidden.¹⁵⁷

As a result of the racial policy further disagreements and opposing opinions rose between the Italian government and the Catholic Church, institutions that had been at odds with one another. However, there were alignments in terms of gender relations. For instance, the Vatican and Italian government, though at odds on various topics, particularly the importance of religion, did agree on the importance of reinforced gender norms that reflected a more traditional family unit;

¹⁵⁵ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with regard to discrimination between American Citizens: The Ambassador in Italy (Phillips) to the Secretary of State*, (Document 455: 865.4016/31, Telegram: Rome, July 15, 1938).

¹⁵⁶ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with regard to discrimination between American Citizens: The Ambassador in Italy (Phillips) to the Secretary of State*, (Document 456: 865.4016/32, Telegram: Rome, July 24, 1938).

¹⁵⁷ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with regard to discrimination between American Citizens: The Ambassador in Italy (Phillips) to the Secretary of State*, (Document 459: 865.4016/37, Telegram: Rome, July 29, 1938).

one with separate, defined, spheres of influence and a male head of house that mirrored the power hierarchy of the state and relegated women to the periphery of political and social life. The main role women filled was that of a homemaker, to raise the next generation and serve their husband. Regarding racial policy, the Catholic Church opposed the Italian government's racial policy as "the use of the word "Catholic" meant "universal" and was neither racial, nationalist or separatist."¹⁵⁸ There were also barriers to communication between the government and foreign diplomats and ambassadors. For instance, the Italian Ambassador in Washington was receiving conflicting information from his government regarding the treatment of the Jewish population and as a result felt the need to return to Italy and observe first-hand the political environment and internal conditions of the nation.¹⁵⁹ In the case of one Italian Ambassador to the US, following his return to his mother country he saw that "there had been a change in the Government's attitude toward the Jews" and that,

the Government had decided to take measures to preserve the purity of the Italian civilian throughout the Empire. The movement originated from the necessity of keeping the Italian and black races apart in Ethiopia in order to prevent miscegenation which had had such bad results in the Portuguese and French Colonies. The movement, he said, was therefore an empire movement and the Jewish race which had always regarded itself as a separate race also came into the picture...¹⁶⁰

This suggested the imperial perspective that Mussolini imposed, not only outside of Italy but within as well for foreign nationals, foreign residents, and those that did not conform to the preconceived notion of the Italian ethnic identity.

¹⁵⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with regard to discrimination between American Citizens: The Ambassador in Italy (Phillips) to the Secretary of State*, (Document 456: 865.4016/32, Telegram: Rome, July 24, 1938).

¹⁵⁹ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with regard to discrimination between American Citizens: Memorandum of Conversation, by the Under Secretary of State (Welles)*, (Document 458: 865.4016/36: Washington, July 26, 1938).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

Racism and antisemitism in Italy in the later 1930's become an essential part of Mussolini's politics, his conception of nationhood, and the Italian imperial project.¹⁶¹ Indeed, many considered that there had been no "sense of racial superiority in a biological sense."¹⁶² In Mussolini's Italy, the focus was on a superiority of Latin culture and shared history as there was little to no racial policy in the nation before Mussolini came to power. However, Mussolini's racial policies changed as they become more restrictive of racialized individuals and citizens, including Jewish people within the state following the Ethiopian war.¹⁶³ This changing political landscape had implications for the sporting world as well. These policies specifically restricted access for women and racialized persons to participate as athletes, especially in public or international sporting events as the state controlled which athletes represented Italy and who got the support from sporting institutions.¹⁶⁴

The assassinations of two Italians, Carlo Rosselli an influential anti-fascist who was living in France, exiled from Italy based on rumours that he had planned an assassination of Mussolini, and his brother Nello, a historian, blamed for anti-fascist communist and anarchist. In actuality, an extreme right French secret organization was more than likely responsible. This incident impacted French-Italian relations and provided the Italian government with a concrete event to exploit in their declining political relations with France. It also provided an example for Mussolini to exploit through the media, providing fuel for Italian nationalism and protectionism. This event promoted these sentiments throughout the general population, further consolidating the foreign and national politics of Mussolini and legitimizing his political aspirations. The tense

¹⁶¹ Gene Bernardini, "The Origins and Development of Racial Anti-Semitism in Fascist Italy," *The Journal of Modern History* 49:3 (1977), 431.

¹⁶² Esmonde Robertson, "Race as a Factor in Mussolini's Policy in Africa and Europe," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23:1 (1988), 38.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

¹⁶⁴ R.J.B Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy: Life Under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915-1945*, 264.

relations between France and Italy at this time were partially due to the Spanish Civil War and Mussolini's pro-Franco attitude. As France was the host nation, Franco-Italian relations were increasingly important. Not only were there regional implications as a result of the political tensions rising in Europe in the late 1930s, the host nation held importance and influence over the World Cup in terms of organization, promotional aspects, media coverage, and tourism. The politics differed as a result of the World Cup being played in France,

A new sense of national pride was aroused by the performances of the national team. Moreover, Italians were playing in a foreign country and the traditional city and regional loyalties and antagonisms were set apart for a while.¹⁶⁵

Because the event took place in another country, the goal of victory still remained dominant for the Italian team and Italian Duce. However, the implications of winning the tournament differed as a result of the occurrence in another country. In the years between the 1934 World Cup and the 1938 World Cup an erosion of Franco-Italian relations occurred as well as a desire to end Anglo-French authority in the Mediterranean. Indeed, part of the motivation to support Franco in the Spanish Civil War was a result of this as, "Mussolini hoped to gain, apart from victory for Franco — and for himself — was the destruction of the Anglo-French grip on the Mediterranean."¹⁶⁶ There was a desire to spread fascism and support political allies, such support being the basis for political alignment and self-interest. Mussolini's intentions in political life were multifaceted. Politicians were constantly playing a two-level game and their goals for various actions and policy approaches had various motivations.

¹⁶⁵ Alessandro Dal Lago and Rocco De Biasi, "Italian Football Fans: culture and organization," in, *Football, violence, and social identity*, edited by Richard Giulianotti, Norman Bonney and Mike Hepworth (New York City: Routledge, 1994), 74.

¹⁶⁶ Halperin. *Mussolini and Italian Fascism*, 78

Not only were tensions high between Britain and Italy, but the United States was also at odds politically with the Duce and Italian Fascism. There were issues with the rhetoric of the Italian state, the racist policies, and the lack of transparency from Italian diplomats and ambassadors. Whether this was a major motivating factor or not, the United States “decided to scratch from the World Football Cup. This makes the third scratching, the others being Austria and Argentina. The tournament will be held in various towns in France.”¹⁶⁷ Trade relations between the U.S. and Italy were tense during this period, particularly surrounding tariffs, quotas, exports, and “dumping.”¹⁶⁸ The conflicting political culture and US superiority and legalism in the eyes of Italian diplomats and foreign ambassadors negatively impacted trade relations and communications.¹⁶⁹ This became highly noticeable following the racial policies in the late 1930’s towards the Jewish population in Italy. During treaty negotiations for trade agreements between F.B Sayre, Fulvio de Suvich, and Giuseppe Cosmelli the suggestions and requests of Italy were considered questionable,

...we could not do this because (1) it was questionable whether it would be constitutional and (2) it was inadvisable politically. I said the only sound procedure was to continue with the treaty negotiations, which I hoped could be done.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, April 21, 1938, 4.

¹⁶⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with regard to discrimination between American Citizens: The Ambassador in Italy (Phillips) to the Secretary of State*, (Document 447 611.653/428, Telegram: Rome, September 2, 1938).

¹⁶⁹ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with regard to discrimination between American Citizens: Memorandum by the Under Secretary of State (Welles) of a Conversation with the Italian Ambassador (Suvich)*, (Document 454: 711.65/1101/2: Washington June 15, 1938).

¹⁷⁰ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with regard to discrimination between American Citizens: Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State (Sayre)*, (Document 432 611.653/410: Washington, March 10, 1938).

In response to this attitude by the Italian government, Professor Guarnieri¹⁷¹ replied that:

"You Americans and your Government must get it into your heads that either we mutually assist each other or there can be no talk of a commercial agreement. I repeat what I have said many times: either you make it possible for us to pay for imports from your country by importing from us, and your existing tariff system be handled with greater vision and comprehension of our difficulties—or there will be no importation. We refuse to import unless we can pay and we refuse to be placed in a position of inferiority." (Professor Guarnieri repeated the phrase "we refuse to be placed in a position of inferiority" in an emphatic manner.) He said: "Italy is today a country whose loyalty cannot and shall not be questioned. We pay to the last cent for all we import and that is our system—but we must export. When that is made impossible there will be no issuance of import permits for any of the commodities listed which we have so carefully and painstakingly prepared. We can and we shall have to import from elsewhere. There is no other solution to this problem."¹⁷²

These contrasting opinions of the trust and transparency of Italy within the United States negatively impacted trade relations because of the limitations placed on its word and commitments. Italy was seen as a nation that was inherently self-interested, one that could only be trusted to do what they believed was in their best interest and not in the mutual interest or benefit of both nations. This concern was supported by the evolving stance towards Austrian independence as a former supported and protector and now a supporter of German expansion. Furthermore, the trade relationships between Austria and Italy as well as Italy and Germany had shifted, "Austria had been abolished and [that] no preferences were granted German products entering Italy."¹⁷³ This, suggested that the partnerships and 'friendships' built between Italy and other nations did not hold value in the sense that they transferred into favourable trade relations.

¹⁷¹ Felice Guarnieri was the Italian Minister of Foreign Trade and Exchange from 1937 to 1938.

¹⁷² Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with regard to discrimination between American Citizens: The Ambassador in Italy (Phillips) to the Secretary of State*, (Document 443 611.6531/421, Telegram: Rome, August 8, 1938).

¹⁷³ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with*

There were growing concerns for the foreign residents in Italy, particularly for US citizens who were Jewish. There were appeals by the US government to extend protections to American citizens living in Italy however,

Americans in Italy cannot avail themselves of treaty rights since there is no treaty guaranteeing mutual establishment and residence the United States and Italy are nevertheless continuing their relations with each other generally speaking as formerly except as regards commercial relations which are governed by the new *modus vivendi*.¹⁷⁴

The US government believed that Italy must consider and decide that,

American citizens lawfully residing in Italy will not be discriminated against on account of race or creed and that they will not be subjected to provisions of the nature of those embodied in the decree-laws in question.¹⁷⁵

However, the Italian response to these requests was that,

A special treatment accorded to American Jews would constitute an unjust discrimination with respect to other foreign Jews and would moreover be incompatible with the principles underlying the measures in question which are designed to safeguard the race and not to discriminate against special categories of foreigners according to the countries of which they are nationals.¹⁷⁶

Italy further claimed that although it was not possible "for the Italian Government to make a broad exemption for American Jews," their cases would instead be "dealt with individually and

regard to discrimination between American Citizens: The Ambassador in Italy (Phillips) to the Secretary of State, (Document 450 611.6531/431, Telegram: Rome, November 8, 1938).

¹⁷⁴ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with regard to discrimination between American Citizens: The Ambassador in Italy (Phillips) to the Secretary of State*, (Document 465: 865.4016/63, Telegram: Rome, September 11, 1938).

¹⁷⁵ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with regard to discrimination between American Citizens: The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Italy (Phillips)*, (Document 469: 865.4016/75a, Telegram: Rome, September 14, 1938).

¹⁷⁶ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with regard to discrimination between American Citizens: The Ambassador in Italy (Phillips) to the Secretary of State*, (Document 472: 865.4016/85, Telegram: Rome, October 17, 1938).

sympathetically,"¹⁷⁷ thus implying that despite US power and influence internationally Italy was no longer willing to concede privilege to a nation that had previously refused its own requests.

Athletic Exchange

The use of foreign-born athletes in Italy and racialized athletes remained a topic of controversy. In the case of the World Cup, "in order that a player be eligible to take part in this competition if he is fortunate to be selected he must first of all be a citizen, either by birth or naturalization."¹⁷⁸ This implies that the practice of athletic exchange was limited to nations where there were ethnic and national ties, where a country such as Italy would be able to trace the lineage of the players it was interested in taking back to their 'mother country.' It was this national team led by Vittorio Pozzo which began the utilization of foreign-born athletes, referred to as *oriundi*, to represent the Azzurri in the 1934 World Cup. This created an interesting international environment as well as tension between certain states as some of the top Argentine players had been enticed to play for Italy, a fact which the Argentine national team felt had created a weakened Argentine team because of the loss of its former talent. Although the exchange of human capital may be considered to strengthen relations amongst nations in terms of club sports, athletes are more and more commonly seen playing for national teams of nation-states that they are only loosely tied to in terms of loyalty. Similar to brain drain, these players joined a team outside their nation to represent and win victories and titles. In this case it was the loss of Argentine players such as Luis Monti, Raimundo Orsi, and Enrique Guaita who

¹⁷⁷ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, Volume II. *Persecution of Jews in Italy; representations by the United States with regard to discrimination between American Citizens: The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Italy (Phillips)*, (Document 473: 865.4016/85, Telegram: Washington, October 22, 1938).

¹⁷⁸ George M. Collins, "American Booters to Play in Rome: Compete for World Cup Next Year," *The Boston Globe*, October 27, 1933, 33.

transferred to Italy. Although they were not completely accepted by the Italian public, officials, coaches, and political leaders promoted the narrative that these foreign-born players were as Italian as the native-born players because of their lineage and their willingness to serve their new home country through athletics.¹⁷⁹

Global soccer is a sphere of international engagement. As the most popular sport in the world, one that is able to circumvent most cultural, social, and political differences, and with billions of fans around the globe, the World Cup, the Champions League, and the Copa America, among others, are huge events that promote national loyalty and pride in one's country and team. There are different motivations surrounding global soccer and the ever-increasing connection between states and regions through sports. These motivations vary depending on political ideology and governments: "Totalitarian regimes such as the Third Reich or Mussolini's Italy have actively sought to construct an all-encompassing public sphere as a crucial instrument in their attempt to manifest power."¹⁸⁰ Global sport has many purposes, however, as seen through the intentions of the Olympic Games and the rules and regulations outlined in the *IOC Charter*,

Primarily sport must be the medium of international conciliation. There can be no rivalry without some friction, but rivalry in sport should, and must, be the most generous of all rivalries — a contest in magnanimity.¹⁸¹

It is meant to "create and strengthen bonds of friendship... to purify sport... and as far as possible, make the contest and not the victory the joy of the young."¹⁸² However, because of globalization and technological developments that have brought the world closer together local sport is becoming global as well. For instance, local club teams gain international support that

¹⁷⁹ Zach Bigalke, "'If They Can Die for Italy, They Can Play for Italy!': Italo-Argentine Identity, and the 1934 Italian World Cup Team," Thesis, *University of Oregon* (2017), 97-100, 109-110

¹⁸⁰ Cornel Sandvoss, *A Game of Two Halves: Football, Television and Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 186.

¹⁸¹ William M. Sloane, "The Olympic Idea," in *Sports and International Relations*, edited by Benjamin Lowe *et al.* Champaign: Stipes Publishing Company, 1978, 128.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 131.

partially stems from immigration, shifting population groups, and diversifying immigrant nations such as the USA and Canada.

