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Review of *The Palgrave International Handbook of Football and Politics*.

Edited by Jean-Michel De Waele, Suzan Gibril, Ekaterina Glorizova and Ramón Spaaij.
London: Palgrave Macmillan 2018, 710 pages (ISBN 978-3-319-78776-3)

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The Palgrave Handbook is so far the most extensive effort to write a comparative political science of football. A programmatic introduction is followed by case studies on the history and politics of football in 32 countries and five continents. The Handbook teaches us a lot about both the similarities and varieties of football politics around the world. Some additional examples, for instance the Austro-Hungarian and Dutch cases, would have been welcome as far as the politics of football is concerned.

All the chapters follow the framework outlined in the introduction. The first section discusses the political origins of football, i.e. how the English game was introduced to the various countries and their local cultures. The second section provides an overview of historical and contemporary club rivalries, while the third section addresses football as a sports spectacle with a special emphasis put on football fandom. Finally, the fourth section allows the authors to address contemporary issues specifically, covering a wide range of topics, such as 'religion, gender, corruption, geopolitical interests, social integration or economic dimensions' (p. 6). The examination of the so-called Bosman ruling (pp. 31-33), which granted free movement of players within the EU, is a very valuable contribution.

The Football Association (FA) was founded in 1863, but 'different variants of "football" were emerging through play and competition, discussion and debate. Only by the late 1880s it is really possible to distinguish rugby and association football as separate games' (p. 182). Disputes between (Association) football and other genres of the game were also

prominent in other countries, especially in Australia (pp. 580-83).

Football as an English game parallels the status of Westminster among parliaments. The football rules were indebted to members of the Cambridge Union Society, which followed Westminster-style parliamentary procedures in its debates and internal meetings. The most obvious link between football and parliament lies in the ideal of fair play. In parliament, fair and open debate is followed by a vote. A football match is fair only if its result remains open and the rules of the game are fair.

The fair play principle has been interpreted and evaluated in various ways. In Sweden it was seen as amateurism (p. 140), in Argentina it was replaced by 'a new concept of masculinity' (pp. 471-72); in Uruguay, however, winning at all costs has been abandoned for 'the traditional Uruguayan tenacity ('garra', 'garra charrúa') within the limits of "fair play"' (p. 573). The Ivorian club Stade Abidjan 'had a reputation for being intellectual and cultivating fair play and style' (p. 389), in Ukraine fair play formed the rules 'for fights between football fans' (p. 321). The parliamentary link between fair play and football rules has thus been lost in translation.

The reception of 'the English game' varied greatly. In France cycling was seen as a 'republican' sport (p. 41), in Sweden gymnastics was 'the popular amateur model based on the male working class' (pp. 139-40), in Spain bullfights were the national sport (p. 126). In Russia 'anti-British feelings began to increase' (p. 267) and in the United States football was 'branded as foreign and un-American' and as a 'young ladies' game' (p. 532).

In the English colonies football was a tool 'to promote good behaviour, sobriety, obedience, discipline and cooperation' (p. 448). The locals frequently managed to invert these aims and create their own football. In Egypt 'football as a tool of anti-colonial

struggle ... soon became a powerful tool of propaganda for subsequent dictatorial regimes' (p. 350). Against the French, 'young male Ivorians ... defied the colonial policy by developing a strong interest in sports and particularly football' (p. 386). In Algeria, the clubs names *Mouloudia* and *Musulmane* were a mark of resistance (pp. 330-31). In Europe 'the Nazi's intentions of instrumentalizing football ... failed ... miserably' (p. 67), and 'the Soviet power never really succeeded in establishing a true socialist football culture', but 'football allowed Soviets to choose their leisure and the team they wanted to support' (pp. 268-69). When the contingency of results is the *raison d'être* of the game, a total control does not make sense.

Football took part in the politics of forming international institutions. The chapter on France mentions the founding of the FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) in 1904 (p. 41); accounts of FIFA membership, including the curiosity of the four British member associations (p. 186), are confined to the chapters specific to each country. The World Cup was organized for the first time in Uruguay in 1930 (p. 561), and continental championships as well as Champions leagues for clubs followed. The chapters discuss the rhythms of founding nationwide leagues: the German *Bundesliga* was created as late as 1963 (p. 62), and the Swedish *Allsvenskan* still does not officially recognize professionalization (pp. 139-40). Today football is a global game with numerous foreign players in the main leagues as well as an extraordinary visibility of major events even in countries such as Indonesia (pp. 623-24). The inclusion of tables of tournaments, medallists, players and coaches into the Handbook would have facilitated the comparative reading of football politics.

