

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Football's contribution to international order: the ludic and festive reproduction of international society by world societal actors

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## Abstract

In the English School, the relationship between international and world society has recently received increasing attention – conceptually and empirically. Adding to this developing literature, we study how world societal actors not only serve as normative counterpoints to international society or function as norm-entrepreneurs, but decisively contribute to its reproduction. Going beyond the common preoccupation with actor types, we focus on practices that are performed on the international stage. We examine the role which world sport events, especially FIFA's World Cup and the infrastructure of football, play for international society. Building on Wight, we conceptualize world sport events as a (world societal actor driven) derivative primary institution of international society, which is embedded within the particularly hybrid master primary institution of sites and festivals. We find that world sport events allow for the ludic and festive reproduction of key primary institutions (like sovereignty, territoriality, and nationalism), while they highlight how members of international society compete on the basis of shared norms and values. Naturalizing world order as international order, they make international society emotionally experienceable as feasible and desirable at a global level. In performing world sport events, world societal actors uphold rather than challenge international society.

**Key words:** English School; international society; football; sites and festivals; international practice theory; primary and secondary institutions; world society

The concept of *international society* entails the expectation that *states* are in principle able to manage conflict and cooperation on the basis of common goals, rules, and institutions. In doing so, they (re)produce international society over time. While a focus on states and on international society has dominated early English School theorizing, increasing attention has meanwhile been devoted to the question of how international society is embedded in a broader world society. English School scholars have begun both to conceptually advance world society and to inquire into the empirical interrelationships between international and

world society.<sup>1</sup> Most importantly, the early inclination to view the relationship between international and world society in oppositional or even conflictual terms,<sup>2</sup> has now largely given way to studies that underscore ambivalent and complex, in some cases even mutually supportive, ways in which international and world society relate.

Today, the English School takes the notion seriously that the ‘institutional structure of the society of states can be, and sometimes is, shaped by upward pressure from world society’,<sup>3</sup> and the other way around.<sup>4</sup> Contributing to these debates and drawing on some of Buzan’s recent conceptual distinctions, we will inquire into the complex and potentially symbiotic relationships between international and world society.<sup>5</sup> More specifically, we will show that world societal actors can play a central and unique role in reproducing international society. In analyzing the role that world societal actors play for the reproduction of international society, we also address the question of ‘how to relate the concept of primary institutions to world society’,<sup>6</sup> which occupies an important position in more recent debates.<sup>7</sup>

Starting with the basic notion that international society needs to be continually reenacted and reproduced, we suggest to closely trace how this is actually achieved in practice, without exclusively focusing on specific actor types. By including world societal actors, or non-state actors as we will also refer to them, in the analysis of how international society is reproduced, we move away from the actor-type paradigm underlying much of English School thinking. Rather than analytically foregrounding actor types, we take a more practice-based perspective. This leads us to make three interrelated claims.

First, while state actors enjoy a privileged status in international society, various practices that are central elements of the primary institutions of international society can be adopted and enacted by non-state actors. Second, by performing these practices, non-state actors can contribute to the reproduction of the goals, rules, and institutions of international society as a whole, as well as specifically to the reproduction of such central primary institutions like sovereignty, territoriality, and nationalism. Third, some primary institutions are particularly open to the participation of non-state actors. In some cases, non-state actors can even form focal secondary institutions (i.e. organizations) for these primary institutions. In the context of such highly hybrid institutions, non-state actors can consequently play a unique role for the reproduction of international society.

From the perspective we develop, many non-state practices are potentially relevant to the reproduction of international society. Especially taken-for-granted practices that we commonly do not view as being linked to international society make for intriguing cases. One area in which the role of non-state actors has been noted, but not analyzed in regard to international society, is globalized football. Debates have primarily focused on corruption scandals,<sup>8</sup> and problematic relations between

<sup>1</sup>Stivachtis and McKeil 2018.

<sup>2</sup>Vincent 1986.

<sup>3</sup>Buzan 2018, 132; Donnelly 1998; Wheeler 2000.

<sup>4</sup>Costa Buranelli 2018.

<sup>5</sup>Buzan 2018.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>7</sup>Stivachtis and McKeil 2018.

<sup>8</sup>Bayle 2015; Kistner 2012.

individual states and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). Centrally, critics have highlighted that FIFA, which is a private organization under Swiss law, makes great financial gains in the context of the quadrennial World Cup tournament, while the pay-off for the host countries remains questionable. FIFA's 'contracts of adhesion' have even been argued to undermine the host's sovereignty. Discussions of this sort were particularly pronounced in news reports prior to the 2010 World Cup in South Africa<sup>9</sup> and before the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.<sup>10</sup> Discussions prior to the 2018 World Cup in Russia were additionally characterized by concerns about Russia's domestic and foreign policies.<sup>11</sup>

Precisely because such debates raise crucial issues that have not been resolved, we consider football as a promising case for studying the entanglement between world and international society. We will, however, not look at the dyadic relationship between FIFA and individual countries. Rather, we are interested in the broader institutional setting of which FIFA is a part and that makes it unsettlingly 'indispensable' for international society. If our analysis was confined to the question of how costs and benefits are distributed among public (host) and private (FIFA) organizations, it would be ill-equipped to reveal the broader implications of FIFA and its World Cup for international society. Nor could it address the question of why FIFA and its World Cup emotionally engage people across the globe. A number of world sport events have become 'global mega events'. But the football World Cup is the largest single-sport event of this kind and reaches billions of people. Moreover, for FIFA alone, the 2018 World Cup has generated 5.357 billion USD of revenue and has been labelled 'the most profitable edition to date'.<sup>12</sup>

From our perspective, the success story of FIFA and its World Cup is a consequence of the symbiotic relationship between FIFA (and other non-state actors) and international society. To some extent, the non-state actors involved in world sport events can be seen to not only take part in the reproduction of international society, but as playing a constitutive role for international society. To underscore this claim, we will argue that a secularized version of the institution that was visible in ancient Greek international society and which Martin Wight (1977) discussed as *religious shrines and festivals*, still plays an important role today. We will re-conceptualize it as the master primary institution of *secular sites and festivals* that encompasses the derivative primary institution of *world sport events*. FIFA in turn, can then be understood as a private secondary institution that plays a focal role for globalized football. Importantly, its organizational setup naturalizes the segmentation of the global in terms of sovereign territorial nation states that compete with each other on the basis of shared goals, rules, and institutions.

FIFA and the billions of people who engage with the quadrennial global football festival actively perform international society and make it experienceable for each other. They turn the abstract constitutional idea of world order as international

<sup>9</sup>Who profits most 2010; Cornelissen 2012; Giampiccoli and Nauright 2017.

<sup>10</sup>Bar-On, 2017, 261; Police clashes, 2013; Ozanian, 2014.

<sup>11</sup>Ludvigsen 2018; Rowe 2018. Further discussions concern the issue of using world sport events for political purposes (Murray and Pigman 2014), and the securitization of the World Cup (Ludvigsen 2018). The relationship between sports and politics/diplomacy has been discussed from the perspective of post-colonial (Waldman and Wilson 2015; Darnell et al. 2016) and diplomatic studies (Pigman 2014).