Prior to the World Cup, soccer remained a mainly local sport. Although there were exhibitions and organized international games they were not at the same level as they were following the inaugural World Cup in 1930. Competitions were also mainly between nations within the same region or continent opposed to those around the world. States engaged in a two-level game at the local and international level in terms of soccer, where “[t]he local, signified by the club which functions as a representative of the self, is integrated and interpreted before the transnational background of an increasingly encompassing public.”¹⁸³ However, although,

club football has traditionally been considered the counterpart to international football competitions such as European Championships or World Cups, domestic or national leagues are becoming transnational in terms of both production and distribution.¹⁸⁴

As media provides a form of cultural and political exchange between states through a form of public diplomacy, sport and sport entertainment is also a part of cultural diplomacy through media and transnational fanaticism. There is also the factor that soccer in and of itself does not result in social relations and cultural exchange; it is the human nature of politicization that ensures this happens, otherwise transnational soccer would be the *terra nullus* that it is meant to be in theory. Indeed, “While transnational football alone does not construct transnational social relations, football fandom offers the space to project and communicate the transnational identities of fans.”¹⁸⁵ International soccer provides a sphere of influence and interaction for individuals to come together under the guise of a shared common interest as well as friendly

¹⁸³ Sandvoss, *Game of Two Halves*, 76.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 68.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 73.

competition. Such individuals are intrinsically linked to one another through this sport, a phenomenon that can be explored through “fans’ negotiation of the national, global and local layers of professional football, an intrinsic connection between the global and the local emerges... the transnational and potentially global dimension of football through a heightened emphasis on the local.”¹⁸⁶ The sport has captured the interest of fans around the world, providing an increased capacity for political propaganda as well as a further reach for national governments. They are no longer limited within their nation and domestic influence, instead governments, politicians, and world leaders can access populations around the world not only through international events such as the World Cup but through international media coverage.

The consumer market surrounding soccer at a local and international level has impacted the sport through commercialization and the presentation of teams and athletes as commodities. Sandvoss argues that, “Distinctly global strategy of contemporary players in the football and sponsorship market in turn reflects the increasingly global state system of consumer markets and distribution patterns.”¹⁸⁷ During the 1930’s the Italian national team members were considered to be heroes for their nation. However, they were also commodified by the Italian government to promote sentiments of national pride amongst the population as well as a subtle example of fascist policy and behaviour through organization, strategy, physical ability, and national loyalty. Regardless of whether the players were foreign born nationals, they played for their country, brought pride and international attention, and in some ways respect, and as such served their nation to the best of their abilities. Although globalization and global consumerism within sport was less defined during this period, the level at which it was present was known and used by

¹⁸⁶ Sandvoss, *Game of Two Halves*, 75.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 69.

Mussolini to accomplish goals of cultural exchange and propaganda on a domestic and international scale. This can be seen by the opportunistic approach to international events, media coverage, exhibition games, and the World Cup. There were campaigns to increase international interest and tourism in the nation and thus the exposure of state politics and ideology to an audience and population outside the domestic and regional reach.

Chapter Five: Propaganda

The pageantry of sport allows for the imposition of political ideals through symbolic structures and actions. This allows for various levels of propaganda delivery through mass media and entertainment. There is a conflation of athletes and the outcomes of these events with the image of the state. Popular culture, media, press and entertainment factions, as well as the international community, recognize the success of the state through its athletes and, in the case where a country hosts one such event, through the success of the nation-state as a host. This chapter explored the relationship between sport and propaganda through various dimensions such as sport and national image, the role of radio in the promotion of political ideology and as a medium of sport reporting, stadium construction and infrastructure development as a covert form of propaganda, the symbolic value of sport, and finally, the use of ephemera as printed materials were used to extend the reach of sporting events as they helped shape the narratives surrounding the history and image of participating nations.

In the case of the 1934 World Cup, infrastructure development, the *Azzurri* organization and team hierarchy, and the use of the Fascist salute were all symbols utilized by Mussolini to impose Italian fascism of this era, both subtly and overtly, to the international community. This imposition was done directly towards those participating at various levels and those observing the games both in Italy and abroad through various forms of media. Regardless of the depression and economic recovery that was occurring in the 1930s, Italy spent over \$3 million lire on the propaganda campaign leading up to and during the World Cup. This refers to the construction of stadiums, the increase in tourism, the amenities and activities provided as spectators of these events, memorabilia, art and poster commissions, the cost of ticket production, and international

cooperation and support through participation.¹⁸⁸ Not only were they able to take advantage of Mussolini's policy, but travel within the nation was also free for ticket holders. This was in attempt to increase interest in the region with the hopes to grow the tourism industry beyond the World Cup.

Sports offer a form of mass culture, similar to religion, that appeals to the general population as well as the political and economic elite; sports bridge social and cultural gaps between populations and allows for the creation and reinforcement of national identity and loyalty. Sports also offer a form of controlling collective consciousness of the population, allowing political officials and leaders an alternative to propaganda. Athletics may be utilized as a vehicle of domestic and international politics and a tool for foreign and domestic policy. There are many different facets of sport that allow for easy conflation of sport and political ideology as well as national strength. Sport is a form of mass culture, a mass phenomenon, a form of controlling the collective consciousness of the population, a vehicle for political propaganda, and a tool of the state. In the sense of sport as mass culture, there is a fanaticism that may be found through the fan bases and followers of certain sports and teams. In terms of soccer, there is a loyalty to the club, to one's city, region, and nation as "the mania for physical sports" must now be distinguished from sport itself; and the football "fan" has sacrificed the faculty of wonder made possible by high culture."¹⁸⁹ This suggests that the culture surrounding the sport, alongside the athleticism and game itself, inspires the loyalty and the sense of inclusion through observation and support of a certain team. Although soccer is not considered high culture or an

¹⁸⁸ Apostolos Matsaridis and Vasileos Kaimakamis, "Sport at Fascism's Disposal: The 1934 Football World Cup as a Case of Ideological Propagation and Political Enforcement," *Studies in Physical Culture and Tourism* 19:3 (2012), 118.

¹⁸⁹ William M. Sloane, "The Olympic Idea," in *Sports and International Relations*, edited by Benjamin Lowe *et al* (Champaign: Stipes Publishing Company, 1978), 232.

elite sport due to its accessibility and the affordability of the game, it is ingrained in the culture of so many nations and is enjoyed by all social classes. Its status as the most popular sport in the world allows soccer to promote politics and ideology to the masses. In terms of sport as a mass phenomenon, “[sport] provides an outlet for impulses which would otherwise endanger the [social] apparatus. By occupying their leisure, it keeps the masses quiet”¹⁹⁰ It helps control the collective consciousness of the population and helps placate the population. It may also be used as a form of distraction or a way to ease international tensions as sports promote cooperation, camaraderie, and friendly competition. Sport is also considered to be a “positive cultural factor of the greatest value” in its basic form. Sports, competition, and participation are harmless and enjoyed by all, bridging cultural and ideological gaps between peoples and states. In relation to Italy during the period of this study, sports were used by Mussolini to partially replace religion and the importance and reverence of the Catholic Church alongside political ideology.¹⁹¹

Fascism itself, as presented by Mussolini when he came to power, was considered a religion in and of itself, while soccer was followed with religious reverence, it was sacred. Sports were also used as tools of the state, as a form of foreign policy as well as a vehicle for the creation of national unity and an Italian identity that reflected the fascist ideal. Fascism itself can be considered a political religion, one of the main characteristics of the political ideology was that it meant to establish a civil religion. Italian fascism specifically is seen as a form of political religion because of Mussolini’s desire to replace the influence and authority of the Catholic Church with political ideology. Furthermore, there was a level of religious devotion towards Mussolini and the government expected of the Italian population, as well as ritualistic behaviour

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

and sacralization of politics.¹⁹² The violence of Mussolini's regime and that of the Squadrisimo was justified through rhetoric similar to that of the crusades as they sought to "destroy those desecrating the homeland."¹⁹³ This justification of the state's violence, reminiscent of the crusades, indeed compared to the crusades by the state, illustrates the sanctification of government, law enforcement, and authority.

The use of large international events to endorse one's nation is a common strategy by politicians as the eyes of the world are on their nation-state, its athletes, and their success both on the pitch and as hosts. The image of the nation's strength through athletic victory is paralleled with the image through infrastructure, tourist opportunities, hospitality services, and quality of the tourist experience. Sports, particularly international events and tournaments are used to the advantage of political leaders as "Politicians view these events as a form of political endorsement... this is politically charged when it concerns non-democratic regimes."¹⁹⁴ This is certainly relevant for Mussolini's regime as the 1934 World Cup hosted by Italy was rampant with highly political undertones and narratives related to architecture, memorabilia, and marketing. These competitions and events are utilized as forms of international interaction amongst states, for competition and camaraderie as well as political endorsement. Victory is crucial for the politicization of sport by leaders and officials such as Mussolini. However, the narrative surrounding loss may be utilized in other ways such as to illustrate unfairness and dissatisfaction with the international community, victory is easily interpreted as national prestige. Furthermore, the narrative and coverage by international media of victories is more focused than

¹⁹² Emilio Gentile, "Fascistese: The Religious Dimensions of Political Language in Fascist Italy," in, *Political Languages in the Age of Extremes* edited by Willibald Steinmetz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 75.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 77.

¹⁹⁴ Stefan Szymanski, "About Winning: The Political Economy of Awarding the World Cup and the Olympic Games," *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 31:1 (2011), 90.

that on the losses, the victor is the victor, not only to their nation but to the world, whereas a loss may only be felt in the nation which loses. Propaganda and the pageantry of sport are entangled, although they may be considered exclusively as their own concept with values and measures applied. "There is no limit to the use of sport for propaganda, prestige, and political development, anyone can interpret sports triumph for the celebration of any national purpose."¹⁹⁵

The image of the state is reflected in that of the athlete, of the events, of the outcomes whether they are defeated or victorious. In fact, Sloane that,

Sport furnishes an organic image of the state... is seen as embodying a chivalric ideal stressing elitism, asceticism, and a notion of the enemy as a purely formally opponent whose ideological proclivities are irrelevant in light of his courage and sense of "fairness"... politics and war are viewed as forms of sport... the figure of the athlete is expanded to characterize non-athletic roles traditionally associated with inspiration; the notion of the athlete is thereby given a transcendental significance... sport is associated with the idea of a revolution of the body, which is viewed as the sphere of cultural and spiritual progress.¹⁹⁶

In relation to Mussolini and Italy in the 1930's this may implicate that heroism assigned to athletes and representatives of the state at international competitions and tournaments such as the Tour de France, the World Cup, and the Olympic Games, among others, as well as the high degree of emphasis on the importance and image of the body and physical wellbeing as reflections of the state, reflects an ideal physical form of the fascist man. And, although Mussolini himself represented one form of the ideal, there was also the emphasis on strength, agility, virility, and bravery as well as national loyalty and respect and reverence for one's

¹⁹⁵ Benjamin Lowe *et al*, "Ideology Introduction," in *Sports and International Relations*, edited by Benjamin Lowe *et al* (Champaign: Stipes Publishing Company, 1978), 201.

¹⁹⁶ Sloane, *The Olympic Idea*, 234-235.

country and one's leadership. Mussolini was a symbol of and for the state; he represented his ideals.¹⁹⁷

In some ways, the consolidation of power and the acquisition of local and international political legitimacy of governments and leaders occurs within the stadium, especially for non-democratic regimes. Every nation's image benefits from the conflation of sport with state propaganda. In Italy it was through the control of class consciousness and the widespread involvement and dedication that Italian citizens and residents had towards the sport. Furthermore, sport may be used as a proxy war between nations with competing ideologies as "Mutual hostility between nations is often channeled into the pseudo-event of sports competition where, ironically, it may serve to create or exacerbate political conflict."¹⁹⁸ In the case of Italy, the mutual hostility between states was evident and reflective of the geopolitical tensions throughout the latter half of the 1920s and into the 1940s. Mussolini recognized the importance of sports as arenas for international cooperation and interactions, but, an opportunity to gain a victory for his nation on the international stage. Not only did it impact the image of the state but because of the importance of these events on the image of the nation they held both international and domestic implications. In fact, there is the belief that,

National prestige is at stake, victory is no longer the success of the team that could play better but becomes a national victory and is an occasion for national rejoicings, out of all proportion with reality.¹⁹⁹

In this sense, the success of the Italian national team reflected on the nation. The athletes themselves were held to such national prestige and honour that they were considered to be

¹⁹⁷ "Mussolini aims at empire: As Dictator of Italy he plans greater nation National Assembly cedes him power. Mussolini aims to revive roman empire," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 20, 1925, 4.

¹⁹⁸ James A.R Nafziger, "The Regulation of Transnational Sports Competition: Down from Mount Olympus," in *Sports and International Relations*, 171.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

heroes, serving their country in the international sphere and bringing home a victory for their nation and their leader. International victory, above all other forms of athletic competition, was Italy's most prominent form of athletic victory as the competition was between other nation states instead of other national teams. It suggests a win against competitive nations opposed to a win against fellow citizens of other countries.

International victory allows a nation and its athletes to gain extra exposure in other nations. The implications of athletes' reputations is reflective of the state. Tomlinson argues in *Sport and Diplomacy* that, "The most prominent individuals in the world of sport are of course the record breakers and the champions."²⁰⁰ This suggests that those who are remembered throughout history are the "record breakers and champions," those who achieved proverbial milestones in their sport and made a social and cultural impact in the memories of their nations and the greater world. Indeed, "Most states claim athletic heroes as representative of the "best" in their cultures..."²⁰¹ They are cultural heroes; they represent their nation's politics and values on the international stage; their actions are a direct reflection of their state. Furthermore, the reputation of national athletes and members of national teams also reflects on the state wherein the strategies utilized by athletes and teams are considered to be representative of their people. This holds both negative and positive implications. For instance, if a team or athlete is considered to play dirty, cheat, or be violent, their actions may reflect directly on their nationality. On the other hand, when a team or athlete is considered upstanding, they are seen as positive representations of the state, the gold standard of their citizenry. For Italy during

²⁰⁰ Alan Tomlinson, "Diplomatic actors in the world of football: individuals, institutions, ideologies," in *Sport and Diplomacy: Games within Games*, edited by J. Simon Rofe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 50.

²⁰¹ Benjamin Lowe *et al*, "Introduction," in *Sports and International Relations*, 3.

Mussolini's rule, the reputations of Italian athletes and the national team in the international community, although seen as fierce competitors, was marred by negative connotations within the western liberal democratic world towards Mussolini. He was Italy, and thus, the Italian national team was a direct reflection of the Duce. Although this was a purposeful act and a political move by Mussolini himself in order to strengthen his regime and the image of Italy within the international sphere, there were mixed and evolving responses as the years went by. However, the athletes were celebrated and considered to be extensions of the state and of Mussolini. "The players who score are called 'cannonieri Azzuri' -- the blue gunners. Italy has the football fever."²⁰² This quote from an article in *The Manchester Guardian* suggests that the popularity of the sport in Italy was growing considerably and had been growing as the athletes were regarded as reflecting a sense of heroism and romanticism.

As a result of the use of sport in foreign policy, sport and national strength are intertwined as well. Similar to the impact and use of propaganda as a tool of the state for promoting political ideology on both domestic and international levels, sport was used to promote and consolidate national strength. This is useful in political ideals that are conservative and nationalistic in nature. Though there are varying levels of this conservatism, the promotion of national strength and physical superiority through athletics is argued to be right leaning as "...this orientation is right-wing or conservative in character."²⁰³ There is a conflation of national prestige with athletic prestige, the strength and virility of the athlete is associated with that of the state as a direct reflection of the nation's power. Indeed,

²⁰² "Italy's Football Progress, Foundations Laid by Lancashire Players: To-Day's International at Highbury." *The Manchester Guardian*, November 14, 1934, 3.

²⁰³ John M. Hoberman, "Sport and Political Ideology," in *Sports and International Relations*, 225.