With his famous distinction between left and right wing football, the Argentinian coach César Luis Menotti in the 1970s suggested that different styles of playing have a political aspect. In Nigeria, for example, the 'ability to dance with the ball' is considered more important than 'simply putting the ball into the net' (p. 408). A look at the tensions between aesthetic styles, usually associated with Brazilian and Dutch football traditions, and result-oriented styles, often attributed to the Italian school, would have introduced

possibilities to analyze the politicization of the style alternatives. In the 1970s, Bayern München ‘was portrayed as cold-blooded, defensive and purely result-oriented’, while its rival Borussia Mönchengladbach was ‘playing an enthusiastic, attacking and aesthetically pleasing football’ (p. 72). A famous attempt to bring these approaches together is AC Milan under Arrigo Sacchi at the turn of the 1990s. Sacchi’s obsession with style represented a radical politicization of the game in Italy, still known for its emphasis on defence and cautiousness.

The Handbook discusses extensively the political affiliations of football clubs. Besides the well-known rivalries between Celtic and Rangers in Glasgow (p. 188) or the Egyptian clubs al-Ahly and Zamalek (p. 353), we enjoyed reading that Club Brugge represented ‘the liberal and secular bourgeoisie’ and Cercle Brugge ‘the elitist and Catholic bourgeoisie’ (p. 25), or that Mohun Bagan was the club of the locals and East Bengal that of migrants arriving after the partition of India (p. 613). Sometimes a club’s political colour has changed over the course of history (see the sad story of Universitatea Cluj, pp. 257-59). The division in Northern Italy to city clubs (Genoa, Milan, Torino) with a masculine article in their names, and outskirts clubs (Sampdoria, Inter, Juventus) with a feminine article (p. 107) is only known to insiders. With the globalization of football such considerations have largely lost their relevance: few players today would refuse joining Real Madrid due to its monarchist name and Francoist heritage.

The Handbook interestingly suggests, that today not only are politicians expected to have an association with football, but also the players must have at least some political literacy. When Ivory Coast qualified for the 2006 World Cup, ‘The players ... used the successful qualification as a chance to make political statements’ (p. 393), star player Didier Drogba being one of the most prominent figures in this regard. In Sweden, Pia Sundhage is considered as a ‘norm-breaker in football’ (p. 156), as her careers as both player and trainer have contributed to football culture becoming more egalitarian. In general, the players’ political activity would have deserved further reflection. For instance, the successful Brazilian players Romário and Bebeto have been elected to

parliament after their playing career. Pelé has even served as Brazil's sports minister, while an AC Milan icon, Giovanni "Gianni" Rivera, has served as a member of both the Italian and the European parliaments.

The Handbook rightly wants to deal with the politics from below, yet the voices of the actors, of players and coaches and football journalists, their views on the game and its evolutions, are largely absent. An exception is the famous autobiography of Zlatan Ibrahimović (p. 158), although the French players revolting against the coach Raymond Domenech during the 2010 World Cup are denounced as 'badly behaved kids' (p. 44). Focusing on the game itself would have brought to light important aspects of the politics of football.

Another important aspect, which is curiously dismissed in the Handbook, concerns the link between the changing rules of the game and tactical developments, including the emergence and vanishing of different player types and the corresponding paragon players. An exception is the presentation of the origins of the Argentinian *criollo*, or *la nuestra*, style with its focus on the adversaries (pp. 473–75).

The rules of football allow different opportunities to use the space, which has, over the years, led to numerous tactical innovations. Karl Rappan's *verrou* introduced a system in which the defenders would outnumber the forwards, later famously used in the Italian *catenaccio*. A gradual withdrawal of forwards has been a major trend in football ever since. The 1990 World Cup with a record low number of goals prompted some notable modifications to the rules. The back-pass rule that prohibited the goalkeeper from handling the ball when it was deliberately passed by a team mate was introduced, awarding three points instead of two for a win, as well as the possibility for a third substitution all marked a politicizing effect on the game as they redefined the range of legitimate moves.

The rules of the game are, of course, subject to interpretations. For instance, there is no absolute criterion to judge when a player handles the ball ‘deliberately’ or when she uses ‘excessive force’. This allows players to test the line of the referee and to adjust their own playing accordingly. The coaches can also make political use of the rules – for example when the team makes a substitution to break the *momentum* of the opponent. But such issues of the politics of time within the game remain outside the horizon of the Handbook.