<sup>12</sup>FIFA 2019a, 2.

order into a lived reality and ‘demonstrate its feasibility’. It is hereby key that international society is reproduced through a game. Games make central rules of society tangible and foreground the centrality of rules for human interaction. This, so we suggest, applies for first- and second-order societies alike. Moreover, games are intended to be entertaining and suspenseful – which allows them to emotionally engage all kinds and large numbers of people. As a consequence, international society is not only portrayed as feasible and experienceable, but also as enjoyable and desirable. The ludic and festive character of these football events consequently sets them apart from other relevant international rituals like the autumn sessions of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly that remain an arcane and passionless event for most people.

The finding that primary institutions of international society can be decisively driven by secondary institutions of world society and by other non-state actors, draws into doubt that ‘international society’s institutions are exclusive to states’,<sup>13</sup> and underscores the complex relationship between international and world society. Even more importantly, it encourages a broader theoretical shift away from actor-type theorizing. To use a metaphor from theater: rather than focusing on the actors who are on the stage, we highlight the play that they perform. In the context of FIFA championships, it is not only ‘football’ that is being played, but also ‘international society’ that is being performed. Convincingly performing ‘international society’ centrally suggests two things: First, the world consists of states, which implies that it is not a universal empire or a cosmopolitan community of individual human beings. Second, not least since they are rule-governed, the inevitable antagonism and competition between states is acceptable (and even entertaining). By the same token, the world is not in a Hobbesian ‘state of war’. The performance therefore proposes that world order exists in the form of international order, and that this order is natural, feasible, and desirable.<sup>14</sup>

Focusing on practices and their implications allows studying multiple phenomena outside of the confines of classical understandings of international society. In the case of world sport events, non-state actors do not challenge international society, but play a central part in continuously (re)constituting and developing international society and its institutions.

In the following, we will situate our argument in the current English School literature and draw on some recent conceptual distinctions.<sup>15</sup> In order to do so, we will discuss the concepts of international society and world society before more specifically focusing on institutions in English School thinking. We will conclude the conceptual–theoretical part with an elaboration on sites and festivals as well as on

<sup>13</sup>Davies 2019, 269.

<sup>14</sup>There are also other world sport events to which the ideas developed in this paper apply. Rather than providing a comprehensive overview of different world sport events, our empirical analysis will be devoted to a rich single-case study. We thereby seek to account for both the historical emergence and the present practice of international football. Especially World Cups have a unique global outreach as a single-sport event – both during the qualification phase and during the tournament phase. Football is only rivalled by the Olympic Games which are, however, a hub for multiple sports, most of which get much less attention individually between the games. Moreover, single-sport events are characterized by a one-to-one relationship between a country and its team, which reinforces the notions of representation and reenactment.

<sup>15</sup>Buzan 2018.

world sport events. In terms of our empirical analysis, we will discuss the infrastructure of football before focusing on FIFA's World Cup. Whereas our main aim is to contribute to an ongoing theoretical debate, our study does identify a dimension of FIFA and football that has so far not been discussed. We will therefore close with a short reflection on the potential normative implications of understanding world sport events as a derivative primary institution of international society that is linked to reproducing central primary institutions of international society (sovereignty, territoriality, and nationalism).

### International society in the English School

International society is commonly understood as a group of states that 'have established by dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations, and recognize their common interest in maintaining these arrangements'.<sup>16</sup> In this classical formulation, the English School moves beyond realist systemic thinking and asserts that even under anarchy it is possible that states share values, have common interests, and pursue common goals.<sup>17</sup> Most centrally, the notion of international society entails the expectation that states are in principle able to manage conflict and cooperation on the basis of common goals, rules, and institutions. Rules and institutions not only give rise to behavioral expectations in a rationalist sense, but provide standards of legitimacy that are relevant for self-understandings and membership.

While international order depends on the continual realization of the primary goals of international society (maintaining society as a whole, preserving its individual members, and upholding peace), Bull underscores that the interests of states can conflict and that common goals and rules may not all point towards the same course of action.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, common institutions may play a mutually supportive role, but they might also clash with one another.<sup>19</sup> Bull's account of international society consequently does not describe a static and seamless institutional arrangement. Rather, he stresses that social life is often murky and contradictory. Order is not naturally given but needs to be continually established in the face of disruptions and inconsistencies. This makes the reproduction of international society and the perseverance of international order a continuous challenge, but also implies that anomalies and temporary disorder do not necessarily indicate the obsolescence or breakdown of international society.

While, empirically, social arrangements are dynamic phenomena whose momentary state is not always easily discernible, abstract ideas and principles are more clear-cut. Especially by taking a comparative approach it is possible to clarify 'what may be called the fundamental or constitutional normative principle of world politics'.<sup>20</sup> In the context of an international order, this principle 'identifies the idea of a society of states, as opposed to such alternative ideas as that of a universal empire, a cosmopolitan community of individual human beings, or a Hobbesian

<sup>16</sup>Bull and Watson 1984, 1.

<sup>17</sup>Bull 1977.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 17–18, 70–71.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, e.g. 187–89.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 67.

state of nature or state of war'.<sup>21</sup> The articulation of distinct competing ideas (or models) of world order highlights that world politics could be organized quite differently from what we see today. It also cautions us not to expect a perfect fit between abstract ideas and prevailing practices empirically. The observer should consequently take the murky and contradictory realities of social arrangements seriously and ask which ideas of world order come *closest* to actual practices and which are at odds with them.

In light of the empirical complexities of social arrangements, it is clear that the concept of international society does not imply that states are the only actors in world politics. While states occupy a privileged position, they are likely to not be the sole actors potentially relevant to reproducing global social arrangements and to creating order. As a consequence, we suggest that *states as actors* have to be distinguished from the *institutional preconditions* that afford states a privileged position and that are constitutive of international society. If actors and institutions are conceptually separate and if international order is seen as a continuous achievement, it becomes conceivable that non-state actors are not necessarily constrained to the role of merely tolerated participants in world politics. Rather, they can actively contribute to the (re)production of international society – in particular if they do not propagate alternative ideas of world order.

While we will elaborate on the institutional preconditions for the privileged status of states below, it is central to underscore that ontologically speaking, neither the status nor the existence of states themselves are given prior to or apart from the practices (or processes) that continuously temporarily stabilize and reproduce their position and 'thingness'.<sup>22</sup> To be blunt, if no one 'did state' – it would go away.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the (boundary drawing) processes which constitute the state are not exclusively performed by actors who self-identify as a part of the state apparatus. They rather heavily depend on a multitude of different types of societal actors (which in turn are constituted as specific types of actors in the process). The same holds true for state identity,<sup>24</sup> in the continuous formation of which, world societal actors can play a decisive role.

We contend that what holds true for individual states, holds true for international society as well. We consequently agree with those authors, who have repeatedly underscored that 'English School studies of the society of states cannot be made independently of the political world beyond it'.<sup>25</sup> To be clear, we do not hereby challenge the notion that international society is a second-order society in its own right. But the notion that international society is a society of states does not necessitate that the reproduction of international society be performed solely by states.

But if the practices through which states and international society are reproduced are not exclusively characterized by state agency, the established actor-type approach to international society should be reconsidered. At a basic level, we

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>22</sup>On boundary drawing and thingness, see Abbott 2001, 261–80.

<sup>23</sup>In other words, treating the state as exogenously given should be an analytical choice, not an ontological certainty.

<sup>24</sup>Linsenmaier 2018.

<sup>25</sup>McKeil 2018, 42.

suggest looking at practices that serve to uphold (or challenge) international society, rather than to look at states alone. In other words, we focus on ‘what play is being performed on stage, and not on who the actors are’. If non-state actors perform ‘international society’ (rather than e.g. ‘universal empire’), they potentially contribute to the reproduction of world politics in terms of international society.