The concern with virility -- Coubertin talks of ‘the art of virilizing bodies and souls’ and calls sport ‘the very symbol of virility’ -- is one aspect of a general theory of cultural health and of the forces which may subvert it.²⁰⁴

This suggests that the social and cultural value of the state parallels the population as physical and observable representations. Sport is believed to “coincide with certain ideological interests, to reinforce or even to amplify them.”²⁰⁵ As a result they are co-opted as a platform for propaganda and political discourse. There is no such thing as an apolitical space, regardless of what FIFA or IOC officials claim. The inconsistency of reinforcement for certain regulations has created an environment where political messages are disallowed from competition, a decision that alone appears political, aligning with whatever agenda opposes the message.

The propaganda campaign of the 1934 World Cup was mobilized by Italy’s ability to host and thus, the ephemera would reflect the iconography of the country. This promotional material allowed Mussolini to magnify the importance of Italy around the world through stamps, posters, cigarette cards and other products. In terms of domestic policy, propaganda and information were conflated through periodicals, magazines, and shifts in popular culture. The size, success, and organization of the event not only reflected on the nation but also on Mussolini himself as the embodiment of the country. There was an emphasis on parading Italian politics and culture to the international community through the event and the ceremony surrounding such an honour.

Although the propaganda campaign and cost reductions were extensive and well funded, there was less of a focus on international influence provides targeted propaganda in America as there was a focus on the regional propaganda. Italian propaganda targeted towards European countries had the intention to solidify Mussolini’s dictatorship and legitimize his leadership,

²⁰⁴ Sloane, *The Olympic Idea*, 229.

²⁰⁵ Hoberman, *Sport and Political Ideology*, 225.

government, and politics within Italy and Europe. Furthermore, there were many domestic goals of the propaganda campaign leading up to and during the 1934 World Cup. This included the use of foreign-born players and the rhetoric that it was not only military duty and an individual's willingness to die for their country during war but also the concept of duty and expression of national strength and representation in other areas of international influence. Italy tied the language of the nation, unity, and patriotism to every aspect of life, conflating Italian culture and traditions with Mussolini's fascist politics. By reorganizing day-to-day pastimes, activities, common hobbies and interests, the government was able to mount a soft power campaign and undermine the progress and existing liberal values, imposing ideological beliefs on the collective consciousness of the Italian population.²⁰⁶

There was, and is, an Italian fascination and dedication to listening and watching soccer constantly, '*il calcio minuto per minuto.*' As such,

over eight million Italians — in their homes, in bars, in cars, at the stadium or any other possible place — perform this Sunday ritual, which is closely bound up both with the gambling attractions of the football pools (the Totocalcio) and the familiarity of the commentators' voices.²⁰⁷

Through technological developments and developments in sports entertainment such as the widespread use of radio, Italians were able to massively consume content. This created "a 'new sports hero' in the form of Nicolo Carosio, a huge influence on Italian sports radio for over 30 years. He was still commentating in 1984 at the time of his death."²⁰⁸ The radio provided a new and exciting medium for political propaganda to be issued through sports commentating and new

²⁰⁶ Murray, *The World's Game*, 65-67.

²⁰⁷ Pierre Lanfranchi and Stephen Wagg, "Cathedrals of Concrete: Football in Southern European Society," in *Giving the Game Away: Football, Politics & Culture on Five Continents*, edited by Stephen Wagg (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 131.

²⁰⁸ Murray, *The World's Game*, 72.

public figures, such as Carosio, who represented values within Italy that reflected Mussolini's political agenda.

Almost all forms of media, especially those given attention and freedom to publish, were completely under government control. "Newspapers were the principal arm of fascist propaganda."²⁰⁹ Radio was sparingly used by Mussolini himself. He preferred a direct approach, however, "his subordinates were almost constantly on the air."²¹⁰ Instead, Mussolini would speak to the public directly through public speeches, making his public image more accessible and appearing as though he was a part of the social fabric of the nation; he attempted to relate to the public as a form of control by expressing and showing interest in national pastimes such as soccer. The control of news media, and ultimately its narrative was exceedingly important for the PNF. Sports and sports media were not immune to this control as political messaging permeated through every aspect of life within Italy. *Lo Sport Fascista*, established in 1928 and run by Lando Ferretti, the chairman of the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI), and Augusto Turati, the secretary general of the PNF, was a magazine that served as the mouthpiece of the fascist sport movement and helped to translate the importance of fascism through sports. The fanfare and the event itself were attributed to Mussolini's value and success as a politician and leader as, "An event as colossal as this could only have been organized by Benito Mussolini's Italy."²¹¹ *Il Popolo d'Italia* was another major vehicle for propaganda and discourse between the government and the population. *Il Popolo d'Italia* was Mussolini's personal newspaper, this publication covered the news and events of the nation and international community through a

²⁰⁹ Halperin, *Mussolini and Italian Fascism*, 48.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Simon Martin, *Sport Italia: The Italian Love Affair with Sport* (New York: I.B. Taurus & Co LTD, 2011), 69.

fascist lens, one that explicitly supported and intended to place the Italian prime minister, his policies and administration, in a positive light. *Gazzetta dello Sport* was a sports paper that Lando Ferretti was heavily involved in. In fact, in 1914 he was the editor-in-chief of the paper.

Leading up to the 1938 World Cup in France, the narrative promoted by the newspapers and various parts of the Italian domestic propaganda machine provided the public with a sentiment of Italian World Cup supremacy.²¹² Italians were the expected champions. There was also an additional level of pressure to justify the foreign policy decisions made by the Italian government and their intervention into Ethiopia. The World Cup provided an opportunity to distract from Italian failure abroad and refocus the population on the success of their national team. The 1938 World Cup sanctioned propaganda through the news, media, and excitement in Italy even though it was not the host nation. It promoted Mussolini towards, “propaganda as well as terror to maintain his dictatorship... he knew from experience the potency of the written and spoken word.”²¹³ There was a necessity and importance placed upon written forms of communication as tools of the state, utilized to provide political ideology and messages to the public for easy consumption. “[Mussolini] proceeded on the assumption that all the people could be fooled all the time.”²¹⁴ He assumed they would recognize his authority, as he himself, his administration, and his inner circle promoted the concept that “Mussolini is always right.”²¹⁵ and thus the beliefs and actions of the people should reflect those of the Duce himself.

When considering the financial side of hosting a major event, the benefits in terms of politicization and the draw from tourism have to outweigh the costs. In the case of the Paris

²¹² "Experienced Italian Team," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 2, 1938, 5.

²¹³ Halperin, *Mussolini and Italian Fascism*, 72.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

World Cup in 1938, "in spite of the enormous expense of assembling teams from all over the world, a profit of about 6,000 [Francs] had been made."²¹⁶ This success occurred despite the concerns of

whether summer football would attract French crowds, but the aggregate of attendances in this competition, played in Paris and nine provincial cities, was much greater than at the world tournaments held in Uruguay and Italy.²¹⁷

A legitimate concern due to necessary funding for the World Cup explained that, "there w[ould] have to be several crowds of 50,000 if the French Football Federation, organiser of the tournament, is not to be out of pocket."²¹⁸ Indeed, in terms of the UK,

British observers may be surprised by the world-wide spread of the game, the stamina the players show in summer for what we consider a winter pastime and the enthusiasm of crowds who have been watching football with scarcely a break since august... even twelve years or so ago any one of the British teams would have been made favourite in a world tournament. To-day, even had all four entered... the chances of the trophy coming to the United Kingdom would have been considered by many foreign critics remote.²¹⁹

As,

The world competition has given football thousands of new enthusiasts. All the ingenuity that providers of popular distractions have displayed in the post-war period has failed to dislodge the game from its position as chief entertainer of outdoor crowds.²²⁰

The lack of popularity and success of soccer internationally would previously have considered 1938 an inopportune time to host and organize an international tournament. However, given that "Competition countries have had to contribute to the expenses account," the profits would "be

²¹⁶ "Paris World Cup Tournament: Italy Successful, But Brazil May Have Had Best Side," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 24, 1938, 3.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ "The Financial Side," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 2, 1938, 5.

²¹⁹ "World Cup Competition Prospects: France Confident Against Conquerors of Switzerland," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 2, 1938, 5.

²²⁰ Paris World Cup Tournament: Italy Successful, But Brazil May Have Had Best Side," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 24, 1938, 3.

divided among the competing federations."²²¹ Unlike Italy in 1934 where “a substantial profit was made from the [FIFA World Cup],”²²² France was not able to capitalize from hosting the World Cup, the tournament being partially funded by participating nations a double-edged sword. Italy was able to capitalize socially, culturally, politically, and economically by growing its tourism industry and increasing interest in the nation alongside the financial gains directly related to participating in the World Cup.

Stadium Construction

Stadium construction was important as a symbol of Italian strength, virility, ingenuity, work ethic, and organization during the 1934 World Cup. Because Italy was the host nation, its infrastructure was on display for the world to see, it represented the past and present of the nation. For instance,

International competition and victories were naturally important, both domestically and abroad... the 1934 World Cup provided the opportunity to show the world how fascists hard work and creativity had transformed Italy, its athletic elite would leave no doubt about the rejuvenation of the race, and its stadiums would demonstrate a genetic artistic and engineering genius.²²³

The stadiums constructed for the purpose of the World Cup showed the potential of Mussolini’s administration and leadership. In fact, the *Stadio Nazionale del PNF*, or Stadium of the National Fascist Party, in Rome was the venue for which the final match between Italy and Czechoslovakia eventually took place. This stadium was built in 1911 but renovated in 1928 before subsequently closing in 1953, being replaced by the *Stadio Flaminio* four years later. During the months leading up to the World Cup, this stadium was "made to accommodate

²²¹ "The Financial Side," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 2, 1938, 5.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Martin, *Sport Italia*, 69.

between 60,000 and 65,000 spectators."²²⁴ Indeed, it was reported that at least "forty thousand spectators, including Signor Mussolini, saw Italy win the world football "championship" this afternoon...in the final at the Fascist Stadium."²²⁵ Of the 7 host cities, the other stadiums were the *Stadio Littoriale* in Bologna, *Stadio Giovanni Berta* in Florence, *Stadio Luigi Ferraris* in Genoa, *Stadio San Siro* in Milan, *Stadio Giorgio Ascarelli* in Naples, *Stadio Littorio* in Trieste, and finally the *Stadio Benito Mussolini* in Turin.²²⁶ *Stadio Littoriale* in Bologna, now known as the *Stadio Renato Dall'Ara*, was built in 1927. Two of the matches in the 1934 World Cup were played in the Bologna stadium, the round of 16 match between Sweden and Argentina and the quarter finals match between Austria and Hungary. *Stadio Giovanni Berta* in Florence was named for the Florentine fascist Squadrisimo Giovanni Berta. It was built in 1931 and held three of the matches of the 1934 World Cup, the round of 16 game between Germany and Belgium and the quarterfinal match between Italy and Spain, including the controversial replay. Only one game was played at the *Stadio Luigi Ferraris* in Genoa, the round of 16 match between Spain and Brazil.²²⁷ *Stadio San Siro* in Milan is now named for the two-time World Cup winner Giuseppe Meazza who played for the Italian national team in the 1934 and 1938 FIFA World Cups. This stadium was built in 1925 and renovated for the 1934 World Cup: "The improvements being carried out at the San Siro football stadium in Milan were ascribed to the personal skills and fascist devotion of the podesta, Ernesto Belloni."²²⁸ *San Siro* hosted three games during the 1934 World Cup, the round of 16 match between Switzerland and Netherlands, the quarter-final match between Germany and Sweden and the semifinal between Italy and

²²⁴ "the 'World Cup Final,'" *The Manchester Guardian*, January 30, 1934, 3.

²²⁵ "Italy Wins World 'Championship' urge of the Duce," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 11, 1934, 12.

²²⁶ "1934 FIFA World Cup Italy: Matches" *FIFA.com*

<https://www.fifa.com/tournaments/mens/worldcup/1934italy> Accessed June 25, 2023.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ R.J.B Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy: Life Under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915-1945* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 128.

Austria.²²⁹ The *San Siro* stadium was characterized by its single-use architecture. Designed only with soccer in mind, the athletic tracks found at publicly funded stadiums in Italy were not present for this project. *Stadio Giorgio Ascarelli* in Naples hosted two games during the 1934 World Cup.²³⁰ *Stadio Littorio* in Trieste was a multiuse stadium that was built in 1932 and hosted one game during the 1934 World Cup between Czechoslovakia and Romania during the round of 16. The *Stadio Benito Mussolini* in Turin was built in 1933. It was also known as the *Stadio Municipale* as well as the *Stadio Olimpico*.²³¹ The *Stadio Mussolini* hosted a preliminary match as well as a quarter-final match.²³² Each match counted approximately 23,000 “extremely passionate spectators” in attendance.²³³

Stadium construction is significant because of the concept of propaganda masquerading as art, architecture, and city infrastructure. City infrastructure may be considered as an extension of foreign policy similar to the use of athletes as diplomats. Through soft power politics, the architecture and urban planning showed the prosperity, strength, and work ethic of the Italian country and citizens. The symbolism and architecture overtly referenced and reimagined fascist ideals through the art, architecture, and design of the stadiums and multisport facilities. This included the redesign and refurbishing of stadiums as well as the design and creation of new stadiums. Stadiums were seen as monuments to political glory.²³⁴ Furthermore, *la fede calcistica* — the football faith — was a concept that religion and sport were tied together closely in

²²⁹ “1934 FIFA World Cup Italy: Matches” *FIFA.com*
<https://www.fifa.com/tournaments/mens/worldcup/1934italy> Accessed June 25, 2023.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ Apostolos Matsaridis and Vasileos Kaimakamis, “Sport at Fascism’s Disposal: The 1934 Football World Cup as a Case of Ideological Propagation and Political Enforcement,” *Studies in Physical Culture and Tourism* 19:3 (2012), 120.

²³⁴ Murray, *The World’s Game*, 68.

Mediterranean society as there was a level of religious devotion given to popular pastimes and leisure activities.²³⁵ The significance of hosting international events placed importance on the construction and design of the stadiums used; they are *Cathédrales de béton* — concrete cathedrals — and serve as alternative arenas of worship, not tied to the Catholic Church.²³⁶ Given the tense relationship between the Vatican and the government, the widespread devotion of sport offered an alternative form of religion. Stadiums offered an alternative to how governments presented their country's strength and success to the international community through participation, media coverage, and the experience of spectators. As a result of this level of religiosity, devotion, and the symbolic value of stadiums, “Most of the major European stadia are to be found in Latin countries.”²³⁷ For Italy, and Mussolini in particular, “the big stadia were ideal places for the rallying of nationalist sentiment. Football matches in the thirties were moments in which mass culture and propaganda could go hand in hand.” These monuments of Italian glory, victory, and strength ““give birth to new vigour worthy of the traditional Rome.””²³⁸ Infrastructure reflected the strength of the nation financially as the architectural style of projects was intended to mirror the state and government. The fascist architecture was meant to draw inspiration from the Roman Empire while also incorporating a more modern image. This was present in the reconstructing and revitalisation projects leading up to the World Cup; not only were the buildings reflecting the state architecturally, they reflected attempts at showcasing the nation's financial strength as a result of Mussolini's political projects. These buildings were monuments of *Novecento Italiano* and drew inspiration artistically from the rhetoric and politics of Mussolini.

