ONE PEOPLE, ONE NATION, ONE FLAG: PATRIOTIC UNDERTONES IN 2014 FIFA WORLD CUP TV FOOTBALL COMMENTARY

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between sports and patriotism is defined by a country’s historical involvements, present-day preoccupations and the prevailing beliefs held by the general public. Football commentators employ this background to fashion their narration according to the spectators’ patriotic tendencies. This paper scrutinizes patriotic expression in the 2014 FIFA World Cup as discernible in the match commentaries. I contend that acts of patriotism demonstrated take the form of positive, constructive or extreme chauvinism. Patriotism finds expression in the exhibition of national colors and the veneration of important personalities and national days. I further argue that the commentators’ interpretation of the matches is influenced by the patriotic predilections of the participating teams. In addition, commentators employ various literary forms to adorn the exposition of patriotism with drama and spectacle. I conclude that the use of these artistic devices in the presentation of a discernible thematic concern transforms football commentary into narrative.

Key Words: 2014 FIFA World Cup, patriotism, narrator, signifying, chauvinism, ideology, herd instinct, egocentricism.
1.0 Introduction
Many narratives contain patriotic undertows in their thematic preoccupations. As a form of narrative, football commentary incorporates an overwhelming presentation of patriotic expression. The 2014 FIFA World Cup TV commentaries, the focus of this study, feature elaborate public demonstrations of patriotic predispositions, such as the playing of national anthems before kick offs, the exhibition of national colors majorly in the national dress and flag, and the veneration of important personalities and national days. Patriotism manifests itself in the commentaries either as egocentricity and bad faith, or as a validation of a country’s virtues and obligations to humanity. Both aspects of patriotism are palpable in the commentaries analyzed. While the sheer intensity of fervor roused by patriotism can be susceptible to malevolence, it can also promote equality, universality, and the enjoyment of basic rights by all people. Displays of patriotism would frequently catch the fancy of the commentators and the cameramen in this World Cup. Likewise, the patriotic preferences of the competing teams would sometimes shape the commentators’ interpretation of the matches. Thus patriotic expression, in its diverse forms, is a major thematic concern in the commentaries analyzed.

1.1 Background to the Study
Sports and patriotism have long been interconnected, as stated by Dyreson (2013). This explains why national anthems are played at the commencement of games, flags raised and triumphant teams hosted by heads of state. Two aspects of patriotism find expression in the commentaries analyzed in this study. First, football as a form of popular culture can provide a key vehicle for the articulation of national identity, universal human values such as equality, fairness and respect for human rights. This can be manifested by way of regional pride, local patriotism or national belonging. Secondly, football can expose numerous instances where nationalistic values and emotions are tarnished by chauvinism, vengeance and injustice. When Leo Tolstoy’s contention
that patriotism leads to war is added to this proposition, the predictable outcome is a triumvirate that comprises sports, war and patriotism.

Sports can represent many positive values of patriotism. Nathanson (1993) has singled out equality, universality, and the entitlement of basic human rights as aspects of positive patriotism. Nussbaum (2013) is emphatic that universal human values should be incorporated into patriotism. Thus both Nathanson and Nussbaum further an inclusive brand of patriotism that respects and promotes people’s rights and welfare, irrespective of race, nationality or creed. Positive patriotism, therefore, shares with postcolonial theory what Chibber (2013) calls “the commitment to challenging and questioning the practices and consequences of domination and subordination.” Pratt (1998) acknowledges sports’ virtuous feature of getting participants engrossed in an experience that is beyond their commonplace, self-centered involvements. This kind of patriotism is a key objective of 2014 FIFA World Cup, as propagated by the match commentaries.

Nevertheless, the football commentaries reveal various negative attributes of patriotism, as well as sports’ close affiliation to war. Both war and sports have a tendency to create a distinct out-group or “enemy,” which may result in exclusiveness, xenophobia and racism. For instance, racism in football has been a subject of extensive concern since the late seventies with the emergence of black players at all levels of football. During many football matches, xenophobic exhibitions such as racist chanting, banana throwing, name-calling and the writing of hate mail letters aimed at these players became commonplace.