In order to further develop this perspective, we will discuss the existing concepts of world society in English School thinking, before more specifically focusing on a more detailed discussion of institutions in general as well as sites and festivals in particular.

### World society in English School thinking

World society ‘has received much less attention’<sup>26</sup> than international society even though it has conceptually always been an integral part of English School thinking. In contrast to international society, there seems to be little agreement on the ‘exact meaning and content of the world society category’.<sup>27</sup> Central figures of the English School like Butterfield, Wight and Watson generally understand world society in terms of shared culture serving as a prerequisite for international society.<sup>28</sup> Bull, in contrast, focuses less on shared (Christian) culture and symmetrically places world society next to international society.<sup>29</sup> This directly leads to a conceptual separation into a world of states and a world of individuals that still characterizes much of English School thinking.

The same holds true for Vincent’s approach in which ‘world society remained ontologically distinct from international society’,<sup>30</sup> and became linked to human rights. Approaches along these lines contribute to framing the relationship between international and world society in basically oppositional terms.<sup>31</sup> They suggest that ‘the expansion of individual rights threatens [...] sovereignty both by facilitating grounds for outside intervention in the domestic life of the state, and by weakening the state’s authority to act internationally’.<sup>32</sup> In this tradition, (individual) human rights – and by extension world society – pose a challenge to the state, and to pluralist conceptions of international society.<sup>33</sup> Tying world society to a human rights discourse has had the additional effect that ‘world society has [...] come to be associated with moral cosmopolitanism’,<sup>34</sup> thereby giving the concept an overly moralistic touch.<sup>35</sup> But wedding world society to moral cosmopolitanism limits the leverage of the concept and makes it difficult to theorize the role of norm-challengers or counter-movements in norm development processes.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Stivachtis and McKeil 2018, 2.

<sup>27</sup>Williams 2014, 127.

<sup>28</sup>Buzan 2004, 28.

<sup>29</sup>Bull 1977, 279.

<sup>30</sup>Williams 2014, 131.

<sup>31</sup>Waever 1992, 104–7; Reus-Smit 1997, 566–68; Barkin 1998, 235.

<sup>32</sup>Buzan 2004, 29.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>34</sup>Williams 2014, 132.

<sup>35</sup>Also see Babones and Aberg 2019, 297.

<sup>36</sup>See, respectively: Clark 2007, 200, 203; Pella 2013



This strand of thinking has subsequently been supplemented by conceptions of world society characterized by normative agnosticism.<sup>37</sup> But these approaches continue to uphold the conceptual separation between world and international society. In particular, the boundary tends to be drawn ‘according to different types of basic constitutive units’,<sup>38</sup> which usually amounts to the difference between individuals and states. So despite the concept of world society having developed over time, the assumption remains widely shared that international and world society are ontologically distinct.<sup>39</sup> But difference does not necessitate ontological distinctiveness in a formal logical sense. Importantly, positing such a barrier has the detrimental effect of setting-up ‘two incompatible realms’ (e.g. individuals vs. states), while making it less likely (although not impossible) that we inquire into the relations between international and world society.

These conceptual hurdles notwithstanding, there are some English School scholars who have scrutinized these relations empirically and conceptually.<sup>40</sup> For example, Clark argues that ‘key international actors have formed coalitions with sectors of global civil society, while world society remains dependent on state actors for regulation and enforcement of norms’.<sup>41</sup> Others have begun to investigate the role of world societal actors as norm entrepreneurs that have ‘pushed for [the] insertion [of global values] into the normative order of international society’.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, it has been suggested that ‘the idea of a divide may also need to give way to the potential for connections between international society and world society’.<sup>43</sup> Drawing on Willetts,<sup>44</sup> Davies has argued that ‘the boundary between transnational society actors and international society actors is blurred, since there are many hybrid organizations consisting of both governmental actors and TNAs, which function across both international society and transnational society’.<sup>45</sup> The English School is consequently increasingly embracing the view that non-state actors and state actors can enter into symbiotic relationships or ‘mutually legitimate one another’.<sup>46</sup> It is within this strand of literature that our argument is situated.

Despite these recent advances, world society remains a broad and often (too) fuzzy concept. Against this background, Buzan has suggested a terminological distinction for the multiple meanings of the term world society, which we find helpful.<sup>47</sup> Buzan identifies three different meanings. While the concept of integrated world society refers to a teleological prediction without historical precedent, the other two are particularly relevant for the present purpose: normative and political world society.

At base, normative world society refers to normative, or argumentative resources upon which actors can draw in justification processes and which remain to some

<sup>37</sup>Buzan 2004; World Society Research Group 2000, 1–18; Babones and Aberg 2019.

<sup>38</sup>Linsenmaier 2018, 95; see also Buzan 2004, 27–62.

<sup>39</sup>Buzan 2004, 118; Pella 2013, 69

<sup>40</sup>See Bellamy 2005, 286–7; Clark 2007; Davies 2019

<sup>41</sup>Clark 2007, 13.

<sup>42</sup>Falkner and Buzan 2019, 132.

<sup>43</sup>Williams 2014, 127.

<sup>44</sup>Willetts 2011, 72–80.

<sup>45</sup>Davies 2019, 285.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>47</sup>Buzan 2018.



degree 'separate from the structures of the society of states'.<sup>48</sup> It *can* serve as a 'moral counterpoint' to international society.<sup>49</sup> But this does not presuppose that there is universal agreement on the normative stance or implications of world society. Rather, normative world society is compatible with (two) distinct kinds of moral referents. In a cosmopolitan version, it references 'the interests and well-being of humankind as a whole'<sup>50</sup> as the benchmark for judging international society. In a pluralist version, it draws on other collective identities, including 'nations, tribes and clans'<sup>51</sup> when assessing international society.

Political world society 'comprises all the non-state social structures visible within humankind as a whole that have both significantly autonomous actor quality and the capacity and interest to engage with the society of states to influence its normative values and institutions'.<sup>52</sup> It covers both individual human beings and organizations (i.e. secondary institutions) as (non-state) actors. At base, normative world society 'provides the ideational resources with which political (transnational) world society engages interstate society'.<sup>53</sup> Political world society consequently serves as an intermediary between normative world society and international society.<sup>54</sup>

Elaborating on political world society, Buzan lists sport alongside commerce, environmentalism and many more as fields of interest of non-state actors. He explains that 'the main activity of these non-state actors is [...] advocacy *within interstate society* [and providing] services, either by themselves or as contractors to states or IGOs'.<sup>55</sup> We add to this that non-state actors may also provide services for *international society as a whole*. World sport events and non-state actors like FIFA perform a global spectacle that promotes the constitutional idea of world order as international order. In light of Buzan's considerations, FIFA can be seen as a secondary institution of political world society that draws on and reinforces resources of normative world society that are closely linked to notions of legitimacy at the inter-state level. Given its visibility and the importance football has within many societies, we suggest that football at a global level is symbiotic with international society (rather than it being merely parasitic on international society).<sup>56</sup> This entanglement of world and international society can be further specified through an elaboration on the institutions of international society to which we turn now.

### Institutions of international and world society

Institutions, as temporarily stabilized sets of practices, are no less central to the English School than the notion of society. It has become widespread to follow

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>54</sup>See *Ibid.*, 134–135.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 135, italics added.

<sup>56</sup>See Pella 2013, 68.