²³⁵ Lanfranchi and Wagg, *Cathedrals of Concrete*, 127.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

Stadium construction and the revitalization of infrastructure found a major aspect of hosting international events such as the World Cup. This allowed for an increased number of international spectators as well as a presentation of the host nation's economic strength.²³⁹ For instance,

Having been selected as host for the so-called World Football Cup competition to be played in 1938, the French controlling body is wondering which of the Paris stadiums will be enlarged to hold 100,000 spectators and whether British teams will play.²⁴⁰

As a result, for the Paris World Cup,

a ground is being enlarged to hold 100,000 spectators. The contest will give a further stimulus to a game which in most countries now holds first place in popularity. Evidence of this growing interest is seen in the demands for accommodation at international matches.²⁴¹

Furthermore, "Accommodation at Colombes Stadium, near Paris, has been increased from 45,000 to 70,000 for the final, and one or two of the provincial grounds have also been enlarged."²⁴² Stadium creation, revitalization, and expansion is a standard practice when hosting an event such as the World Cup; these early cups were no different than the modern ones other than scale and level of international participation, in offering the same type of prestige and visibility within the sporting world, particularly to the west in more modern times.

Symbolism

The fascist salute, or Roman salute, popularized by the Italian Fascisti, while similar to the Nazi salute, was characterized by the individual's right arm pointed directly at the sky

²³⁹ "Games and Players," *The Manchester Guardian*, February 16, 1937, 4.

²⁴⁰ "Games and Players: worth the candle or not," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 25, 1936, 4

²⁴¹ "Games and Players," *The Manchester Guardian*, February 16, 1937, 4.

²⁴² "World Cup Competition Prospects: France Confident Against Conquerors of Switzerland," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 2, 1938, 5.

opposed to straight ahead. Not only was this action present on the iconography and posters made and developed for the purpose of the 1934 World Cup, the *Azzurri* were expected to, and all did in fact, raise their arms in the fascist salute prior to each match, "whenever the team enters the arena they greet the spectators and their opponents with the Fascist salute, and again when the match is over. These signs are compulsory."²⁴³ As mentioned later more in depth, the *Azzurri* performed the fascist salute prior to each match. This action was present throughout Italian soccer, at an international level within the World Cup and Olympic Games as well as exhibition matches between other nations. It was also a staple practice within Serie A and reminiscent of the Olympic salute; both derivative of the Roman Salute.

Not only was the 1934 World Cup a competition for the Jules Rimet²⁴⁴ trophy, there was also a secondary competition for the *Coppa del Duce*, a second trophy named for Mussolini and awarded alongside the Jules Rimet trophy. The Jules Rimet trophy was made of solid gold and lapis lazuli around the base, standing at 14 inches tall and weighing 3.8 kilograms. It was originally named 'Victory' and referred to as the World Cup or the *Coupe du Monde*. Comparatively, the *Coppa Del Duce* was six times the size of the Jules Rimet trophy; it was a "huge bronze sculpture of footballers in action in front of the symbol of the regime — the fasces."²⁴⁵²⁴⁶ This was awarded to the Czech team following the final match, the Italian Federation Cup was awarded to Germany who won bronze. Following the end of the final match as the medal ceremony began,

²⁴³ "Italy's Football Progress, Foundations Laid by Lancashire Players: To-Day's International at Highbury," *The Manchester Guardian*, November 14, 1934, 3.

²⁴⁴ Jules Rimet was a French football administrator and the FIFA President from 1921 to 1954.

²⁴⁵ Martin, *Sport Italia*, 69.

²⁴⁶ Fasces refers to the symbol of authority in Fascist Italy, a bundle of rods with an axe blade. This symbol was also used in Rome as one of power and authority.

Signor Mussolini received the captains and presented the cups. The Italians received the gold championship cup, which is so big that it took four men to carry it and its pedestal on to the field. The Duce's cup was presented to the Czecho-Slovakian team and the Germans received the Italian Federation's cup.²⁴⁷

In 1934 Mussolini had promised rich rewards to the Italian players if they won the cup, and punishment if they lost. As a result, "The Italian team fought its way to the final with a style that was a fitting tribute to the regime it represented."²⁴⁸ The press reporting and narrative presented by the media regarding the Italian team and Italian public was one of strength, national will, discipline, and collective organization.

As with the Olympics, the World Cup may also be considered as a proxy war between nations symbolically. The World Cup, and sport in general, has political implications for states who oppose one another's politics or have tense relationships with one another. There is a symbolic conflict between two groups "during a football match, every group fights to impose its symbolic strength in terms of the beauty and impressiveness of the choreography... and in terms of displaying courage."²⁴⁹ Furthermore, the athletes representing their nation are considered in service to their country and population, they 'fight' for victory for their state, although these athletes and " footballers were not necessarily expected to die for the nation, the will to confront death was the ultimate commitment for all Italians."²⁵⁰ They were expected to lay everything on the line for their nation and win at all costs; they must "Know how to obtain victory without boasting and to be beaten without recrimination, to win with style and to lose with style."²⁵¹ The implications of the World Cup, participating, hosting, and ultimately winning the tournament

²⁴⁷ "Italy Wins World 'Championship' urge of the Duce," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 11, 1934, 12.

²⁴⁸ Murray, *The World's Game*, 69.

²⁴⁹ Alessandro Dal Lago and Rocco De Biasi, "Italian Football Fans: culture and organization," in *Football, violence, and social identity*, edited by Richard Giulianotti, Norman Bonney and Mike Hepworth. (Routledge: New York City, 1994), 85.

²⁵⁰ Martin, *Sport Italia*, 68.

²⁵¹ Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, 128.

differed depending on whether or not the event took place on home soil: "When Italy itself became the theatre for the World Cup Finals, the conflicts between supporters reappeared; the tournament was reinterpreted within a parochial and municipal framework."²⁵² The culture and expectations of soccer during this period demanded "characteristics that the regime wanted to build among Italians and display to the rest of the world, most notably the ability to battle and resist."²⁵³ Not only was the team 'at war' with other nations through competition but also with values and characteristics that did not conform to the fascist ideal, they had to display to Italians and the rest of the world the personification of the regime through strength, virility, skill, and attitude. Furthermore, the reward of increased international interest in the nation outweighed the risk as,

the rich Italian Football Federation accepted the risk of loss, feeling that in any case a deficit would be repaid by the fillip which the competition will give the game in Italy and that it would also be an additional opportunity for the country to show her qualities as a host and as an attraction to the holiday-maker.²⁵⁴

The investments put into the state for the experiences by tourists was high, "special trains are being run into Italy from many continental countries and the tourist trade will benefit considerably." Furthermore, not only did Italy spend on infrastructure and tourism projects, the nation also helped finance the travel and accommodations of participating teams,

several teams hesitated in making their entry for financial reasons. Italy is paying the expenses of teams that will be her guests, but the tournament will be held at a time when some countries would normally be playing profitable international matches or when many of the leading players would be touring with their clubs.²⁵⁵

²⁵² Dal Lago and De Biasi, *Italian Football Fans*, 74.

²⁵³ Martin, *Sport Italia*, 68.

²⁵⁴ "Italy as Host," *The Manchester Guardian*, May 29, 1934, 3.

²⁵⁵ "the 'World Cup Final,'" *The Manchester Guardian*, January 30, 1934, 3.

There was an extreme desire to increase interest in the Italian peninsula by foreign tourists, to show the world what the state had to offer. Excess spending in the hopes of achieving this and ultimately growing the tourism industry in Italy was considered necessary.

One of the most obvious forms of propaganda and fascist symbolism during the 1938 World Cup was the use of the *Maglia nera*, the black shirts. As previously mentioned, Italian soccer was referred to during this time as soccer in a black shirt because of the reflection of the sport to the fascist politics within the nation-state. In this context however, the *maglia nera* refers to meant literal black shirts, as the jersey for the *Azzurri*, who previously wore blue as the name of the national team suggests.²⁵⁶ This was a direct connection of those chosen to enforce Mussolini's politics at a national level; they were "Mussolini's organized militia — the blackshirted gangs or squads," individuals who would ensure expectations. Rules of engagement and behaviour were expected to be followed.²⁵⁷ Despite this blatant disregard for the FIFA regulations which suggested that no political symbols may be worn by a player or team during international competition and participation in the FIFA World Cup and its qualifying matches else the team forfeit their place within the tournament. There were no disciplinary actions sought by FIFA for the Italian contravention to the rules. The political sentiments and the previous demonstrations within the tournament were observed by spectators, the press, and governments alike, but whether or not they achieved any particular goal they did bring the political ideology of Mussolini, his government, and the nation to the international sphere.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Martin, *Sport Italia*, 71.

²⁵⁷ Halperin, *Mussolini and Italian Fascism*, 33.

²⁵⁸ Special Correspondent, "PARIS WORLD CUP TOURNAMENT, Italy Successful, But Brazil May Have Had Best Side," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 24, 1938, 3.

Olympic propaganda

The Olympic Games are a powerful tool for propaganda. The Olympic Games as with other international sporting events is a major focal point for the media not only during the events but leading up to the games as nations and citizens around the world focus on the media narrative, infrastructure developments, and events involving the host nation as “Success on an international scale in sports brings with it a certain amount of respectability, prestige and status...”²⁵⁹ The narrative in liberal democratic states and Anglo-American media is particularly volatile when the nation granted the opportunity to host is a non-democratic regime with an authoritarian government or a government bordering on dictatorship such as the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, the Beijing Games in 2008, and the Sochi Olympics in 2014. Although, “Sport can serve as an innocuous pretext for initiating formal contact between hostile ideologies,”²⁶⁰ the potential for violence between athletes, teams, and attending fans is also present and often times visible when political rivalries result in tension that boils over into sporting events. In terms of the concept of soccer fascism and Mussolini’s use of soccer as an extension of foreign policy, although political rivalries were not a major factor of the 1934 World Cup, they were present during the 1936 Olympic soccer dispute,²⁶¹ and the 1938 World Cup in France during the Italy-Brazil quarterfinal match. Fans and those attending matches are often verbal in their political opinions and displays of displeasure towards teams, athletes, and governments. The geopolitical tensions and impending war during this era of Italian foreign policy bore implications for the future of international sport following the Second World War as, “Due to the outbreak of WWII,

²⁵⁹ Benjamin Lowe *et al*, “Ideology Introduction,” in *Sports and International Relations*, 204.

²⁶⁰ John M. Hoberman, “Sport and Political Ideology,” in *Sports and International Relations*, 224.

²⁶¹ Refers to the dispute between Austria and Peru during the 1936 Olympics that led to Peru’s withdrawal from the Games.

the Olympic games were not reconvened until 1948... Not uncharacteristically, Germany, Japan, and Italy were banned from participating by the victorious allies.”²⁶² This exclusion of Germany, Japan, and Italy from participating in the 1948 Olympic Games further shows how politics bleed into spaces considered to be apolitical, regardless of intentions to provide mutual respect and participation amongst politically opposing states. Some behaviour and politics are still deemed unacceptable and warrant exclusion from such events. The Olympic Games are used by states to illustrate the politics they consider acceptable for inclusion in the international world order, if a state does not fill the characteristics necessary, it may be banned or it may boycott in protest; proving the use of the Olympic Games alongside international sports as tools utilized to push forward the political agendas of nation states.

Although much of the Olympic propaganda produced focuses on Germany and the solidification of German political and social influence within international relations, propaganda was produced by the Italian nation-state. Mussolini recognized the importance of the press, his administration maintained a tight control over what was published, the language, and the imagery. This control was extended to the language and wording used to describe events, victories, and athletes creating an environment where Italian sports and news media were interlinked to one another, and a single narrative was produced. This allowed for consistency within the press for the public to consume.

As with the 1934 World Cup and the conflicting opinions of *oriundi*, the language of war was and still is often utilized in reference to sports. In the international context, sports may be used as a proxy war for international conflict and political tension. Italy chose to concentrate on the 1936 Olympics, referred to as the Battle of Berlin, following the sanctions by the League of

²⁶² Joel Thirer, “Politics and Protest at the Olympic Games,” in *Sports and International Relations*, 155.

Nations. Athletes from Italy were a reflection not only of the state in this instance but also of their leader, Mussolini. Following the Ethiopian conflict and the international responses to Italian attempts at imperialism the language of war was increasingly present. Given the tight control of the press by the Italian government, this language was a direct decision by the political elite that allowed athletes to be placed at the same level of national defense as the military. It further promotes the desire for *oriundi* as it opposes sentiments that these athletes were not Italian and thus could not represent the nation at an international level. By placing sports in a wartime context there is the sentiment that if an individual is able to die for the country of Italy through military service, they are able to represent the country as athletes; athletic participation and competition are simply another aspect of national service.²⁶³

Comparatively, the German government employed a two-level game method of diplomacy and policy creation when hosting an international event as important and widely viewed as the Olympic Games. Internationally, Germany wanted to utilize the potential of the Olympics as a vehicle for propaganda in order to integrate the Third Reich and break the nation and government's isolation away from the broader international community. Domestically, Germany intended to use the Olympics as a propaganda machine that would make the violence and segregationist policies of the Nazi party more palatable. In order to achieve this, an organizational body dedicated to Olympic propaganda was created.²⁶⁴

Germany's domestic propaganda campaign was similar to Italy's domestic propaganda during the 1934 World Cup as it focused largely on the role of the press and media. However, while the press in Italy was confined to the use of specific wording and phrases, this was not the

²⁶³ Benjamin Lowe *et al*, "Ideology Introduction," in *Sports and International Relations*, 210.

²⁶⁴ Arnd Krüger, "Germany: The Propaganda Machine," in *The Nazi Olympics*, edited by Arnd Krüger and William Murray (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 21.

case in Germany, where the illusion of a free press was put forth. Because of the nature of the Games, the racial superiority and abuse of racialized persons, had to be partially placed on hold. Germany did not overtly bait citizens through the press as it was “strictly prohibited to report disputes with foreigners in Germany or controversies with Jews.”²⁶⁵ Instead, Germany relied on the racist narratives produced by American newspapers in order to continue their campaign of white supremacy and racial superiority propaganda.

Alternatively, Germany’s propaganda campaign abroad focused on the glorification of the country in part as a way to entice tourism and enhance recognition of the ability of the Games “show the world the quality of German organisation as well as the nation's muscular prowess.”²⁶⁶ There were also mixed results and varying levels of success to Germany’s international propaganda campaign. The success of propaganda abroad was most difficult to achieve in the United States as, despite the racial tensions within the country, the U.S. was a liberal democracy, declaring freedom, and equality of opportunity for all. Although there were critiques of the allowance and flexibility given to Germany to promote their nation on the global stage as hosts,

In the opinion of most French spectators at Berlin, the Games were used as a medium for glorifying Germany's national spirit. They would like to see some "small" country act as host so that the old atmosphere of the games might be restored.²⁶⁷

There was also an understanding that,

wherever the Games are held, it might be asking too much of the organisers to neglect an opportunity of showing off the attractions of their country to the worth of its people. The French complain that in Berlin a sense of proportion was not maintained and that sport was a means to an end.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Krüger, *Germany*, 25.

²⁶⁶ "Games and Players: worth the candle or not," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 25, 1936, 4.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Regardless of national strength, size, and political ideology the use of the Olympics, as well as other events such as the FIFA World Cup, PANAM Games, and others, as an opportunity to ‘show off’ remains.