Hoch (1972) and Phillips (1993), as quoted by Nixon & Frey (1996), point to a close relationship between war and aggressive confrontations meant for sporting purposes. They point out that there are some societies where war has been waged within the parameters of sportsmanship.
Equally, Arms, Russell, & Sandilands (1987) are key proponents of what they call “sport as substitute for war.” Their supposition, however, does little to prove that sports ease the aggression levels experienced in fighting. According to them, even though sports activities present very low mortality, they nonetheless generate exceedingly charged and competitive atmospheres. Sports activities, therefore, are perceived as a harmless method of settling modern territorial conflicts, thus supplanting modern technological warfare. Payne (1995) concurs, maintaining that there has existed a relationship between sports, patriotism and war. The world has become exceedingly competitive, and so victory determines what the society considers virtuous, while defeat is considered malevolent. Countries pursue success as a means of escape from dishonor and ignominy. Thus, in most sports one clear-cut winner must come out. According to Pratt, both war and sports ascertain a clearly identifiable out-group or “enemy.” Mangan (2004) contends that in order to render competitions between different teams noteworthy, deliberate efforts are made to cultivate frenzied rivalries. War has been noted for its ability to defuse political and social tensions. This, according to Epstein (1985) parallels sports’ capacity to unite people for a common goal. Heinegg (2002) observes that the stakes in sporting events are not as obvious as in war, although they act as if the results in the field of play will lead to a permanent resolution as is expected in the aftermath of a war. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate how these aspects of patriotism are portrayed in 2014 FIFA World Cup commentaries.

2.0 Literature Review

The 2014 FIFA World Cup commentaries are replete with allusions to patriotism. As stated by Peffley (1990), patriotism involves the love of one’s country though the choice of the phrase “love of country” is susceptible to a myriad of elucidations. Coutant (1997) interprets “love of
country” to embrace the act of putting the country’s welfare above self-interests. This calls for a singular affection for the country, a personal identification with the country and self-sacrifice for the preferment of the country’s welfare, according to Theiss-Morse (2009). Gomberg (2002) describes patriotism as “identification with, and a special concern for the wellbeing of our own country and our compatriots.” The implication here is that nationalism leads to patriotism.

Koch (1996), quoting Fletcher (1995), calls patriotism an “attitude of sentiment and devotion” toward a state or nation. This expressive attachment is a result of early training and affinities. Taylor (1997) is in agreement, equally laying emphasis on the emotional attachment to a country. Patriotism is premised on what he calls “identification with others in a particular common enterprise.” Taylor maintains that this bonding may involve commitment to friendship or family ties or an altruistic dedication. Friendship or family attachments are specific, while altruism necessitates commitment to all people. Taylor asserts that patriotism comprises ties that bind together a group of people that share emotional loyalties based on a “common political entity.” Fletcher holds that patriotic ties in a republic are especially compelling given that people are roped together by their “common history.” Nathanson (1993) is of the view that people are likely to associate patriotism with a strong passion that bonds citizens in support of their country, the country itself and what it stands for.

Over the centuries, communities have entertained ethnocentric attitudes as well as the pervasive notion of the supremacy of one’s own group. For instance, Jews have considered themselves as “chosen people”. Americans have repeatedly referred to their nation as “the greatest on earth.” Prior to World War II, Germans maintained a sense of national superiority fashioned within the confines of Nazism. The French lay claim to linguistic and cultural ascendency. Similarly, the
ancient Greeks defined their presumed superior status by labelling non-Greeks “barbarians.” Kobtzeff (2016) asserts that some country names smack of bigotry. The name “China,” for instance, denotes “central country”, implying that the rest of the world emanates from it, while “Japan” indicates “the place where the sun rises.” People who insinuate that their own nation may not be as exceptional as is professed are treated with resentment. Political leaders whip this public vanity to gain political mileage. Payne (1995) comments on the wider cultural framework of sports, arguing that a combination of a country’s historical experiences, the contemporary preoccupations and the dominant beliefs held by the populace define the effects of sports on international relations.