Buzan's differentiation between primary and secondary, and between master and derivative institutions.<sup>57</sup> We too find this distinction helpful.

While the term secondary institutions refers to organizations and regimes as they are widely discussed in the International Relations literature, the English School has been particularly interested in primary institutions. Buzan characterizes these as 'durable and recognized patterns of shared practices rooted in values [...] and embodying a mix of norms, rules and principles [that] play a constitutive role in relation to both the pieces/players and the rules of the game'.<sup>58</sup> The master/derivative distinction in turn underscores that some primary institutions 'nest inside others, but not in the sense that some are constitutive and others regulatory'.<sup>59</sup> For example, sovereignty, territoriality, and nationalism (among others) are categorized as master primary institutions, whereas non-intervention, boundaries, and self-determination are good examples of associated derivative primary institutions.<sup>60</sup>

While Bull views the common institutions of international society as limited to states,<sup>61</sup> Buzan has been more open to the idea that non-state actors could engage in them.<sup>62</sup> Going further, we argue that non-state actors can even contribute to the reproduction of international society by performing practices that are central elements of the primary institutions of international society. By conceptualizing institutions in terms of multi-actor type practices,<sup>63</sup> we take a multi-dimensional approach<sup>64</sup> that provides for the possibility of diverse roles (contestation, innovation, stabilization, etc.) of non-state actors.<sup>65</sup>

Considering that there is indeed no consensus on a definitive number of institutions of international society<sup>66</sup> or how these could be identified,<sup>67</sup> we follow Holsti and focus on those institutions that matter for the research task at hand.<sup>68</sup> While we will revisit a long-neglected institution in the subsequent section, we will here focus on the primary institutions that are particularly relevant for our inquiry. If non-state actors can decisively contribute to the reproduction of core primary institutions, our argument that their role for international society should be taken seriously, is decisively supported. This holds especially true if these institutions are at the heart of reproducing the state as the privileged and central actors of international society.

While the character and privileged status of states is linked to the constitutional idea of world order as international order, it is particularly interesting that Bull did not explicate the institutions that most clearly express this idea. As mentioned

<sup>57</sup>Buzan 2004; Lawson and Buzan 2018.

<sup>58</sup>Buzan 2004, 181.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>60</sup>See *Ibid.*, 184, 187.

<sup>61</sup>Bull 1977, 71–74.

<sup>62</sup>Buzan 2004, 181.

<sup>63</sup>On practices see Adler and Pouliot 2011; Bueger and Gadinger 2018; Navari 2010; Schatzki 2001

<sup>64</sup>Linsenmaier 2018.

<sup>65</sup>Costa Buranelli 2018; Weinert 2018.

<sup>66</sup>Buzan 2004, 174; Wilson 2012, 568.

<sup>67</sup>Falkner and Buzan 2019, 135.

<sup>68</sup>Holsti 2004, 25–27.

before, Bull assumed that international society was limited to states to which he also referred in passing as ‘the principal institutions of the society of states’.<sup>69</sup> While Bull’s approach makes it difficult to distinguish between states as actors and states as institutions, we will disaggregate the latter into three primary institutions that have been discussed in the English School literature: sovereignty, territoriality, and nationalism. Both sovereignty and territoriality are part of the classical ‘Westphalian’ set, to which nationalism could be added.<sup>70</sup> As such, our argument concerns the most central primary institutions, not merely fringe cases<sup>71</sup> and it goes beyond the existing literature in that we highlight that not only states, but also non-state actors contribute to their reproduction.

We understand sovereignty as the institution that defines the scope of rule, while territoriality defines the domain of rule. Both internally and externally, sovereignty emphasizes the modern tendency to monopolize and centralize legitimate rule and political representation. Moreover, sovereignty includes the notion of formal equality of states. Territoriality refers to the specific manner in which non-overlapping authority is organized in that the domain of rule is limited to mutually exclusive territories. Both institutions are modern as they are incompatible with the medieval notion of overlapping authority and complex relations of super- and subordination. They are, however, compatible with the dynastic principle underlying medieval legitimation practices.

The dynastic principle has, however, been superseded by nationalism that distinguishes contemporary international society from (inter)dynastic society.<sup>72</sup> Nationalism as collective identity does not map onto specific states cleanly, or without exceptions. It remains a complex and multi-faceted concept that cannot be applied consistently (e.g. due to ethnic heterogeneity), and often stands in conflict with other institutions (e.g. if irredentism challenges territoriality). But it is the dominant expression of collective identities used to legitimize the existence of states. Nationalism implies ‘the rule that states should be nation states’.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, nationalism (and notions of collective identity more broadly) have recently been interpreted as providing a connection between international and world society. This development is closely linked to a fresh approach that English School scholars have taken towards institutions. Traditionally, the concept of institutions was confined to the context of international society. More recently, authors like Stivachis and McKeil, Buzan, and Davies have begun to investigate how primary institutions relate to world society. Most centrally, Buzan identifies collective identity as the primary institution of normative world society, while suggesting that nationalism (as a form of collective identity) is traditionally a primary institution of international society.<sup>74</sup>

But if this is the case, then nationalism may be read as a primary institution of both international society and normative world society. This need not be troublesome. The *prima facie* difficulty of categorizing nationalism emerges from the

<sup>69</sup>Bull 1977, 71.

<sup>70</sup>Buzan 2018, 132.

<sup>71</sup>See Buzan 2004, 161–204.

<sup>72</sup>Wight 1977, 153–73; Mayall 1990.

<sup>73</sup>Bull 1977, 73.

<sup>74</sup>Buzan 2018, 133.

actor-type focus underlying English School thinking. Returning to our stage metaphor: If we focus on the play being performed, rather than on the actors, the difficulty of categorizing nationalism disappears. Nationalism as a form of legitimation and collective identity is performed in many complex ways, entailing multiple actor types.

To the point, world sport events not only reproduce nationalism (as collective identity), but nationality in that they link or yoke (in practical experience), specific notions of nationalism to specific sovereign territorial states. Rather than only reproducing nationalism, they reproduce specific sovereign territorial nation states and naturalize the segmentation of the global in terms of states. They harmonize 'the identity of the state (as a *nation* state) and collective identity in the inter-human domain (as a *nation*)'.<sup>75</sup>

While a focus on sovereignty, territoriality, and nationalism promises to shed light on the exact manner in which non-state actors contribute to the reproduction of international society, we will, in the empirical part, also address the role which the promotion of human rights plays in this context. As discussed above, the notion that human rights threaten sovereignty has been central to thinking about world society. Our approach consequently raises the interesting question of what role human rights play when world societal actors enact international society. Before we can turn to such empirical issues, however, we need to revisit an unduly disregarded institution that is particularly open to the participation of non-state actors.

### Sites, festivals, and world sport events

Sovereignty, territoriality, nationalism, and human rights are prominently discussed in the literature. But the institution to which we will turn now has previously been considered to be irrelevant.<sup>76</sup> While *religious* shrines and festivals as originally discussed by Wight are indeed absent from contemporary international society,<sup>77</sup> we suggest that a *secular* version of Wight's institution can be identified today. We will conceptualize it as the master primary institution of *secular* sites and festivals in which the derivative primary institution of world sport events is embedded.