The role of women as football players, coaches and fans is a recurring theme in the Handbook. The game was invented and introduced all over the world by men, who saw it often as ‘a strictly male preserve’ (p. 406). This was seen as an anomaly in Nigeria for example, where women are reported to have played football by the 1930s (p. 407). In Sweden, ‘the first match between two women’s teams was played in 1918’, but the first Swedish championship for women took place only in 1973 (pp. 153–54). Since the beginning of the championship, Swedish teams have included foreign star players, such as Brazilian Marta or American Hope Solo. In Switzerland, the first official women’s championship was organized in the 1970-1971 season, although attempts to establish female teams date back to 1920s (p. 178). Football is also highly popular among women in Japan (pp. 652–53) and Germany (p. 62), which have both excelled at World Cup competitions. However, despite the increasing interest towards women’s football and the rise in both the number and quality of players, it is peculiar that in some big footballing countries, such as Italy, women receive only marginal attention. Pia Sundhage’s example (pp. 155–56) illustrates what kind of barriers and stereotypes women still encounter when they enter this male dominated sport.

The Handbook examines in great detail the mobilization of the supporters inside and outside the stadium, although the emphasis lies on the extreme forms of fandom. The inspiration for supporting one's team fiercely is mainly drawn from England or Italy as

the case studies on Greece (p. 93), Switzerland (p. 174), Russia (p. 279), Algeria (p. 338), Egypt (p. 357) and Indonesia (p. 631) demonstrate. The world famous term for fanatical supporters, *ultras*, seems to have originated among Sampdoria supporters in 1970s (p. 114). For example in Argentina and Uruguay, these fanatical supporter groups are called *barras bravas* (p. 478, 570), in Brazil *torcidas* (pp. 492–94). The chapters also explore what kinds of measures have been adopted to tackle issues concerning violent and racist forms of fandom. In Belgium, the creation of ‘fan-coaching’ (pp. 30–31) in 1990s was an attempt to promote a positive spirit among football supporters. The German 50+1 rule instead provides fee-paying organized supporters a say in their club’s affairs, which is seen as protecting the soul of German football (p. 74).

The politics of naming forms an unintended subtext of the book. The US term *soccer* (derived from ‘association football’) and the Italian *calcio* are well-known examples of giving a local colour to the game. English football terms were introduced in Russia prior to WWI (p. 267), but German translations such as *Stürmer* for *forward* had a militaristic tone (p. 64). The first *pyramid* formation for setting the players on the pitch still has a visible impact on the football lexicon of player positions and roles. Names for tactics on the pitch, such as *diamond* or *Christmas tree*, as well as types of players, from *libero* to *false nine* illustrate historical layers of the football language unfortunately not discussed in the Handbook.

Many chapters discuss, however, the politics of club names. *Dynamo* was the club of the police in the Soviet Union (p. 271), in East Germany (p. 70) and in Romania (spelled *Dinamo*, p. 255), but not in Zimbabwe (pp. 450-51). *Spartak* Moscow (pp. 271-72) and the railway workers’ club *Rapid Bucharest* had a certain ‘aura of opposition from below’ (p. 256). In Israel *Hapoel* represented trade unions, *Maccabi* bourgeois parties, *Beitar* the right wing, *Elizur* religious Zionists (p. 371), *Hakoah* was the name of left-wing Jewish clubs in Switzerland (p. 166), Romania (p. 253) and Ukraine (p. 313). The rival names *Iraklis* and *Aris Thessalonikis* refer to Greek mythology (p. 90), as does also *Ajax* Amsterdam.

In sum, the Handbook was highly informative in addressing the relationship between football and politics. The contributions of the Handbook will surely be useful to scholars and students in their academic work, inspiring also further research into the topics that are not discussed in much detail.

The title 'Football and Politics', however, gives the impression of separate spheres, and the book explores both 'politics in football' and 'football in politics' (p. 640 in the Japan chapter). The Handbook deals the former in club rivalries and fan engagements, the latter in politicians' involvement in clubs and associations. The quote from Grant Farred referring to football as a 'language' (p. 3) and a Weberian-style action-concept of politics as 'the struggle for power and resources' in the chapter on Nigeria (p. 403) contain, however, possibilities of reading football as a form of politics in itself. The fair play ideal and parliamentary rules as the historical paradigm for the game point to further possibilities to regard politics as a regular part of football matches.