Scholars have always held divergent views on the intrinsic worth of patriotism on the one hand, and its inherently perilous potential on the other. Levin (2010) observes that while some academics acknowledge patriotism as a positive trend, others find it responsible for what he calls “reduction of democratic values of tolerance and inclusion.” Other critics associate it with egocentricity, bad faith and even war. Proponents of patriotism, however, view it as a validation of a country’s virtues and a compelling obligation to humanity. Interestingly, both aspects of patriotism are palpable in the football commentaries analyzed in this study.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

This study views football commentary as a form of narrative, and so analysis was carried out within the precincts of postmodern narratology. The term narratology was invented by Tzvetan Todorov in 1969, and it was developed out of structuralism and Russian formalism. At times, narratology is referred to as the study of narrative. According to Groden, Kreiswirth, and Szeman (2012), narratology aims at defining the narrative-specific conventions governing narrative
production and presentation. Narratology also delves into what makes one form of narrative differ from another, and in so doing it incorporates various narrative forms.

Narratology explores the main narrative tools of structure that appear in narrative media. This exploration makes reference to concepts which are shared by all media and forms, and other models which describe specific forms within given media. Narratology employs the "constructionist” viewpoint which embraces the social nature of the construction of meaning. Thus, the representational procedure rather than the producer or the item being represented facilitates the manifestation of meaning. Narratology regards story and discourse as the most basic features of narrative representation. As stated by Genette (1988), in its formal bearing, narratology indicates the study of narrative discourse; while in its thematic form it connotes an inquiry into the progression of events and actions associated with this discourse. Postmodern narratology, in particular, allows for the expansion of the narratological scope to accommodate the narratological analysis of other domains that are beyond the traditional media (Nunning 2005). Thus football commentary finds space within the confines of postmodern narratology.

4.0 Methodology

The study adopted the analytical research design. The researcher analyzed recorded television commentaries of four crucial 2014 FIFA World Cup matches broadcast by BBC and ESPN. The commentaries were recorded from SuperSport; a South African group of television channels owned by Multichoice and carried on the DStv satellite platform. A television set connected to a satellite dish, a DVD recorder and blank digital versatile discs were used to record live transmissions of the selected commentaries. The researcher highlighted and coded specific phrases, sentences, paragraphs and ideas that explicitly signified religious expression. Eventually, the researcher critically analyzed the pre-stated objective through a systematic
assessment of the coded material. Narrative, a qualitative data presentation format was used to present data collected; with direct quotes and paraphrases used to support and illustrate the stated objective.

5.0 Results and Discussion
As the literature reviewed demonstrates, numerous definitions of patriotism have been advanced. All of them, however, cite a fervent and unwavering love for one’s country as a requisite ingredient. This “love of country” involves putting the country’s welfare above self-interests. In the Brazil versus Croatia match, for instance, the narrator says that “Brazil is behind the team – to wipe out the memories of 1950 World Cup when Brazil failed in the final hurdle against Uruguay.” This act of patriotism is portrayed against the background of what he calls “the troubled build-up to the competition” and “resentments.” He is referring to demonstrations against the massive resource mobilization in the preparation of venues for the tournament. A further show of patriotism is displayed by the team coach, Filipe Scolari who, according to the narrator, opts to remain with the team “despite the devastating news of the loss of his nephew in a car crash earlier in the week.”

5.1 Positive Patriotism
Nathanson (1993) singles out equality, universality, and an entitlement of basic human rights as important aspects of positive patriotism. Nussbaum (2013) is emphatic that universal human values should be incorporated into patriotism. Thus both Nathanson and Nussbaum further an inclusive brand of patriotism that respects and promotes all people’s rights and welfare. This kind of patriotism is a key objective of 2014 FIFA World Cup, as propagated by the match commentaries. For instance, each match is preceded by a brief anti-discrimination ceremony in which the captains of the competing teams, on behalf of their respective teams and countries,
undertake to combat discrimination of all type. Positive patriotism borrows from postcolonial theory the commitment to defy practices that border on supremacy and subservience.