Similar to the 1934 World Cup, stadium construction was a major part of national image and presentation of national strength and politics to the international community for the Berlin Games. Indeed, “If you have the whole world as your guests, you should present your country at its best.”²⁶⁹ The stadium complex constructed for the Berlin games was widely over budget, this was largely due to the high level of skilled workers needed to complete the project.²⁷⁰ There was a disregard for the cost of the Olympics from the moment Hitler gained power in the later months of 1933. Instead, the focus centred on the image of the Olympics on the global stage and an assurance that these games were not only memorable, but they placed Germany in the consciousness of the international community as an athletic contender and a political and economic power.²⁷¹ The stadium and the Olympic village which housed athletes from each delegation during the 1936 Olympics were filled with artistic depictions, murals, and statues of the German army, military, and influential figures. The strength of the nation was on full display to those who opted to participate and watch the spectacle.

There was also a focus on ephemera and Berlin Olympic specific souvenirs for tourists as well as foreign athletes. Some of these included Olympic trading cards that depict instances during the game of action and victory. For the soccer tournament, two trading cards specifically focused on the Italian national team. The first (fig 1.) depicted a moment from the final match between Italy and Austria from behind the Italian team's goal.

²⁶⁹ Krüger, *Germany*, 23.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.



Figure 1: "Italy v. Austria final" Olympia 1936 Volume II work no. 14, Image no. 146

The framing of the photo makes Austria seem like a more dominating team despite the fact that Italy won the match and was more dominating and energetic throughout the tournament. This may be because of the significance of Austria to the host country and the political officials and administration. However, it may also be interpreted as an illustration of Italian strength and defense. The English translation of the back of this trading card states, "a snapshot through the net reveals this moving scene in front of Italy's goal in the Italian football final Italy against

Austria."²⁷² The second trading card (fig. 2) depicts the Italian national team performing the Fascist salute following their victory.



Figure 2: "Italian National Team Fascist Salute" Olympia 1936 Volume II work no. 14, Image no. 143

The English translation of the back of the trading card states, "Italy's Olympic Victory in the football tournament was won by a young student team who beat Austria with 2:1 in the final."²⁷³

These two trading cards are examples of a volume of 200 pictures representing the unique Olympic experiences of Berlin in 1936.

²⁷² "Italy v. Austria final," *Olympia 1936 Volume II work no. 14, Image no. 146.*

²⁷³ "Italian National Team Fascist Salute," *Olympia 1936 Volume II work no. 14, Image no. 143.*

Chapter Six: Anglo-American Media representation

Italy, Mussolini, and the Italian national team were represented in the Anglo-American press for all three major athletic events involving soccer during the 1930s. These perspectives offer insight into the media representation of Italy, international soccer, and the World Cup as well as the Olympics; media representations that may have been the main form of information consumed by the general public. These newspapers are not only a source of sports journalism but also one of foreign policy. They discuss the political and military actions of foreign states and their national governments. In doing so, these articles reflected the general understanding of Italy, Mussolini, and the national team through the language used in regard to political and athletic victories. Furthermore, the everchanging opinions towards the state can be seen as well as the evolving attitudes towards Italy and Fascism throughout the 1930s. There was a conflation of soccer and state in foreign reporting as the commentary around the Italian national team was entwined with that of Italy; these sources traced evolving perspective of Italian fascism and diplomacy through sport.

1934

The international response and participation in the 1934 FIFA World Cup was mixed from the beginning. The Cup was marred by the English (including Scotland, Ireland, and Wales) decisions not to participate. Neither did Uruguay, the 1930 Cup's defending champion. This was an act of protest in response to the Italian boycott four years prior as well as the lack of European teams who accepted Uruguay's invitation when hosting the 1930 World Cup, the first World Cup in FIFA history. To date, Uruguay is the only team in the history of the World Cup

not to participate in defense of its title. The English decline to participate in the 1934 World Cup was less political; it is believed that their home championship was of better quality and more important than anything organized by FIFA at this time.²⁷⁴ This meant that no British representation was present for the 1934 World Cup, having future consequences in the sphere of international sports in future years particularly the 1938 FIFA World Cup hosted in France. The significance of all international events during this pre-war period, especially those hosted in Europe, is impossible to ignore. Continental Europe was seeing the increased likelihood of war, the Spanish Civil War had started in 1936 and would continue until 1939, offering a precursor for the Second World War. Closely following the end of the Italian World Cup, significant political agreements and relationships were built between the leaders of European nations. Mussolini himself traveled to Germany in 1934 to meet with Adolf Hitler, who was at this time the German Chancellor, laying the foundation for what would soon become the Axis powers. Germany also experienced success during the Italian World Cup, finishing in third place.

US-Italo sports relations were generally positive during the 1934 World Cup, despite the American loss in the opening match of the competition. There was a recognition of Italian skill on the soccer pitch as well as the understanding that following the collapse of the US league there was a lack of athletic development in the sport. There appeared to be excitement surrounding the announcement that the US team will be participating in the 1934 World Cup,

"The United States Soccer Football Association has received notice from the Italian Football (Soccer) Association that this country will be the guests of the Italians next year when the World's Cup competition is played at Rome."²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ "Russian Spy Attack: A Brief History of World Cup Boycotts," *BBC Sport* (March 13, 2018). <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/43387549>.

²⁷⁵ George M. Collins, "American Booters to Play in Rome: Compete for World Cup Next Year," *The Boston Globe*, October 27, 1933, 33.

This may be because of published announcements in some newspapers, such as the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, which wrote, "The United States Football Association announces it will send an all-star team to Italy in May to compete in the world's soccer championship," an announcement that did not gain prime space in the *Eagles* sports coverage.²⁷⁶ Instead it was relegated to the very bottom of the page and has some of the smallest font for the title of the clipping.²⁷⁷ The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* appears not to have placed much importance in the US participation in the World Cup in Italy despite the sport's and the tournament's popularity globally.²⁷⁸ Even *The Boston Globe* reported that,

This will be great news for the soccer fans of this country, for it simply means we will have a team there for the games... since the visit of Gen H. E. Balbo and his men to Chicago, the wonderful reception tendered the Italian flyers made a big hit with the men in Italy.²⁷⁹

Following the World Cup, in the fall of 1934, there was a series of matches played by Italy against the United States and England. These matches show international diplomacy through sports, as Italy engaged in a tour following their win in 1934. This included exhibition games in England and the United States. England, considered the World Cup and US soccer below their expertise.²⁸⁰ Although there was a large "squad of 350 athletes from Italy..."²⁸¹ those that stood out in the media were the soccer players as, "according to reports there is a wonderful soccer

²⁷⁶ "Soccer Team to Cross Sea," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 11, 1934, 23.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ George M. Collins, "American Booters to Play in Rome: Compete for World Cup Next Year," *The Boston Globe*, October 27, 1933, 33.

²⁸⁰ "Italian Soccer Team Here for Series of Games," *The Boston Globe*, September 22, 1934, 7.

²⁸¹ Referring to the large number of athletes representing Italy in international sporting events.

team. It will play games with college teams or any other team that will take them on.²⁸² This was furthered,

since the Italians won the World's Cup competition in June at the big series staged in Rome, soccer men on this side of the water have become excited over the visit of this bunch of athletes.²⁸³

There were high levels of anticipation within North America given the growing interest in the sport. The interest in competing with the Italian national team following its World Cup win was especially prevalent as Italy was considered to have one of the strongest soccer cultures in the world.

Within the Italian American community, there were mixed perspectives on Italian politics during this time. The US political leadership was not supportive of the fascist government in Italy and there were concerns for the motivations of the nation state as well as her actions within the international realm. Financial policy and US bilateral relations were strained as a result of fascist politics and increased antagonism towards western liberal democracies by Italy, Spain, and Germany during the latter half of the 1930s. This was partially due to the desire for Italy to become self-sufficient, the intention to become entirely self-sufficient; that was reflective of fascist, protectionist policies.²⁸⁴ There was also a concern on how a relationship between Italy and the US would appear to the international community given the politics and behaviour of

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1934, Europe, Near East and Africa, Volume II. *Preliminary Discussion respecting a trade agreement between the United States and Italy: The Ambassador in Italy (Long) to the Secretary of State*, (Document 502: 611.6531/86, Telegram: Rome, May 12, 1934).

Italy, "If Italy were about to embark on a program that would embarrass our trade, it might be better not to start negotiations."²⁸⁵ They believed that,

...the distinct and definite impression that the Italian Government is digging itself into the trenches of an economic warfare in which they are confronted with a very large unfavorable trade balance. They are determined to cut down their imports to something approximating the value of their exports. They are moving in an atmosphere of super-nationalism.²⁸⁶

However, the US government still maintained the belief in a liberal global economy, one without trade barriers that would be mutually beneficial, especially for the US; this was embedded in the narrative that a decrease in trade barriers and an increase in global trade would aid in the post-war economic recovery following the end of the Second World War,

The other theory which the United States advocated was a gradual liberalization of world trade and an elimination of barriers which were preventing its recovery. In other words, we rejected the bilateral theory of trade in favor of a triangular or polyangular trade.²⁸⁷

However, "To do this was requiring a great effort and more and more Italy... was turning in the direction of barter agreements and bilateral balancing of payments."²⁸⁸ The financial politics of Italy and Italian foreign diplomats within other nations were impacted by domestic policies and their abilities to advocate for their country. As well, they were limited by the legal policies of the

²⁸⁵ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1934, Europe, Near East and Africa, Volume II. *Preliminary Discussion respecting a trade agreement between the United States and Italy: Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Western European Affairs (Moffat)*, (Document 503: 611.6531/94: Washington, September 17, 1934)

²⁸⁶ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1934, Europe, Near East and Africa, Volume II. *Preliminary Discussion respecting a trade agreement between the United States and Italy: The Ambassador in Italy (Long) to the Secretary of State*, (Document 506: 611.6531/104: Rome, September 27, 1934)

²⁸⁷ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1934, Europe, Near East and Africa, Volume II. *Preliminary Discussion respecting a trade agreement between the United States and Italy: Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Western European Affairs (Moffat)*, (Document 505: 611.6531/99: Washington, September 22, 1934)

²⁸⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1934, Europe, Near East and Africa, Volume II. *Preliminary Discussion respecting a trade agreement between the United States and Italy: Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Western European Affairs (Moffat)*, (Document 503: 611.6531/94: Washington, September 17, 1934)

changing political landscape in Italy as well as the rules and regulations regarding diplomatic behaviour and their discourse with foreign governments. Diplomats and political figures were required to maintain their strong, vocal support of the nation and her politics as,

Any fascist who criticizes Italian financial policy will lose his party ticket and perhaps be expelled from the party, according to a new order issued by the secretary of the Fascist party.²⁸⁹

The communications between governments were tense, often times compromised by the questioning of legitimacy and truth of the information provided by diplomats. There was a refusal to address certain policies and behaviours by diplomats, particularly in the latter years. As Italian diplomats could not speak against the PNF, this legitimacy was often called into question. Foreign governments could discern if their statements were a result of their support for the PNF and the party's politics, or if their statements and communications were an accurate representation of Italy's social, cultural, and political environment. Not only were there changes in Italian national expectations and instructions, there were also changes in policies towards foreign nationals, residents, and workers imposed by the Americans. These changes in policies towards, not only Italian foreign nations, but other foreign individuals working and living in the United States furthered the tension between the countries. However, there were attempts made to provide exemptions to certain tax policies, for instance, an agreement since potential exemption of journalists from American Federal income tax on a reciprocal basis between Italy and the US.²⁹⁰²⁹¹ Mussolini's financial and economic policies and the dissatisfactory bilateral relations

²⁸⁹ "No Criticism in Italy, Mussolini's Order," *The Manchester Guardian*, December 15, 1934, 11.

²⁹⁰ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1934, Europe, Near East and Africa, Volume II. *Proposal by the Italian Government for exemption from income taxes on a reciprocal basis of Italian journalists in the United States and American journalists in Italy: The Italian Charge (Longhi) to the Secretary of State*, (Document 524: 811.512365 Double/1: Washington, August 16, 1934)

²⁹¹ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1934, Europe, Near East and Africa, Volume II. *Proposal by the Italian Government for exemption from income taxes on a reciprocal basis of Italian*

with countries like the United States were an issue later on for the country as "the Italian dictator is already in search of loans, to judge from reports that his agents are busy trying to borrow..."²⁹² This was mainly a result of a "heavily unbalanced" budget and the costs of colonizing Abyssinia through the export of Italians and the repatriating of land owned by 'unfriendly tribesmen'.²⁹³ Although the Duce claimed to have rebuilt the Roman Empire and created an imperial power through the Italian colonial project in Africa, the cost of Abyssinia's occupation did little to grow the country's strength in terms of military and economic resources.

The Italian-Argentinean relations were important to the World Cup in 1934 for a variety of reasons. Not only was Argentina one of two Latin American countries to participate in the 1934 Cup but Argentine-born Italian athletes were being signed to Italian clubs throughout the 20s and 30s as "the federation decided several years ago that no player could take part in the club championship of the country unless an Italian either by birth or by blood - a dual qualification that permits players of Argentina being repatriated and attached to clubs. Only a few, however, have been brought home."²⁹⁴ In fact, four of the players on the 1934 national team were Argentine born. Although Argentina participated in the 1934 World Cup, its performance was marred by the loss of talented players to the Italian national team; they were eliminated within the first round, as was Brazil and the US, the only Western Hemisphere nations represented. This loss of talented Argentinean players to Italy was not a new development. In fact, in 1928, after

journalists in the United States and American journalists in Italy: The Secretary of State to the Italian Ambassador (Rosso), (Document 525: 811.512365 Double/5: Washington, October 2, 1934)

²⁹² "Letters to the Editor, The Italian Victory -- and After: Mussolini's Financial Predicament," *The Manchester Guardian*, May 11, 1936, 16.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ "Italy's Football Progress, Foundations Laid by Lancashire Players: To-Day's International at Highbury," *The Manchester Guardian*, November 14, 1934, 3.

the loss of former Argentinean team captain Luis Monti to the Italian national team for the Olympics, the Argentinean Federation stated that,

In a complaint to the FIGC, the Argentine federation argued that “the Italians want to form a national team at the cost of Argentine football” as that Italian government appeared to have “set its eyes on well-known creole players and wants to tie them to Italian clubs to make them Italian players.”²⁹⁵

Furthermore, Argentina also lost Raimundo Orsi, an *oriundi* player of Italian descent who signed after the 1928 Olympics. These actions had a negative impact on sports relations between Italy and Argentina, as it was believed that “If fascist Italy wanted to build up its prestige, then it should follow the British and Argentine example of raising homegrown players instead of buying ready-made products from other countries.”²⁹⁶ The Argentinean national team suffered following the loss of their national talent to Italy, “they had lost the brilliant Orsi after the 1928 Olympics, and after 1930 Monti and several others were brought over with the promise of big money.”²⁹⁷ There was a sense of Argentine disenchantment against the Italian national team as well as a feeling of incapacitation as Argentine was not able to compete to its full ability through the loss of key players and talent.

Italian-English cultural relations leading up to the 1936 Games, particularly sports relations and the possibility of a British or Commonwealth team participating, were mixed. There was respect for Italy accepting the responsibility of hosting the FIFA World Cup in 1934, “Italy was complimented on a bold stroke when she consented to be host for this tournament, for acceptance of the duties involved also financial guarantees.”²⁹⁸ Even though there was concern regarding the strain on the players following an extended season of competition. As a nation they

²⁹⁵ Quoted in A. Ghirelli, *Storia del Calcio in Italia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1990) 99.

²⁹⁶ William J. Murray, *The World's Game* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 67.

²⁹⁷ Murray, *The World's Game*, 64.

²⁹⁸ “Games and Players,” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 29, 1934, 3.

"had little to gain."²⁹⁹ As a result, Britain and the United Kingdom was not represented in the competition.³⁰⁰ Following the elimination of Ireland from the qualifying matches for the World Cup, the British Commonwealth expressed "no direct interest" in the tournament.³⁰¹ Although the British were not interested in participating in the World Cup, its interest in Italian soccer following Italy's display and victory, led to an exhibition match between the two countries.