In his account of the Pan-Hellenic institutions, Wight describes religious shrines and festivals, especially 'the quadrennial festival of the Olympian Zeus' and the 'Oracle of Apollo at Delphi',<sup>78</sup> as having an important integrative function for Hellenic international society. He observes that they displayed diplomacy-like aspects and 'had political importance as a forum and a sounding board'.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, both Olympia and Delphi served as repositories for important contracts. At both sites, regularly recurring festivals were conducted and the competitions that accompanied them symbolically represented and embodied Hellenic international society.<sup>80</sup> Wight speculates that there must have been an 'international public opinion' that was concerned with the 'international festivals and

<sup>75</sup>Linsenmaier 2018, 99, italics in original.

<sup>76</sup>Buzan 2004, 183.

<sup>77</sup>Wight 1977.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>80</sup>While Delphi is famous for its oracle, the competitions in Delphi were known as the Pythian Games. Wight also mentions the Isthmian and Nemean Games (Wight 1977, 67).

competitions'.<sup>81</sup> He also discusses the issue of membership in arguing that 'admission to the states-system, or diplomatic recognition, took the form of admission to the Olympic Games, after scrutiny of the applicant's Hellenic lineage'.<sup>82</sup> By the same token, misconduct could lead to an exclusion from the Games.<sup>83</sup>

The Pan-Hellenic games not only made Hellenic international society and membership therein tangible, they also expressed the idea of competitive coexistence. Both the rules of the competitions and the observance of a truce during the games convey this cooperative–competitive dimension. The main distinguishing factor between inter-polity politics and the Pan-Hellenic games was arguably, that the consequences of festive competition were much less serious than those of economic or military inter-polity struggles. Such – in comparison to non-game settings – attenuated consequences are among the defining characteristics of games as discussed in ludology (the study of games and play).<sup>84</sup> And they are particularly apt to underscore that the primary goals of international society (preserving the society, its members, and inter-state peace) are achievable, because they reinforce the notion that violence can be regulated and constrained. Similarly, games foreground the centrality of rules – and their enforceability – for human interaction. This makes international games uniquely suited to convey that even competitive relations among states are rule-governed.

Games are akin to rituals in that they can mediate and communicate the rules of a society. They can also reflect societies' shared cultural norms and self-understandings.<sup>85</sup> The ritual-like aspects of games allow them to present social conventions as naturally given facts,<sup>86</sup> and to communicate constitutional ideas.<sup>87</sup> They are complexity-reducing simulations that make societal life experienceable. Games are particularly engaging since they are intended to be entertaining and suspenseful. While not true for all types of rituals, games retain a key aspect of social practice, namely a strong element of unpredictability. This does not imply complete unexpectedness, but creates suspense within the rules of the game. The codified and practiced rules of the game comprise a grammar in which ever new – but still comparable – stories can be told: stories of victorious underdogs, (un)deserved winners, epic struggles, fallen heroes, and so forth.

Sport is a specific kind of game. It is competitive and commonly involves physical exertion. As in other games, all teams are treated equally. In an international context, even teams that represent small countries can in principle defeat all other teams. This aspect highlights their legal (or 'sovereign') equality, whereas a comparable victory in war among the respective states might be inconceivable.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>81</sup>Wight 1977, 67.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 48. Contra Reus-Smit who argues that the Olympic festivals in Ancient Greece 'were little more than forums for political debate, places where important treaties were inscribed on pillars for public declaration' (Reus-Smit 1999, 44).

<sup>84</sup>Junge et al. 2016.

<sup>85</sup>Wulf 2014.

<sup>86</sup>Bell 1997, 128–35.

<sup>87</sup>Stollberg-Rilinger 2015, 1–14.

<sup>88</sup>By the same token, sports events provide a unique opportunity to challenge great powers who play an ambiguous role in international society – as they can both strengthen and undermine international order (Bull 1977, 200–29).

The striking fit between sport and international society becomes even more visible if we consider that the emergence of modern world sport events is the result of historical processes that are not without alternatives. They are preconditioned on the well-documented historical rise of English/British 'sport' as the dominant interpretation of physical exercise in Europe,<sup>89</sup> which displaced alternative conceptions like German 'Turnen' and Swedish 'gymnastics'. Both alternatives are far less focused on competition, while it is precisely this aspect that allows the contemporary derivative primary institution of world sport events to stage such convincing (and engaging) representations of international society.

The same applies if we approach this development from the other side and highlight that world sport allows spectators to emotionally experience a world event in terms of *national* organization and competition. This dimension of world sport events may not be readily apparent, as today, the nationalization of sport is so naturalized that we seldom consider the reasons for this being so and not otherwise. But historically, 'the spread of sport internationally [...] did not automatically lead to events organized between national teams',<sup>90</sup> but clubs.<sup>91</sup> Clubs still compete internationally today (e.g. in the form of the Club World Championship), but national teams have taken center stage even though 'the [i]nternationalization of sports events is [...] a recent phenomenon, dating back only as far as the beginning of [the 20<sup>th</sup>] century'.<sup>92</sup> The fact that we continuously see sport competitions between national teams at a global level and that having national teams is almost a universal attribute of UN member states, should give us pause. Part of our discussion of football will consequently seek to de-familiarize how we view football and the functions it performs on the world stage.

As the preceding discussion has shown, world sport events display unique features that warrant their conceptualization as a derivative primary institution, which is embedded in the master primary institution of sites and festivals. Unlike the religious shrines and festivals that were discussed by Wight, contemporary sites and festivals do not rely on common religious convictions. The term 'sites' highlights the spatial and the continuous infrastructural aspects of the institution, while 'festivals' points to temporality and (regularly recurring) culminations that emotionally engage people. The institution highlights that contemporary (second-order) societies also depend on focal times and places that are of a celebratory, festive and/or ludic character. In light of this conceptual discussion, we can now turn to an analysis of football as the predominant sport across the globe. The analysis will briefly touch upon the global expansion of football before discussing the continuous and infrastructural aspects of the game, which include the qualification phase of the World Cup. We subsequently study the World Cup's tournament phase, which is also known as the World Cup finals.

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<sup>89</sup>Pfister 2003.

<sup>90</sup>Arnaud 1998, 21.

<sup>91</sup>The first was a rugby match between Paris FC and the Civil Service in Dulwich, England in 1885 (see *ibid.*).

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

## FIFA and 'Its' World cup

Today, FIFA is situated at the heart of a highly complex global football field.<sup>93</sup> But its unique role, with its 211 affiliated associations, should not be taken for granted.<sup>94</sup> FIFA's standing was historically contested and FIFA could have developed a much more conflictual relation with international society. But its development mirrored the expansion of international society, and the manner in which FIFA determined membership largely reflected membership criteria and practices of international society.<sup>95</sup> This led to striking parallels between international society and the infrastructure of this global sport – which we will discuss next before focusing on the World Cup finals.

### *The infrastructure of football*

Today, football reproduces and naturalizes the segmentation of 'the global' in terms of 'sovereign, territorial nation states'. This process is driven by the general requirement of having only one official football association per nation state. Historically, however, these modalities of membership were contested and could have developed differently.