The match between Germany and France presents an ideal scenario of the use of football in the fight against discrimination. The role of the narrator in the anti-discrimination declaration is extremely vital since the two captains use their native languages rather than English. After some explanation is made on the PA system, the narrator presents the translated version to the viewing audience:

“...on behalf of the national teams they (the captains) wholeheartedly reject discrimination on any grounds including race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin and religion. Using the power of football they can eliminate discrimination from our sport and our societies at large.” Philip Lahm for Germany specifically appeals “to everybody watching us wherever you are in the world to help us remove discrimination from our society and integrate everyone in our game. It is only together that we can succeed.”

After the declaration, there is a photo session where players from both sides pose behind a banner showing the words “Say no to Racism.” The relevance of the anti-discrimination formality cannot be overemphasized, given the racial, religious and sporting experiences of the two nations. According to Reilly, Kaufman, & Bodino (2003), Germany has been accused of racism against people of African descent. The country’s colonial past has also been defined by Nazism, anti-Semitism and extreme far-right rhetoric. Thus practices like racial profiling, racist stereotyping and hate crimes against people of African descent have been rampant in Germany. This form of discrimination extends to football and other sporting activities.

A sizable number of players included in the French national team trace their roots in Algeria, Senegal, Ghana, and Martinique. Thus race relations issues and discrimination have been fascinating aspects of France’s game, including the 1998 World Cup triumph by a team inspired by players such as Zinedine Zidane, Thierry Henry, and Lilian Thuram, all of whom did not
typify a white Frenchman. This dynamism created racial tensions, with some white Frenchmen questioning whether the team embodies French identity. For instance, Georges Freches, a French socialist once stated: "I am ashamed of this country. Soon (the national football team) will be eleven black people when it would be normal to have three or four." The words compelled President Jacques Chirac to remind the French people that the constitution guarantees the equality of all citizens.

In German football, racism is much subtler than in France. Instead of monkey chanting, for instance, codes have been used. The commonest one is number 88, representing HH or Heil Hitler. The words were used as a greeting in Nazi Germany to accompany a salute which signaled subservience to Adolf Hitler and the glorification of the German nation. Recently, Alexander Gauland of Germany's right-wing Alternative fur Deutschland (AfD) party said that he would "not want to have Boateng as a neighbor." He is referring to Jerome Boateng, a German professional footballer born to a Ghanaian father and a German mother, and playing as a defender for German club Bayern Munich and the Germany national team. It is against this background, therefore, that the two captains make the anti-discrimination declarations. And so the avowals, made as acts of positive patriotism, are indisputably perceived as an opportunity for the two countries to make amends for past injustices and to rebrand themselves.

5.2 Constructive Patriotism versus Chauvinism
Any aversion for the criticism of one’s nation is a form of what Staub (1997) calls blind patriotism. However, Staub propagates a brand of patriotism characterized by critical loyalty and questioning. He terms this form of patriotism, propelled by a yearning for positive change, constructive patriotism. Constructive patriotism integrates the devotion for one’s country with
reverence for universally binding moral conventions. On the other hand, an abuse of patriotic principles and feelings can result in chauvinism.

Demonstrations of constructive patriotism emerge in the Germany versus France match. The narrator describes the French as rejuvenated, “having seen that the whole of France is behind them.” He also says that six months before, the French press had declared the team “probably the worst French side ever.” This disparagement of the French team by fellow Frenchmen can be construed by some as a blatant display of unpatriotic journalism. However, in this case, the French press has been compelled by patriotism to demand from the players the attainment of lofty standards in their game. This early criticism seems to have helped since, according to the narrator, things seem to have changed now and the French people are exercising their patriotism by rallying behind the team. The narrator also mentions the DVD of the French coach Didier Deschamps in the dressing room at half time of the final match of 1998 World Cup. Deschamps is shown pressing and trying to bring the players together, a demonstration of patriotism that the narrator describes as “absolutely brilliant.”