Soccer is the most popular sport in the world in the present day, and it has been popular at a global level for many years. Through the growth and expansion of the media, casual viewers and diehard fans can consume the sport from around the world. As the 1934 World Cup had such a large pool of countries participating, the matches were broadcast live via radio in 12 different countries. Radio transmission allowed individuals to experience the 1934 World Cup in real time. As a result, the inclusion of sports commentators, films, and news media comments that was released during and following each match had symbolic and cultural significance. This also allowed for the presentation of Mussolini's fascist ideology to occur both subtly and overtly.

The round of 16 match between Italy and the United States is significant because of North American involvement in the World Cup. It also presented an opportunity for Italy and Mussolini to directly influence US citizens and provide them with concrete examples of Italian strength and virility as well as reinforcing the impact of Mussolini's fascism on the Italian national population. The athletes themselves and the coaching strategies were direct examples of how Mussolini's ideology and political policies were 'shaping' the nation. The match between the United States and Mexico during early qualifying was widely attended. Mussolini himself

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ "The World Cup" *The Manchester Guardian*, April 24, 1934, 4.

³⁰¹ "Games and Players" *The Manchester Guardian*, May 29, 1934, 3.

attended. However, the team sent by the United States was considered a 'compromise' team as the United States Soccer league had collapsed a few years prior and, as a result of the Great Depression, it had been unable to rebuild the league in terms of skill and popularity. As a result,

Italy's soccer team, as expected, carried too many sharpshooters for the United States representatives, and as a result our players are now on the 'outside looking in' as far as this world's cup series is concerned.³⁰²

The skill of the Italian team however was recognized in the US as, "'The boys who carry Italy's colors have been improving by leaps and bounds in the last five years."³⁰³ Indeed,

over in Rome the United States soccer outfit is listed to face Italy in the opening game of the World Cup series, and this is one of the stiffest hurdles that could be placed in the way of our players. The Italians are rated real soccer players. In fact, there is not one goal's difference between the sons of Italy and any other Continental European country, which is saying plenty.³⁰⁴

The US national team lost by a significant margin: "Uncle Sam's soccer players lost 7-1 and the score speaks for itself..."³⁰⁵ Still, a high level of respect towards the Italian team and the skill level at which they performed as "the Italians are in the same class as those Austrians when it comes to 'playing the game.'"³⁰⁶ America at this time was not the global political power it is today, however, the American government had a level of influence over Italy due to its established relationship with the Italians. The World Cup offered these countries an opportunity to interact through sports and culture and offered a chance for the US population to become better acquainted with Italy through the media attention surrounding the Cup. This also presented Mussolini with a chance to present his politics and his country not only to the American public but to a global audience.

³⁰² "Italy's win over US no Surprise," *The Boston Globe*, May 28, 1934, 18.

³⁰³ "World's Cup Final," *The Boston Globe*, June 5, 1934, 23.

³⁰⁴ "Lucy Rees primed to win B and D title," *The Boston Globe* May 26, 1934, 8.

³⁰⁵ "Italy's win over US no Surprise," *The Boston Globe*, May 28, 1934, 18.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

The quarter final match between Italy and Spain was significant because it was replayed. It is the only match in the history of FIFA to be replayed. The first edition of the quarterfinal match, which took place on May 31, 1934, resulted in a draw in extra time, yet the second edition, taking place just one day later on June 1, 1934, was won by Italy, moving the team of the host country into the semifinals. These two games were highly competitive and violent as many players left the pitch with injuries on both occasions. The first match resulted in a broken leg for Italian player Mario Pizzioli; he never played for the national team again.³⁰⁷ On the Spanish side, rough play resulted in an injured goalkeeper, Ricardo Zamora, who was unable to compete in the replay. The replay was just as rough. Three Spanish players were forced to leave the pitch as a result of injuries caused by the Italian's physical style of play.³⁰⁸

The final match between Italy and Czechoslovakia was eagerly anticipated, it took place on June 10th, 1934, in the *Stadio Nazionale del PNF* or Stadium of the National Fascist Party in Rome.

Italy vs Czechoslovakia in the World's Cup final tomorrow will attract 100,000 fans. With the game in Rome the home team is favored to win, but the Czech players can rise to the occasion.³⁰⁹

Italy won the game 2-1 in extra time: "the loss of a goal under the eyes of Mussolini stirred the Italians to frenzy..." as they went on to win in extra time.³¹⁰ During extra time the behaviour of fans and spectators was reported to reflect the stress, frenzy, and adrenaline of the game,

an extra half-hour was played, and so great was the excitement that it was feared at one time that one of the stands would collapse under the stamping of the feet.

³⁰⁷ William Joseph Baker, *Sports in the Western World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 248.

³⁰⁸ Jonathan Wilson, *Soccer in a Football World* (London: WSC Boos, 2006), 71.

³⁰⁹ "Shots at the Uprights," *The Boston Globe*, June 9, 1934, 9.

³¹⁰ "Italy Wins World 'Championship' urge of the Duce," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 11, 1934, 12.

At one corner of the field, too, a cordon of police was formed to keep back the spectators.³¹¹

The announcement of Italy's victory in *The Manchester Guardian* for the 1934 World Cup hosted in Rome, alludes to the pressure placed on the team by Mussolini as well as the rumored collusion and corruption in the organization to ensure an Italian win.³¹² In this article, *The Manchester Guardian* noted that "forty thousand spectators, including Signor Mussolini, saw Italy win the world football 'championship' this afternoon...in the final at the Fascist Stadium."³¹³ By placing "championship" in quotations the Manchester Guardian suggested the victory of the Italians was not legitimate. The language tone of the article suggested passion, emotion, and desperation on the Italian side while the Czech team appeared calm, coordinated, and synchronized as a team.³¹⁴ In terms of the team strategy and style of play,

The game was a contrast between the cool, well co-ordinated play of the Czecho-Slovakians and the more dashing and individualistic performance of the Italians. The Italians won because they were faster than their opponents.³¹⁵

Through the media there was an established sense of respect for the Italian national team's athletic ability and the strategies employed by Pozzo to coach his athletes to victory, not only for the nation but for Mussolini. Although the World Cup was not considered a legitimate tournament by the English prior to 1934, a shift in respect occurred following the exhibition of skill displayed in Rome not only by the Italians but by other teams as well. Despite this, teams from the United Kingdom would not participate or qualify for a World Cup until 1950 when England participated in the Brazil World Cup.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

In the fall of 1934, Italy was invited by the English to play an exhibition match. Italy's July victory in the World Cup left the country with an 'exceedingly high' "football prestige."³¹⁶ The prospect of an "England v. Italy match [was] of chief interest," and, although the English had invited the Italians to London in September of that year, there had been no set date.³¹⁷ The match finally took place in November of 1934. Italy was not expected to win the match in the British mind, the British media believed the country would "approach the match with England with all due care."³¹⁸ Although there some skepticism existed relative to how the Italian team would perform outside the comfort of their home nation. The British press covered the match preludes with interest,

the Italian team's journey to London continues to be widely discussed abroad... One critic has described it as 'the football riddle of the century.' In the world competition, the Italians played in hot weather before a crowd that seemed to electrify them; they performed at a high level despite the weather conditions. While in this match against the English there was a curiosity to how they would 'react to the less helpful surroundings.'³¹⁹

However, as the preparation for the game commenced in both countries there was a concern on the fluidity, opposing strategies and styles, as the "English team [wa]s formidable on paper, but will probably lack the team smoothness of the Italians."³²⁰ However, Italy's preparations mainly focused on team building and the decision of what players would represent them, almost fifty percent of the possible athletes were members of the World Cup team that triumphed just a few months prior, while all but one athlete had represented the country at point or another.³²¹

³¹⁶ "Italy's football Challenge," *The Manchester Guardian* September 18, 1934, 3.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ "Italy's Football Progress, Foundations Laid by Lancashire Players: To-Day's International at Highbury," *The Manchester Guardian*, November 14, 1934, 3.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ "Games and Players: Italy's Preparation," *The Manchester Guardian*, October 30, 1934, 3.

There was a media focus on Vittorio Pozzo, the Italian national team's coach, that displayed the English perceptions of the Italian athletes. For instance, while Pozzo was respected for his reputation internationally, the team itself was received with a sense of skepticism; there was a sense of curiosity towards the players, their style both on the pitch and as individuals. Indeed, the players were described as smaller than the English, their feet in particular,

it appears that the feet of the average Italian player are smaller than those of the average English footballer. Signor Pozzo says that the general difference is about one size in boots. Most of the visitors are of stocky build and there does not seem to be any outstanding player, all being of a general standard.³²²

This reflection characterized the British conception of the Italian population as assumptions being made on the basis of their athletic representatives; the general standard for Italian men was stocky in comparison to the English. Furthermore, Italian style of play and personal presentation on the pitch differed from that of the English,

Several of the players wore long light-blue trousers and dark-blue jerseys. A few wore bandages or bandeaus round their foreheads, and in reply to an inquiry as to whether these men had been badly injured Signor Pozzo states that bandages were worn to keep the players' long hair in position.³²³

And thirdly, their style of play differed enough from the English to elicit comment in their media,

... greatly impressed by the ball control showed by the Italians, almost all of them appeared to excel at this. Sprinting, kicking, heading, dribbling, and physical jerks formed the programme, which was directed by Signor Pozzo.³²⁴

There was a focus on ball control, speed, and team cohesion. The respect and curiosity towards Italy by the British was returned by the Italian players as well as Pozzo himself. Following the

³²² "International Association Teams' Changes: Italians Send for New Full-Back, Male and Hunt Replace Tilson and Cooper," *The Manchester Guardian*, November 13, 1934, 4.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid.

match Pozzo stated that they, ""thought it a very good, vigorous game," and he added, "Hunt is a very dashing centre forward.""³²⁵ This fascination with the Italian style of play and the ability to observe the *Azzurri* within a match environment for a sport in which they believed themselves to dominate was of peak interest not only to the English media and athletic association officials but also the general population. "The Association football match between England and Italy... has aroused even greater interest than the visits of Spain and Austria. The evidence at the box-office is irrefutable."³²⁶ Furthermore,

the England v. Italy match... there is an impression that not only in England and Italy, but also other countries, more is at stake than any single sports encounter warrants... so high is [British] sports prestige abroad, he would rather see England beaten in a good clean game before a generous-hearted crowd than a victory that left our sportsmanship or hospitality in question.³²⁷

Indeed,

It seems as if all the Italians in Great Britain and many in neighbouring countries apart from Italy itself, have applied for accommodation to be reserved. The occasion and the novelty have proved magnetic.³²⁸

This implies the interest in not only Italian soccer but also with the World Cup champions and the level of competition at which the international tournament was played. The exhibition match was not only a chance for the national teams and English and Italian athletes to interact but also for their national populations and sports fans. There was not only a challenge of skill but also one of reputation and prestige.³²⁹ England maintained the belief and opinion that it had perfected the

³²⁵ "International Association Teams' Changes: Italians Send for New Full-Back, Male and Hunt Replace Tilson and Cooper," *The Manchester Guardian*, November 13, 1934, 4.

³²⁶ "Games and Players: Coming of the Italians," *The Manchester Guardian*, October 30, 1934, 3.

³²⁷ "Italy's Football Progress, Foundations Laid by Lancashire Players: To-Day's International at Highbury," *The Manchester Guardian*, November 14, 1934, 3.

³²⁸ "Games and Players: Coming of the Italians," *The Manchester Guardian*, October 30, 1934, 3.

³²⁹ "Italy's Football Progress, Foundations Laid by Lancashire Players: To-Day's International at Highbury," *The Manchester Guardian*, November 14, 1934, 3.

sport and held the position as the leaders and authority on soccer internationally. This match had the potential to shift not only that perspective but also the English strategies, "if England is defeated it is expected that a change will be made in the preparation of British teams for international matches."³³⁰ This match helped solidify the respect England and the UK held for Italy in terms of its athletic prowess. Although they did not consider the 1934 World Cup a legitimate global tournament, following this match in 1934, the language used in reference to the World Cup in British sports journalism changed as the game ended in a draw.

1936

The 1936 Berlin Olympic match between Italy and the United States during group play was characterized by violence as well as a disrespect for game officials. The Italian national team was already considered to be giants within the sport, and they had just won the 1934 World Cup at home. It was during this early round game that a German referee, Herr Weingartner, ordered an Italian player, Achille Piccini, off of the pitch only to be met by severe resistance from the player as well as the team.³³¹ Piccini was allowed to remain playing after Weingartner was surrounded, had his arms pinned to his side as well as had his mouth and eyes covered by Italians. The threat of violence by the Italian team was reflective of Italy's actions abroad; Mussolini's military campaign and occupation of Abyssinia was a concern to the international community.

Norway's performance in the 1936 Olympic soccer tournament led it to the semi-final match with Italy; one that was eventually decided in extra-time, with Italy ultimately winning.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Piccini was asked to leave for tackling two American players so violently they were unable to continue playing.

However, Norway won the bronze medal game against Poland. Despite the earlier violence and aggression between teams, spectators, and officials, the later matches were not characterized by the same levels of tension as this match between Italy and Norway was uneventful compared to others. Annibale Frossi, who set a tournament best record during the 1936 Olympics in scoring seven goals, scored a goal in the ninetieth minute that would allow Italy to advance to the final against Austria. On the other hand,

Great Britain's first tilt at the Olympic Association football championship for sixteen years ended in failure to-night when Poland beat the British team by five goals to four in a second-round match. The British players gave another disappointing display.³³²

Great Britain did not have success at the Olympic Games soccer tournament. The country's refusal to participate as Great Britain or allow or have a commonwealth country participate and qualify resulted in no British athletic representation or strength in international soccer tournaments during this period. Although England would play exhibition games, amateur games, and maintain the British league soccer, there would be no British athletic representation at the FIFA World Cup in 1938 and its defeat at the 1936 Olympics showed that the narrative of British soccer supremacy as a justification for non-participation was false.

The final match between Italy and Austria resulted in Italy winning the Olympic tournament and the nation's continued dominance in international soccer during this period. This match, although important, lacked the level of controversy that both teams faced earlier in the tournament. Italy won this match in overtime; the team, coached by Vittorio Pozzo was made up of student athletes who were frequent victors at the International University Games, also known as the Universiade, an international sporting event that occurred biannually, organized for

³³² "Defeat of British Football Team, Attack Weak Until Late in Second Half and Defence Uncertain," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 10, 1936, 4.

university athletes. The final however was Austria's match to lose in terms of support. Nearly the entire stadium was filled with supporters for Austria. Oddly enough, including extra-time, the game took 120 minutes of play until Frossi scored his final winning goal of the tournament in the 92nd minute, placing Italy in the lead and the victors of the Olympic soccer tournament.

Although the final is important, the most significant game of this tournament happened during the quarterfinals between Peru and Austria. Although it did not directly involve Italy, it did bring into question the legitimacy of Italy's victory.