They became an issue soon after FIFA was founded by its seven original members in 1904,<sup>96</sup> and concerned the status of the four British associations. These were founded prior to FIFA and had organized their own 'international' cooperation since the 1880s (via the International Football Association Board – IFAB). Only England had joined FIFA in 1905 with Scotland and Ireland applying for membership prior to the FIFA congress in 1908. But their application was opposed by the delegates of France, Germany, and Austria, on the grounds that 'if the same policy was followed with regard to Germany some 26 states would apply for admission'. Consequently, 'Germany wished that a single Association should be recognized representing football in the United Kingdom'.<sup>97</sup> Following discussions, the applications of Scotland and Ireland failed to gain the necessary 2/3 majority.<sup>98</sup>

As is well known, all four British associations had eventually joined FIFA by 1911. But their status was defined as an *anomaly*. While allowing for rare exceptions, this process consequently affirmed that normally only one association per country would be recognized.<sup>99</sup> This created an overwhelming parallelism between FIFA membership and membership in international society.<sup>100</sup> By the same token,

<sup>93</sup>Giulianotti and Robertson 2012, 217.

<sup>94</sup>For instructive discussions of the historical emergence of the field of football, see Cleland 2015; Harvey 2005; Cardenas 2015.

<sup>95</sup>For the classic and contestable account of the expansion of international society, see Bull and Watson 1984.

<sup>96</sup>FIFA 1904a, b, Article 1.

<sup>97</sup>All quotes from FIFA 1908, 2.

<sup>98</sup>Along the same lines, 'Austria proposed to recognize Finland provisionally until a Russian Association had been formed' (*Ibid.*), and the admission of the Czech/Bohemian association was revoked as 'only the Austrian F. A. [was to] be recognized in that country' (*Ibid.*, 4).

<sup>99</sup>FIFA 1910.

<sup>100</sup>This practice proves challenging whenever a political unit is recognized only by some members of international society.



the scope and domain of the authority of national football associations became closely modelled on international society's institutions of sovereignty and territoriality, while FIFA membership became increasingly seen as an indicator for being a member of international society.

Not only were member associations legally equal, but any association that joined FIFA could also claim internal and external 'sovereignty' over the territory it represented. It thereby excluded potential competitors and alternative approaches to organizing football.<sup>101</sup> These alternative organizational forms were not merely hypothetical. For example, the application of the Amateur Football Association to be admitted to FIFA as a second English association was rejected<sup>102</sup> and workers' football teams and associations were excluded from participating in the FIFA system even though they organized not only their own national leagues but even international matches among national teams.<sup>103</sup> As such, the basic membership rules and practices of FIFA not only reproduced key aspects of sovereignty and territoriality, but also linked nationalism (as a collective identity) to specific states.

Once FIFA had become the principle organization for international football, the representational logic and the symbiotic relationship between FIFA and international society made it outstandingly difficult for any competitors to emerge. This held true, even though FIFA (as a private organization) could not claim any official or unique mandate that would have formalized its monopolistic position.<sup>104</sup> The exclusive and exclusionary character of this setup was not only a consequence of membership as such. It was further reinforced by the provision that FIFA had to be asked for permission if members wanted to play a non-member, thereby effectively marginalizing non-members and generating network effects.<sup>105</sup>

Historically, membership criteria and admission practices could have developed differently. FIFA could have granted membership to non-territorially bounded associations of people representing political views or different professions. Similarly, privately owned associations or associations linked to transnational co-operations could have become members. The role of football today would be different if it had admitted them, and it is through these exclusions that a mutually supportive relationship between FIFA's organizational structure and the (contested) membership of international society emerged.

The consequences of these early membership decisions are still visible today. The current FIFA (2018) statutes (Section 11, Paragraph 1) stipulate that 'only one association shall be recognised as a member association in each country'<sup>106</sup>

<sup>101</sup>There are limits to the legal equality of member associations considering the privileged role of the four British associations within IFAB to determine the laws of the game.

<sup>102</sup>FIFA 1908, 3.

<sup>103</sup>Frommhamgen 2011; Wheeler 1978.

<sup>104</sup>Nevertheless, alternatives to FIFA continue to emerge. For example since 2013, the Confederation of Independent Football Associations has organized the World Football Cup with teams from 'nations, de-facto nations, regions, minority peoples and sports isolated territories' (CONIFA 2017).

<sup>105</sup>For example, when the English Amateur Football Association was not admitted to FIFA, the Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques (USFSA), the French founding member of FIFA, left FIFA, as it wanted to continue its relationship with the Amateur Football Association. The remaining FIFA members in turn faced the problem of having to sever their relations with USFSA.

<sup>106</sup>See FIFA 2018.

and mention the British case as an anomaly (Section 11, Paragraph 5). Moreover, they point out that FIFA membership requires membership in one of the six regional confederations. The ‘one association per country logic’ is consequently reinforced at the level of regional confederations who also only accept one association per country – see for example the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) statutes Article 5(1), or the Confederation of African Football (CAF) statutes Article 4(4).<sup>107</sup>

While FIFA statutes define a country as ‘an independent state recognized by the international community’ (Definition 6), CAF statutes do not define the term.<sup>108</sup> UEFA statutes link membership even more directly to the UN system, as member associations have to be based ‘in a country which is recognised as an independent state by the majority of members of the United Nations’ (Article 5(1)).<sup>109</sup> Finally, FIFA statutes stipulate that an ‘association in a region which has not yet gained independence may, with the authorisation of the member association in the country on which it is dependent, also apply for admission to FIFA’ (Section 11, Paragraph 6).<sup>110</sup> This acknowledges that membership in international society is not static and recognizes the importance of decolonization processes. But it simultaneously gives a veto to existing national associations. At present, there are only a few UN members who are not affiliated with FIFA and/or one of its regional associations (e.g. Palau, Monaco, and Vatican City).<sup>111</sup>

Since the member associations are also responsible for organizing football at the national level, it is common practice that national leagues are almost exclusively organized along territorial boundaries. This reproduces and naturalizes territoriality, nationality, and sovereignty in the every-day experience (of citizens). There are only a few examples in which football leagues include teams from other states and do not follow a strict national logic.<sup>112</sup> Such cases are readily recognized as anomalies, as the national logic underlying the organization of football is upheld even where language barriers are low and organizational barriers or efficiency criteria cannot explain the existence of small national leagues.<sup>113</sup>

Additionally, national Cups (e.g. the FA Cup in England) integrate national leagues with clubs of varying strength, while excluding from competition clubs from

<sup>107</sup>See UEFA 2018 and CAF 2017.

<sup>108</sup>See FIFA 2018.

<sup>109</sup>See UEFA 2018. UEFA statutes mention the British associations, the Faroe Islands, and Gibraltar as exceptions from membership criteria (Article 69(1)).

<sup>110</sup>See FIFA 2018.

<sup>111</sup>Membership questions are not always clear cut or non-political. For example not all associations who are members of regional confederations are also FIFA members (12 associations) and there are associations who are FIFA members, but not UN members (20 associations). The latter are carefully negotiated exemptions from membership criteria and practices. They include the ones mentioned before (the four British associations, the Faroe Islands, and Gibraltar) as well as Hong Kong, Macau, Chinese Taipei (Taiwan), the British Virgin Islands, the US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Palestine.

<sup>112</sup>For example, the AS Monaco in the French Ligue 1, the FC Vaduz (Liechtenstein) in the Swiss Raiffeisen Super League. Foreign teams compete in the Singapore Premier League, for example the DPMM FC from Brunei. More prominently, clubs from both the USA and Canada compete in Major League Soccer in North America.