The 1936 Berlin Olympic Games generated many historic moments and events, including the Olympic 'football' dispute. Soccer was not included in the 1932 Las Angeles Games as the organizers opted to remove the event in an attempt to help promote the creation of the World Cup which had held its inaugural tournament only two years prior. The sport was reintroduced to the Olympics in 1936; however, it was surrounded by controversy and disputes between national teams, observers, and the media. The match between Peru and Austria in the quarterfinals was characterized by an "eruption of violence" as the pitch was rushed by Peruvian supporters. Although, "Peru beat Austria 4-2 after extra time in another second-round match,"³³³ there are differing accounts of what exactly occurred during this match on August eighth. However, what is known is that the outcome led to Peru boycotting the remainder of the tournament after winning 4-2, leaving Austria to progress to the final. Peru's decision to boycott the remainder of the Games, forfeiting their place in the final was a result of the Austrian appeal of the outcome of the match on the grounds of the pitch invasion and Peru's ability to take advantage of the situation and scoring two goals shortly following, putting them ahead of Austria. The match between Peru and Austria caused a high degree of tension and resulted in the withdrawal of not

³³³ Ibid.

only Peru but Uruguay as well. There was a blatant disregard for officiants, riots, and violence.

Following the violence and the decision to replay the match,

...orders will be given for the withdrawal of Uruguay from the Olympic Games if Peru does not find satisfaction over the dispute consequent upon the incidents at the Austria v. Peru football match.³³⁴

Peru's withdrawal was in protest of the decision to order a rematch between Austria and Peru during the quarterfinal and the cancellation of the team's victory during the original match.³³⁵

This was a result of the Austrian appeal that the spectators interfered with the match and their team; Peru counter appealed claiming that their play was as much interfered as Austria's and it was the fault of the football federation.³³⁶ It was believed that the incident of spectators and fans rushing the pitch,

excited the players to the detriment of the sporting spirit, and in view of the fact that it was not possible to determine who was responsible for the situation, the tribunal has had to come to a sporting decision. The match shall be replayed without spectators, and with the box-offices shut...³³⁷

The International Football Federation believed that,

'by the text of article 10 of the regulations of football matches (re protests) to decide the matter it finds that circumstances attending the match hindered the normal course of the game.'³³⁸ There were calls from the Peruvian President as he "ordered his country's withdrawal from the games... A message from Lima says that people are furious at the decision, and are holding protest meetings in the street. Special editions of the newspapers are on sale in the streets urging that all the South American nations should withdraw from the Games as a demonstration of their solidarity with Peru."³³⁹

³³⁴ "The Olympic Football Dispute," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 12, 1936, 9.

³³⁵ "Peru Withdraws from the Olympic Games," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 11, 1936, 9.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

The Olympic tribunal which was made up completely of Europeans ruled that a rematch would take place with no spectators, a decision that obviously angered Peru enough to forfeit the rest of the tournament and leave the country. The majority of accounts reflect that Peru left the competition as a result of the lack of a fair hearing. This statement was met with anti-German sentiments and protests by Peruvians that had international trade implications. There were refusals to load goods into the holds of German and Norwegian ships because of the dissatisfaction the Peruvians felt with Europe, particularly northern European nations. Throughout the media, this event was referred to as the Olympic Football Dispute and brought Italy's victory in the final match a few days later into question. Calls were aroused for other Latin American and South American countries to withdraw from the Olympic Games in protest and solidarity.³⁴⁰ Not only did the Peruvian soccer team leave but the entire Peruvian Olympic Delegation did, followed shortly by the Colombian athletic delegation. Although both Uruguay and Peru withdrew from the games under a voluntary guise,

"It [wa]s understood that orders will be given for the withdrawal of Uruguay from the Olympic Games if Peru does not obtain satisfaction over the dispute consequent upon the incidents at the Austria v. Peru football match."³⁴¹

This dispute over the interpretation of the rules as well as the tribunals decision to order a replay of the semi-final match changed the course of the tournament, allowing Austria to move forward to the final against Italy. It also steeped the tournament in controversy and created an atmosphere that questioned the legitimacy of not only the tournament and Italy's victory, but also with the Berlin Olympics themselves.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ "The Olympic Football Dispute," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 12, 1936, 9.

There was a general sentiment of concern and disapproval in the Berlin games as a result of the racial and anti-Semitic policies in Germany. One of the major concerns surrounding the soccer tournament was the number of nations participating, for instance, "The organisers of the Olympic Games to be held in Berlin during the coming summer are much concerned by the withdrawals being made from the football competition."³⁴² This refers to reports that only a handful of participating nations would be sending soccer teams to Berlin. However, these reports that "no more than ten nations will compete in the Olympic football tournament in Berlin this summer are denied by the organisers..." and instead there were claims that nineteen countries would be participating including Italy and the United States.³⁴³ This list did not include Latin American countries such as Uruguay and Peru, eventual participants in the Olympic soccer tournament.³⁴⁴ Notably,

There seems to be more likelihood of some of the above named countries withdrawing than of others increasing the number... most of the non-participating countries give as reason for abstention fear that the tournament will not conform to Olympic amateur requirements, but political factors have also had some influence.³⁴⁵

This was significant as many countries,

including Italy and Spain, have not yet given definite assurance of participation. Definite acceptances so far been made by only ten countries and already it looks as though the German team will win the tournament easily.³⁴⁶

Noticeable absentees from the list of definite participants include France, Czecho-Slovakia, Spain and countries from Latin America.³⁴⁷ The French were particularly concerned with the

³⁴² "Games and Players: Olympic Withdrawals," *The Manchester Guardian*, March 10, 1936, 4.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ "Games and Players: Olympic 'Soccer,'" *The Manchester Guardian*, April 14, 1936, 12.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁶ "Games and Players: Olympic Withdrawals," *The Manchester Guardian*, March 10, 1936, 4.

³⁴⁷ "Games and Players: Olympic 'Soccer,'" *The Manchester Guardian*, April 14, 1936, 12.

amateur level of the games as they, "withdrew some weeks ago over the "false amateurism" question."³⁴⁸ However, despite the mixed sentiments towards the tournament,

In the Olympic Games... the football tournament made an important contribution to the rescripts. General interest in the games has increased since then, however, and it is hardly likely that a smaller football competition will embarrass the Berlin organisers financially.³⁴⁹

There was more to gain from maintaining their position as hosts as well as pushing forward with the inclusion of a soccer tournament than the controversy leading up to the Berlin games. This controversy continued during and following games, particularly in regard to the rumours of corruption at an official and organizational or administrative level following the Peru-Austria dispute. The former president of the American Amateur Athletic Union Jeremiah Mahony stated that,

'Democracies... will hesitate before sending their amateur athletes to compete with youths from Government training camps of Germany, Italy, Japan, and Russia. So greatly will the athletes be subsidised in future that the Olympic Games will become not sporting contests but preliminary warfare.'³⁵⁰

There was a belief that because of the high level of state involvement in physical education, leisure, and athletic training, the future of the Olympics will be that of proxy wars and political conflict through athletic competition.³⁵¹ This was in response to the outcome of the Olympic games and the disheartened outlook for the future of international sports.³⁵²

³⁴⁸ "Games and Players: Olympic Withdrawals," *The Manchester Guardian*, March 10, 1936, 4.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ "Olympic Games Doomed? An American View," *The Manchester Guardian*, December 9, 1937, 12.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² *Ibid.*

1938

In the 1938 World Cup, the British national team as well as Scottish and Welsh national teams were excluded from participation as a result of their decision in 1934 to decline the World Cup invitation. Not only were British teams missing from the World Cup, 1938 also saw the absence of both Austria and Spain due to geopolitical events and national crises.³⁵³ Spain was in the midst of a civil war, one that would end within the next year, while Austria had lost its independence and was now fully incorporated into Germany. The major match that took place during the 1938 French World Cup was the final between Italy and Hungary. However, the match between Italy and France helped insult and embarrass the French as they were disqualified within their own country, helping to push forward Mussolini's political agenda: "France was eliminated by the Italian team before 58,000 spectators at the Colombes Stadium, which had been specially renovated for the occasion."³⁵⁴ The resentment towards one another by each nation was visible and present through the style of play, the crowd, and the media responses on both sides following the match. However, the success of the Paris World Cup allowed France some level of success and victory as,

while the jubilant victors were exchanging congratulatory kisses the organisers were shaking hands on their own success. For the tournament begun with no great confidence almost a year ago with eliminating matches which reduced an entry of well over thirty teams to the sixteen invited to France, had been a triumph.³⁵⁵

The size of the tournament allowed for such a large number of teams to participate that, "The matches will show a contrast in styles and divergences in interpretation of the rules."³⁵⁶ These

³⁵³ Murray, *The World's Game*, 72.

³⁵⁴ Murray, *The World's Game*, 79.

³⁵⁵ "Paris World Cup Tournament: Italy Successful, But Brazil May Have Had Best Side," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 24, 1938, 3.

³⁵⁶ "The Financial Side," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 2, 1938, 5.

styles and interpretations of the rules that spanned the globe helped to promote the tournament as a World Cup. This was similar to the rhetoric towards the 1934 World Cup and in opposition to the 1930 Cup in Uruguay, suggesting a sense of European supremacy, because the event was held in Europe and a western country, it was now considered a more legitimate and competitive sport tournament.

Although the quarterfinal match between Italy and France which saw France's elimination from the tournament may be assumed as the ultimate expression of French resentment, the

French resentment against the Italians was expressed most vehemently, however, at the semifinal match between Brazil and Italy played in Marseilles when a storm of abuse accompanied the Italians from the field after a victory gained by a controversial goal.³⁵⁷

The semi-final match between Italy and Brazil was important because of the popularity the Brazil team formed during this World Cup. Brazil had been a favourite for the 1938 World Cup championship as "Before the withdrawal of Argentina, they thought they and their neighbours would be finalists... " and the rest of the international sporting community was continuously impressed by their athleticism and the level of competition at which the Brazil National Team played.³⁵⁸ There was international awe at the level of professionalism and skill conducted by Brazil.

The ultimate match of the 1938 World Cup between Italy and Hungary witnessed a distinct difference in style or play, teamwork, and desperation as

³⁵⁷ Murray, *The World's Game*, 79.

³⁵⁸ "Experienced Italian Team," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 2, 1938, 5.

The final was played between Italy and Hungary before 45000 spectators and the Italian's fast, determined play proved superior to the Hungarians individual, measured style... the 2-4 loss by claiming that Hungary had saved the lives of eleven men; when pressed to explain what he meant, he claimed that the Italian team had received a telegram before the game saying "win or die."³⁵⁹

This reflects the common narrative of service to one's country through various means promoted by Mussolini as well as the dedication and desperation to win regardless of skill level; there was a win at all costs mentality which permeated throughout the Italian team and helped motivate all players to achieve victory on the pitch. Regardless of the inconsistency in Italy's skill and competitive level as,

The Italians sometimes were disappointing in other matches in this tournament but in the final they produced brilliant football, and their speed was astonishing on so warm a day. The win was not popular, but, though political sentiments occasionally made themselves heard during the competition, there were no disorders.³⁶⁰

There was always a spirit of necessity to win for one's country. Indeed,

Italians were used to playing high risk high reward games, with the norm being high rewards for winning and the threat of harsh penalties for losing, including the threat of being sent on military service.³⁶¹

The narratives promoted by Mussolini and Italian officers within Italian society reflected that of an "us against them" mentality; you were either a loyal fascist or an enemy to the state and victory at this level of competition was imperative to remaining within the good graces of the political elite. Despite the parallels drawn by officials between serving the nation through military service and serving through athletic representation at international events, the threat of losing at such an event was close to that of defection and treason and was punishable at various levels.

³⁵⁹ Murray, *The World's Game*, 80.

³⁶⁰ "Paris World Cup Tournament: Italy Successful, But Brazil May Have Had Best Side," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 24, 1938, 3.

³⁶¹ Murray, *The World's Game*, 80.

Italy has had a good international season, and her clever side, maintained, like so many foreign national teams, with few changes for year after year, will be imbued with a fighting spirit which some this is worth at least a goal.³⁶²

Despite attention moving towards Latin America and Brazil, Italy remained a favourite for the World Cup championship as a result of the *Azzurri's* success internationally over the past few years.

There were questions of whether the victory was legitimate or hollow considering the 'lack of competition' as a result of the English decision not to participate, a sentiment that was projected by the British Press to spectators and fans in attendance,

Most of the British Spectators of the final of the World Football Cup competition, in which Italy beat Hungary 4-2 in Paris last week-end, must have wondered whether the teams of England, Scotland, or Wales... could have changed the ultimate result.³⁶³

Furthermore, The language of these announcements and articles relates the games to England and Britain. For instance, in an article that outlined the game between Switzerland and Germany, the decision that a replay would be necessary because of the potential impact of a draw argues that if England had been present there may have been a different outcome.³⁶⁴ They state that, "Switzerland, who beat England recently, and Germany, who was beaten by England, drew 1-1 here to-night in their first round (final series) match in the World Cup Association football tournament."³⁶⁵ Within British media there is again, a constant use of quotations when discussing the World Cup by British journalists suggesting that they did not consider the FIFA World Cup a legitimate football tournament.³⁶⁶ It was unlikely that the British would provide representation

³⁶² "Experienced Italian Team," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 2, 1938, 5.

³⁶³ "Paris World Cup Tournament: Italy Successful, But Brazil May Have Had Best Side," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 24, 1938, 3.

³⁶⁴ "Swiss and Germans Draw," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 6, 1938, 2.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ "Games and Players: 'World Cup' Practice," *The Manchester Guardian*, February 15, 1938, 4.

for the 1938 World Cup, similar to both the 1930 and 1934 World Cups despite the sentiment of British soccer superiority.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The media, particularly radio and newspapers, were a major source of information for those around the world in terms of social and political events. For the World Cup, newspapers and radio allowed for people to remain connected to the event from around the world, as such, these mediums also helped to shape the perspectives and narratives provided to populations. In the case of British reporting, the legitimacy of the World Cup tournament evolved over time. In the beginning, there was very little respect for the level of competition believed to be present in 1934. For the United States however, there is a different perspective and one that suggests a joy in participating and being able to represent the nation internationally. Anglo-American press during and leading up to the 1934 World Cup reflects specific and continual sentiments towards Italy and the Italian dictator. The seeds of unrest and distrust towards Mussolini are present within the writing and opinions promoted by journalists and authors during this period; sentiments that would continue to grow and develop over the next four years as the general attitudes towards the nation shifted from suspicion, to unrest, to fear and opposition. In 1934 the press began to conflate the nation with Mussolini. He embodied his country; his actions and beliefs reflected those of the entire population. This pattern would continue until his death.

Anglo-American press perspectives of national politics in Germany and Italy prior to and following the summer Olympic Games in Berlin may be represented by various articles reflecting US and British media narratives. Those narratives were then provided to the general populations of their population for consumption. One of the main differences in international involvement is the participation of England and other United Kingdom entities such as Ireland, Wales and Scotland. Although UK media and newspapers covered both the 1934 World Cup and

the 1938 World Cups the commitment, involvement, and nationalistic linguistic insertion did not rise to the same level as those covering the 1936 Berlin Games. There was also a larger moral dilemma in the participation of UK athletes because of their participation in the Games and indirect legitimization of Hitler and his Nazi policies. Comparatively the 1934 and 1938 World Cups ended a level of plausible deniability through lack of participation. By opting out of participating for the stated reason of British Champions league supremacy, the UK indirectly avoided legitimizing Mussolini's government and foreign policy in 1934. The 1936 Olympic Football Tournament experience helped to change this perspective, "British participation in the Berlin Olympic football tournament [has] raised hopes that we will delegate professional teams for this competition... the World Cup tournament is not regarded everywhere with favour."³⁶⁸ This suggests that there was a disregard for the legitimacy of World Cup victories and the tournament itself was not considered a real, competitive display of skill and athleticism.