<sup>113</sup>Suggestions for multinational leagues (e.g. an ASEAN Super League, or the fusion of the leagues of Belgium and the Netherlands) have been made in the past.

abroad. In these contests, integration follows a national logic and not one of comparable capabilities on the pitch. The national character of leagues and competitions is not only the result of FIFA rules and practices. In many countries 'the nation-state contributes significantly to football's national regulation and growth, for example through financial support, infrastructural investments, and provision of security at fixtures and tournaments'.<sup>114</sup>

The fundamental role of 'the national' (and the link between nationalism as a collective identity and the state) is not undermined by competitions above the national level for which teams qualify. Here regionalism, akin to regionalism in international society, is reproduced visibly (e.g. UEFA Europa League, UEFA Champions League, Copa Libertadores, or CAF Champions League), while national quotas play an important role. Above the regional level, respective regional champions now meet in the FIFA Club World Cup. In a fundamental sense, football contributes to the development of national identities which are specifically linked to territorially demarcated sovereign states, while reproducing regionalism.<sup>115</sup>

While it is national teams that participate in the World Cup, a regional logic plays an important role during the qualification phase as well. National associations participate in regional qualifications that determine who participates in the finals. Regional quotas secure diversity and ensure truly global games. But this form of global representation had to be fought for and can be seen as part of the larger struggle for decolonization. After FIFA's emergence in Europe, associations from the largely decolonized Americas joined quickly, whereas most associations from Asia and Africa followed much later.<sup>116</sup> Joining FIFA became an important symbol for possessing political independence like other members of the UN system. This development parallels Wight's observation that admission to the Greek system of states took the form of admission to Pan-Hellenic games.<sup>117</sup>

In principle, FIFA admission provided equal membership and voting rights. In practice, some inherited privileges of the early FIFA members remained. These led, for example, to open conflict in the context of the qualifications to the 1966 World Cup. The issue concerned FIFA's requirement that African teams enter a 'play-off [...] against nations in Asia to secure one place'.<sup>118</sup> This induced CAF to boycott the World Cup and led FIFA to revise the rules for the qualifications to the 1970 World Cup in which CAF received its own place. These unfair and excluding qualification practices demonstrate, however, that equal regional representation can be undermined by historical privileges and meritocratic notions of team strength. Partly as a consequence of increasing pressure for equal geographic representation, the total number of teams admitted to the finals has steadily increased. But in 2018, UEFA still held 14 out of 32 seats, whereas CAF held five. At the same time, it has to be noted that due to expanding membership, European associations can no longer control FIFA decisions.

<sup>114</sup>Giulianotti and Robertson 2012, 222, referring to Giulianotti 1994.

<sup>115</sup>On football and identity, see Tomlinson and Young 2006; Goig 2007; Podoler 2007; Gibbons 2014.

<sup>116</sup>There are exceptions to this general trend as the first non-European association to join was the South African Football Association (1910).

<sup>117</sup>Wight 1977, 86.

<sup>118</sup>Cleland 2015, 43.

Football's infrastructure and the prolonged qualification phase underscore that world sport events are not one-shot games. During the years between World Cups more than '800 qualification matches are played across every continent'.<sup>119</sup> As such, the World Cup is an ongoing event. But the World Cup finals remain the festive culmination of the quadrennial global football cycle and we will turn to this tournament phase now.

### **The World Cup finals**

The World Cup finals are global secular festivals that are difficult to overlook. Millions of tickets are sold and billions of people around the globe watch the finals matches, be it privately at home, with friends in bars, or at designated parties. Moreover, cities all around the world install massive screens to accommodate the endless array of spectators.

The 2014 World Cup in Brazil, according to FIFA statistics, reached about 3.2 billion viewers, with the final alone drawing roughly 1 billion spectators.<sup>120</sup> The 2018 World Cup in Russia attracted even more, with about 3.572 billion viewers. The final, in this case, being watched by about 1.12 billion people. Overall, 3.032 million tickets were issued for the World Cup in Russia.<sup>121</sup> While these numbers refer to the men's World Cup that has long been perceived as the quintessential football format, the women's World Cup has also gained increasing and widespread attention.<sup>122</sup> The finals are truly mass-mobilizing and draw an enormous amount of attention and passionate engagement.

Not only are these competitions organized as matches between national football associations, national symbols are omnipresent. Individuals self-identify with these to highly unusual degrees by, for example, wearing national emblems, waving flags, decorating cars, painting faces, or singing the national anthem while marching through the streets. Especially the fans who travel to the host cities invest their time and money – in order to support their teams and often to represent their nations. The fact that we are not puzzled by this synchronized global behavior speaks to the naturalization of the nationalization of world sport events and the link between national identity and sovereign territorial statehood.

It is precisely through world sport events that this link is enacted and established. These events simultaneously take place at multiple levels creating recursive structures which provide for positive self-identification<sup>123</sup> and a sense of 'we / us' to be experienced emotionally. Recursive structures make it possible that nations watch and perceive themselves. For example, TV spectators in nationally decorated rooms witness spectators in national jerseys in the stadium while both representations of the nation follow the national team compete. Moreover, the team members refer back to the nation at home and in the stadium in various ways, for example in interviews. The fact that the broadcasting rights are commonly sold for national markets additionally contributes to the national framing of this global event. At

<sup>119</sup>Giulianotti and Robertson 2012, 217.

<sup>120</sup>FIFA 2015.

<sup>121</sup>FIFA 2019a, 48, 58.

<sup>122</sup>Women's World Cup 2019.

<sup>123</sup>See Elias and Scotson 1994.

base, the finals tend to temporarily homogenize the nation state, because they allow the signification of a natural unitary quality that is reflected in ‘the one national team’ supported by its fans. Centrally, this applies not only to one’s own nation. Rather, everyone witnesses *that others stand for nations too*. These nations are displayed as being mutually exclusive (territorially defined), but of the same kind (sovereign and legally equal) and comparable.

Most importantly, this ludic and festive event not only reinforces the ‘naturalness’ of the sovereign territorial nation state, but also that states compete with each other at the global level on the basis of shared values and common rules. In Bull’s terminology, such an event embodies the primary goals of international society as well as the rules of coexistence. Moreover, it reaffirms that competition can be carried out in a manner that does not escalate into conflict. It is also in this sense that we see a direct link between world sport events and the reproduction of international society (as sovereign territorial nation states managing conflict and cooperation on the basis of shared goals, rules, and institutions).

Importantly, however, the shared values that are communicated in the context of the World Cup also go beyond those that are typically associated with international society. This brings us back to an issue that was discussed above, namely to what extent the rights of individuals also play a role and whether they challenge the constitutional idea of world order as an international order. While there are various ways in which values and norms are communicated in the context of the World Cup finals (e.g. banners against racism), the FIFA statutes and documents can help to address these questions.

The values and norms outlined in the FIFA statutes and documents<sup>124</sup> can be understood as argumentative resources of normative world society. They are formulated in universalist terms and underscore unity in diversity. As such, the tendency to homogenize and naturalize the sovereign territorial nation state is accompanied by a seemingly countervailing force. Beyond agreement on the formal rules of football and a notion of shared sportsmanship (fair play), world sport events draw on semantics of globality, unity (one world), common humanity (anti-discrimination and anti-racism), and even sustainability.<sup>125</sup> Sections 3, 4, and 5 of the statutes refer explicitly to human rights, non-discrimination, equality, and the promotion of friendly relations. Section 4 for example states that

Discrimination of any kind against a country, private person or group of people on account of race, skin color, ethnic, national or social origin, gender, disability, language, religion, political opinion or any other opinion, wealth, birth or any other status, sexual orientation or any other reason is strictly prohibited and punishable by suspension or expulsion.<sup>126</sup>

This shows that football not only enacts practices linked to sovereignty, territoriality, and nationalism. It also draws on specific notions of cosmopolitanism. As

<sup>124</sup>FIFA 2018, 2019b.

<sup>125</sup>FIFA 2019b.

<sup>126</sup>FIFA 2018, 7. On John Ruggie’s contribution to the drafting process of FIFA’s Human Rights policy, see FIFA 2016.

discussed above, these have been associated with world society and have the potential to conflict with pluralist notions of international society. It is in this sense rather than simply because non-state actors play a key role in the organization of world sport events, that specific institutions of international society might be challenged.

But importantly, the values articulated by FIFA are not presented as an actual challenge to the status quo. There are two reasons for this. First, human rights and cosmopolitan values are discussed in very general terms. They are operationalized as vague membership criteria, and they are situated in the broader context of ensuring rule-governed competition (which could be differentiated from discrimination, that suggests a permanent hierarchy that is not based on merit). Human rights violations by national authorities are consequently not necessarily seen as a hindrance to participating in the World Cup.<sup>127</sup> In other words, world sport events (re)enact international society, rather than performing alternative forms of global organization – that would be more in line with notions of integrated world society.

The second reason why these argumentative resources of normative world society do not challenge the status quo, is linked to their (allegedly) non-political nature and that they are articulated by a private actor. Sport leaders continuously underscore their non-political agenda and appeal to statespersons and football players to not mix sports and politics. FIFA statutes highlight that ‘FIFA remains neutral in matters of politics and religion’ but that exceptions ‘may be made with regard to matters affected by FIFA’s statutory objectives’ (Section 4(2)).<sup>128</sup> *FIFA Stadium Safety and Security Regulations*<sup>129</sup> state that the ‘promotion or announcement of political or religious messages or any other political or religious actions, inside or in the immediate vicinity of the stadium, by any means, is strictly prohibited before, during and after matches’ (Article, 60(1)).

This does obviously not imply that World Cups (or other football events) are *actually* non-political. Quite to the contrary. Take the much-discussed early example of the second World Cup in 1934 which was used by Mussolini to present his fascist regime. More recently, we have seen highly politicized debates concerning the World Cups in South Africa, Brazil, Russia, and the upcoming one in Qatar. ‘The stadium has [indeed] always been political’.<sup>130</sup> This becomes immediately visible in the boundary drawing processes that determine whether actions by players or spectators are deemed political or not. In other words, while football is highly political indeed, its transformative potential is radically circumscribed and limited to unpredicted events that unfold in terms of the rules of the game – on and off the pitch. Most centrally, the cosmopolitan values articulated by FIFA are not understood as being in conflict with the values accepted by the members of international society. Quite to the contrary, these values are deemed to be unpolitical because they represent the broadly shared and accepted values of states. As such, the values

<sup>127</sup>However, at times these norms and values have been enforced in the past. In particular, the South African association was expelled for discriminatory policies in 1976.

<sup>128</sup>FIFA 2018.

<sup>129</sup>FIFA 2012.

<sup>130</sup>Guschwan 2016, 388.

expressed by FIFA are all about the existing and not about an alternative world order.

While the World Cups are status quo oriented in the sense outlined above, they also stabilize world order as international order in a temporal sense. The iterated nature of the World Cups, not only leads to a continuous process of organizing the next events, but also projects international society into the future, by generating and normalizing the expectation that the World Cup will take place again. As such, the master primary institution of sites and festivals can be argued to symbolically stabilize international society through creating continuity and normalizing expectations about the future. It does so by allowing for the ludic renegotiation of positions, since future World Cups will provide participants with the opportunity to improve on their results in a new round of rule-governed competition. The World Cup thereby stabilizes international order through providing opportunities for change and development within circumscribed rules. In doing so, it performs a legitimate vision of the world.<sup>131</sup>

As such, international football can be understood as a stage on which diverse actors perform the segmentation of the global in terms of sovereign territorial nation states competing on the basis of shared values and rules. This specific arrangement is made emotionally experienceable as the natural order of things.

### Conclusion: football's contribution and its responsibility

We have taken an unconventional look at the role which world sport events play. While scholarship traditionally focuses on how these types of events impact individual states politically and economically, we studied the role they play in the complex (re)production of international society. We thereby moved beyond highlighting the role of secondary institutions for the development of primary institutions,<sup>132</sup> or the role which world societal actors play as norm-entrepreneurs.<sup>133</sup> Rather, we argued that they can play a constitutive role in reproducing central primary institutions and international society, which manifests as rule-governed competition on the basis of shared values. Doing so required that we moved from an actor-based approach to a practice-based perspective. We chose to focus on the performativity of actions and the role these play for specific social arrangements. While this opens up the possibility that actors beyond states (both as individuals and as collective actors) can participate in international society in an affirmative manner, this analytic move does not undermine the distinction between first- and second-order societies – but it does problematize their strict ontological separateness.

Our approach led us to conceptualize world sport events as a derivative primary institution embedded in the master primary institution of (secular) sites and festivals. These events naturalize sovereignty, territoriality, and nationality (not only nationalism in the abstract). At the same time, they perform international society in a ludic and festive way that makes international society tangible and emotionally

<sup>131</sup>Linklater 2019, 938

<sup>132</sup>Spandler 2015; Friedner Parratt 2017.

<sup>133</sup>Falkner and Buzan 2019.



experienceable. Most importantly, these acts of reproduction, are driven by a secondary institution of political world society that mobilizes billions of people and draws on argumentative resources located at the intersection of normative world society and the legitimacy norms of international society. From a practice-based perspective, international institutions reveal a hybrid character in terms of actor-type participation and it becomes perceivable that world societal actors can even play a focal role therein.

While the concept of 'world' could be performed in ways that challenge the legitimacy of the nation state and international society, the play that is being performed in the context of the World Cups naturalizes the following: first, and anomalies notwithstanding, humanity is segmented into nations that exist as territorially defined sovereign states. Second, humanity organized in this way is characterized by competition that can be rule-governed, and peaceful. In short, the World Cups underscore that a society of states is a natural, feasible, and desirable form of world order. Counterfactually speaking, football does not stage world politics as an epic struggle between capital and labor, as a competition between transnational corporations, as a society of individuals, as a playing field of dynastic families, or as an arena for humans who run the risk of destroying planet earth.

While we focused on football as the largest single-sport event, subsequent work could look into other world sport events such as the Olympic Games. Moreover, we hope that our approach contributes to opening the door for studying the (re)production of other primary institutions and draws attention to the ways in which normative and political world society feed into standards of legitimacy of international society.

But beyond the relevance of our argument for English School theorizing, our shift in perspective raises a set of novel questions that concern the role and responsibility of FIFA. Centrally, it adds another dimension to the importance of addressing FIFA's (corruption) scandals.<sup>134</sup> This issue is traditionally discussed in terms of domestic laws and regulations. But corrupt FIFA practices, can now also be seen as entailing symbolic and reputational costs for international society as a whole. To the extent that FIFA plays a key role for primary institutions of international society and in this sense performs quasi-public diplomacy on behalf of international society, FIFA cannot simply draw on its status as a 'private actor' in order to prevent interference and involvement by state actors or other regulators. Rather, FIFA should be particularly transparent in fulfilling its legal obligations. Viewing FIFA as a key actor in reproducing international society adds a layer of responsibility for FIFA that has so far not been considered.

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<sup>134</sup>See Kistner 2012; Cleland 2015, 48.

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