Anglo-American press in 1938 and the months leading up to the World Cup, particularly the British press, questioned the legitimacy of the World Cup as an international tournament.³⁶⁹ The British superiority was prevalent in major articles, underscoring the sentiment that they were much better than other countries within the sport. This, of course delegitimized the tournament and suggested that the victories achieved at tournaments without the participation of British teams were hollow victories because they were not challenged by 'real' champions.³⁷⁰ In terms of Italian soccer victories, there was an allusion to British unease and unhappiness with continued Italian success within the athletic sphere, and an expressed disappointment in the 'lack of

³⁶⁸ "Games and Players: worth the candle or not," *The Manchester Guardian*, August 25, 1936, 4.

³⁶⁹ Special Correspondent, "PARIS WORLD CUP TOURNAMENT, Italy Successful, But Brazil May Have Had Best Side," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 24, 1938, 3.

³⁷⁰ "Games and Players," *The Manchester Guardian*, February 16, 1937, 4.

consistency' in Italian play.³⁷¹ Despite this, Italy remained the favourite and likely champions of the World Cup in France in 1938.³⁷² In the months leading up to the Paris World Cup there was the continued decision by UK countries (England, Wales, Scotland, and North Ireland) not to participate in the World Cup in France. Although the Irish free state announced their participation as one of the 25 countries competing in the Paris World Cup, it did take part in the qualifying round where it was eliminated by Norway.³⁷³ Furthermore, there was also great attention brought to Germany's loss in the first round. That news received its own subtitle. The withdrawal of Austria was mentioned briefly, likely as a result of Germany's annexation and position with the rising tensions within continental Europe and the support of Franco in the Spanish Civil War.³⁷⁴

Sports were used as a way to control the collective consciousness of national populations and attempts to stifle any resistance from foreign populations. In the case of the Italian fascist government and the 1934 World Cup, because it was given the opportunity to host the second FIFA World Cup and perhaps because of the dramatic increase in participation from European nations, the Italian government was able to promote their nation on a global stage through the media. This also provided the government with an opportunity to increase state involvement in leisure and youth activities, as well as amateur and professional sports. Furthermore, the state's obsession with soccer and its widespread popularity across social groups provided a vehicle for the presentation of political ideology to the masses. It united Italian citizens across religious and national backgrounds. The role of class consciousness in determining the legitimacy of a

³⁷¹ Special Correspondent, "PARIS WORLD CUP TOURNAMENT, Italy Successful, But Brazil May Have Had Best Side," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 24, 1938, 3.

³⁷² "Games and Players," *The Manchester Guardian*, February 16, 1937, 4.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Special Correspondent, "PARIS WORLD CUP TOURNAMENT, Italy Successful, But Brazil May Have Had Best Side," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 24, 1938, 3.

government is important to consider. It is also important to ensure that forms of resistance are stifled. As the world became increasingly globalized and governments have agreed to certain rules of engagement, regardless of sovereignty, it was important to maintain legitimacy within the international community. The entangled economic policies and actions, particularly between Europe and North America, as well as the political treaties and shared histories that tied these continents together, caused the perceptions of the international community to remain important to the legitimacy of governments, including anti-democratic states.

Stadiums were seen as the equivalent of cathedrals; they held the same reverence as 'holy' buildings. The sport is sacred, it possesses the devotion of the masses. By utilizing the sport at national and international levels to promote the state's ideology, strength, and image as well as legitimize the policies and actions taken by the fascist party, Mussolini was able to measure opposition to his leadership and politics as well as to distract, or in some instances recover, the international support or lack of opposition through sports competition. Although in many ways a nation hosting a premier event has a greatest possibility to support, promote, and strengthen its state image in the international sphere, participation and success also play a role. Particularly if the success carried over from previous athletic victories in the same sport. Class consciousness and the Olympic Games provided a larger stage than that of the FIFA World Cup in Rome. Although soccer was gaining popularity globally and quickly becoming the world's most popular sport, it was still widely played only in European and Latin American countries. However, both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games receive massive attention across the world by nations and the national Olympic committees.

The 1934 World Cup, *Coppa del Duce*, was one of the first widely viewed international sporting events that allowed Benito Mussolini and his administration to promote Fascism on a

global scale through soft power cultural politics. What made it important in this aspect was the fact that Italy had been chosen to host the FIFA World Cup, taking place in Rome. As such, Italian culture, society, and politics were placed on the world stage. Not only was the national team's performance a presentation of the nation's strength but also the cities and infrastructure themselves. This event also marked the first World Cup title that Italy won, and the first World Cup that teams had to qualify to gain participation. This was a result of the increase in nation-state participation from the first World Cup held in Uruguay. Murray states that,

The next two World Cups were played in Europe, but with only lukewarm support from South America. Uruguay did not take part in another competition until 1950, and Argentina retaliated against the loss of its best players to Italy by sending a deliberately weakened team to Rome in 1934.³⁷⁵

While Uruguay hosted nine South American teams in 1930, there were only five teams that chose to participate from outside the continent: America, France, Yugoslavia, Romania, and Belgium. On the contrary, the Italian World Cup in 1934 had a much greater level of participation from European nations. Only Brazil and Argentina from South America chose to participate; a total of 32 Countries accepted the invitation. Indeed, "the social influence of sport and particularly of football... is perhaps, insufficiently estimated," a factor that Mussolini recognized and exploited in order to promote his nation as a competitive state within the international sphere.³⁷⁶ Of the actions taken to increase tourism and interest in the region, not only did the Italian government help fund participating teams' travel and accommodation, "special trains are being run into Italy from many continental countries and the tourist trade will benefit considerably."³⁷⁷ In regard to the financial burden,

³⁷⁵ William J. Murray, *The World's Game* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 64.

³⁷⁶ "Italy as Host," *The Manchester Guardian*, May 29, 1934, 3.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

the rich Italian Football Federation accepted the risk of loss, feeling that in any case a deficit would be repaid by the fillip which the competition will give the game in Italy and that it would also be an additional opportunity for the country to show her qualities as a host and as an attraction to the holiday-maker.³⁷⁸

The opportunity provided by the World Cup to promote the nation, her people, and her politics outweighed the cost as well as any negativity towards the second FIFA World Cup. This campaign was successful as, requests for places to stay had “already been received from most European countries, chiefly through tourist agencies and football federations.”³⁷⁹ There was also the added benefit of international relations, sport diplomacy, and soft power politics.

Comparative fascist politics and sports as an extension of foreign policy may be used to dissect the difference in repetition and stance on foreign policy through narrative processes and responses to hosting an international event. In the case of the 1934 World Cup the above discussion outlined the Anglo-American perspectives on Italian foreign policy and foreign involvement as well as the moral and ethical responsibilities felt by athletes, citizens, and politicians in supporting events held in non-democratic states. In the case of the Berlin Games, Germany as an offensive power and threat to the political balance in continental Europe, and as problematic to the independence of states such as Austria and Poland were considered by the American athletic delegation, citizens, and press to be a poor choice in awarding the nation with the responsibility to host the Olympic Games. However, these critiques were brought forward in the months leading up to the event, arguably too late for anything to be done other than have the United States boycott, refusing to participate in protest of the negative human rights in the nation and the discrimination toward marginalized groups within Germany. There was particular outcry regarding the treatment of Jewish athletes within the nation. Because of the overt politicization

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ "the 'World Cup Final'" *The Manchester Guardian*, January 30, 1934, 3.

of the Berlin Games by a non-liberal democratic country, the blatant Nazi propaganda found within ephemera, architecture, and ceremony, promoted sentiments and beliefs that the future of international sports as apolitical spheres of international interaction, competition, and camaraderie were compromised. Instead, there were implications that the future of international sports would be scripted theatrics in support of political regimes.

There was a shift in the public opinion and perceptions of fascism and Italian politics as well as political statements between the 1934 and 1938 World Cups. Actions that were previously supported and accepted, such as the fascist salute, were met with violence and mocking. Pozzo recalls that,

when our players raised their hands to give the fascist salute... I entered the stadium with our players, lined-up military style and stood on the right. At the salute we predictably met with a solemn and deafening barrage of whistles, insults and remarks.³⁸⁰

He states that,

at a certain point the hullabaloo began to die down and then cease... We had just put our hands down and the violent demonstration started again. Straight away: 'team be ready. Salute' and we raised our hands again, to confirm we had no fear... Having won the battle of intimidation, we played.³⁸¹

This disapproval towards the politics of the state shown through the actions of fans and spectators towards political messaging was combatted with the continued use of the Fascist salute by the national team. They were undeterred; whether this was because the players had no choice or because they supported Mussolini and his policies does not matter, the action shows more than the intent. It shows Italy as a united nation, one where its athletes, citizens, and

³⁸⁰ Simon Martin, "World Cup Stunning Moment: Mussolini's Blackshirts' 1938 Win," *The Guardian* (April 5, 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2014/apr/01/world-cup-moments-1938-italy-benito-mussolini> Accessed June 25, 2023.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

military appear to present a unified state at a theatrical level regardless of what the reality may be.

Following the FIFA World Cup, as the international sporting community turned towards its next major event, the Olympic Games, "Discussion continues on the prospects of an Association tournament being held in connection with the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936."³⁸² This would be the first soccer tournament at the Olympic Games in since 1928,

If in accordance with Olympic Games rules, only amateurs took part in such a competition, those countries which have not yet openly adopted professionalism but which it is well known, permit the payment of players, would have a great advantage.³⁸³

This would mean that the teams and athletes that had just participated in the 1934 World Cup would not be able to participate in the Olympic Games. In 1936, the soccer players eligible to participate were not the 'professional' players of 1934 and eventually 1938 but instead the 'amateur' student athletes as a result of regulations at the time ensuring that athletes were not competing for money despite the fact that the Italian government provided compensation to their winning athletes. However, the financial opportunity of including a soccer tournament as one of the most popular sports, one that only continued to grow in popularity across the globe, "the Germans would welcome its inclusion in the next Olympiad, partly because of the great addition it would make to the receipts at the gate."³⁸⁴ The potential for increased popularity in the games, tourism, ephemera and souvenirs, as well as an increase in media views as a result of the inclusion of soccer at the Berlin Games made it an attractive addition. However, as the Games grew nearer and the planning, propaganda, and coverage increased internationally, the inclusion

³⁸² "Olympic Football," *The Manchester Guardian*, September 18, 1934, 3.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

of a soccer tournament was slow in developing. Going into the 1934 World Cup, "Italy remains favourites for the competition," and continued to maintain the position as one of the most popular and dominant teams throughout the tournament.³⁸⁵ The strength exhibited by the athletes reflected on the nation, gaining popularity within the international sporting community and among fans of the sport in foreign nations. This dominance throughout the 1930s as Italy went on to compete and win at the Olympic Games soccer tournament and the 1938 World Cup in France.

The geopolitics of sport through Italian foreign policy and sport participation through soccer in the 1934 World Cup, 1936 Olympic Games, and 1938 World Cup was explored in this thesis. These three events were utilized as case studies in exploring international perceptions and responses. In 1934 the World Cup in Rome debuted Mussolini's Italy under a fascist regime. There were subtle and overt political undertones throughout the entire event from fascist displays of support, the Roman salute, Novecento Italiano architecture, increased spending on infrastructure, and tourism initiatives. Italy was able to capitalize on its victory at home, leaving an impression on the international community of the nation's strength and success under a fascist government. Mussolini was able to show off not only his athletes but his country. Despite the questioned legitimacy of a World Cup victory in terms of global soccer, the sentiment mainly stemming from the UK and English press, impressed by the displays of athleticism, strength, and loyalty from the Italian team and Italy's population. This success and national unity were major goals of Italian domestic policy as were the reestablishment of social and cultural policies, hierarchies, and traditional roles. Sport was a major vehicle for political domestic policy and aided Mussolini's regime in national reform. Overall, 1934's international soccer debut was

³⁸⁵ "the 'World Cup Final,'" *The Manchester Guardian*, January 30, 1934, 3.

successful for Italy as well as Mussolini. This success helped shape the international narrative regarding Italy and Italian fascism, although there was international concern and displeasure towards the political trajectory of the state. In the future soccer helped placate both international and domestic populations and stifle dissent, to a certain extent.

1936 offered a different perspective because the Olympics had a much larger reach historically as well as in terms of participating nations. Because of the number of events included in the Olympics there is less of a focus on the impact of one particular sport. However, in 1936 soccer was one of the integral events and was wildly popular. It also brought with it major controversy through the “Olympic Football Dispute,” which furthered the separation between Europe and the Americas in the global soccer environment. The Olympic soccer tournament helped solidify the relationship between Italy and Germany in the international community’s perspective, a continuation of the growing interconnection between the two states politically. Italian success on foreign soil as well as at an event with a larger international scope than the FIFA World Cup was important. It helped to solidify the athletic supremacy of the national team, not only as professionals but as amateurs as well. 1936 was important not only because of the Olympic Games but because of the notable rise in tension within continental Europe. The international perceptions of Italy were becoming more concerned, concerns surrounding the stability of multilateral relations, treaties, and the League of Nations. The Olympics were also important in offering a comparison to German sport policy and the Nazi approach to hosting an international event of this magnitude. 1936 saw the beginning of popular international outrage and protest of fascist politics, as well as racialization policies, something Italy was not able to avoid as a result of Mussolini’s racialism policy changes. Although there was concern and

tension within the international community as well as talks to protest or boycott the Olympic Games, the Berlin Olympics were still popular and captured the attention of a global audience.

The implications of the 1938 World Cup on Italian foreign policy and the perception of Italy in the international sphere, particularly from the Anglo-American sphere have two sides: the Italian goals and aspirations — what they may have intended to accomplish through this form of foreign policy — and the Anglo-American responses to this form of foreign policy and diplomacy. Similar to 1936, there was the added dimension in 1938 of competing in a foreign nation. In 1936, Italy and Germany were on relatively friendly political terms, allied in their fascist approach to totalitarianism. However, France, the 1938 Cup host, was hostile towards Mussolini and the Italian champions. This period also marked a more prominent shift in international perceptions of Italy and the state's political ideology. This World Cup continued the trend of Italian soccer success as well as helped recenter the image of the state in the minds of the international community. However, there was a strong, underlying narrative of concern towards the political climate and actions of Italy on the African continent. Again, 1938 saw Italy competing in an international tournament on foreign soil and remaining the victors. International media responses reflected the expected victory of Italy, helping to legitimize the position of the World Cup as a global, prestigious competition. There was more displeasure with Italy and her team's behaviour and overt politicization in 1938 than there was in 1934. This could be because the event was not taking place within Italy and was instead hosted by France, a nation with a tense bilateral political relationship with Italy. This may also have been a result of the rise in totalitarian politics and the radicalization of Italian fascism. Regardless, Italy still maintained favour internationally and its success was celebrated in the press as well as around the world.

This thesis aimed to explore how the relationship between sport and politics intersects with that between sport and the mass media to produce an image of the nation domestically and internationally. The impact of the collective conscious of the state citizens is impacted through propaganda and international press. These three events, the 1934 World Cup, 1936 Olympic Games, and 1938 World Cup were used as case studies and placed within the context of international relations during this period in order to study media and government perceptions of nation-states through sport and politics and how these two aspects impact bilateral and multilateral relations, particularly between competing political ideologies. Sport has been and will always be a vehicle for the promotion of national ideology in the international arena as governments use national teams to represent their nation and government on the soccer field. The future implications of Mussolini's fascist policies in Italian sport are still observed today as well as their direct impact in the years following the Second World War. This period of athletic politics in Italy had an impact on international sports participation following the end of the Second World War as Italy along with Germany and Japan were banned from competing in the 1948 Olympic games, taking away the nation's opportunity to defend their titles.

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