Constructive patriotism is also inferred during the tournament’s opening match between Brazil and Croatia. The narrator says that “it has been a troubled built-up to the world cup – riots and resentments over the hosting.” The tournament came at a time when Brazil was experiencing an acute economic regression, prompting a national outcry over the massive financial resources allocated to the preparation of the needed infrastructure. This is in line with Tolstoy’s conviction that patriotic ideals and sentiments can be used to sanction policies that are detrimental to the welfare of the citizens. The rioters are, therefore, exercising constructive patriotism by denouncing what they deem to be the government’s belligerent policies. This is contrasted with the blind patriotism exhibited by Filipe Scolari, Brazil’s coach who in an interview had
announced: “This is our time, if there is a team better than us … they have to show it.” During the Brazil versus Colombia match, the narrator quotes Scolari telling those who appear to question his team’s chances of winning the World Cup “to go to hell” and claiming that Brazil “has one hand on the trophy.” This egotistical patriotism is however weighed against what the narrator calls a “nail-biting progression for the host nation.”

The Brazilian fans are similarly imbued with this unsighted patriotic passion. According to the narrator, “everyone expects them to win; the crowd is on their side.” And when Brazil scores their second goal he asserts that the spectators “came to see Brazil win and celebrate Brazil win and now they are winning.” Such an attitude, as Tolstoy puts it, can lead to a misapplication of patriotic principles and feelings, since the patriots involved may attempt to enhance the interests of their country using dastardly means. Nathanson calls this form of extreme patriotism chauvinism or simply bad patriotism.

Bad patriotism can precipitate acts of exclusivity, xenophobia and racism. During football matches, these acts are commonly exhibited through exploits such as racist chanting, banana throwing and name-calling. The commentators are alive to this malevolent spinoff of patriotism right at the onset of the tournament. In the opening match between Croatia and Brazil, for instance, the narrator says: “Dani Alves made the headlines when amid racist chants during Barcelona versus Virareal a banana was thrown at him … he picked it and ate it, and treated those fans with the contempt that they deserved.” The narrator is referring to the Brazilian defender who plays club football for Barcelona FC in Spain. Since Alves is a black player plying his trade in a predominantly white society, the fans were clearly ethnically profiling him. Effects of herd instinct and intense patriotic fervor had clearly impaired the fans’ capability for rational thinking. The act of throwing bananas at black players, usually accompanied by monkey chants,
is viewed as a powerful racist act since it subconsciously reinforces the deep-rooted European tendency to associate Africans with primates. Alves, and to some degree the narrator, plays on the racist construction of Africans as apes. Alves’ action amounts to “signifying” - the propensity to talk around a subject in order to render a hardnosed oppressor powerless. According to Campbell (2013), signifying involves the use of discourse to assert cultural identity in the face of the imposition of cultural dominance and oppression. In the African American oral tradition, the signifying monkey is an archetypical mythic figure from Africa that is capable of duping more powerful animals using his verbal dexterity. Thus Alves’ reaction deconstructs the white, racist idea of blackness so that “monkey,” rather than represent inferiority, stands for an individual who can exert his verbal or paralinguistic skills to prick the conscience of his more socially, politically and economically empowered counterparts.

The narrator disparages the crowd behavior by acclaiming Alves for treating the fans “with the contempt that they deserved.” And the fact that Alves “made the headlines” attests to the fact that despite the racist chants, the broader Spanish society embraces a kind of patriotism that is both inclusive and considerate to other people’s rights. This, however, should not surpass the role played by the milieu of the match to influence the commentators’ understanding of the incident involving Dani Alves. The commentator’s interpretation of the events in a football match can be swayed in favor of the patriotic predilections towards one team or the other. In this case, Alves is a Brazilian player and his team, in view of being the hosts and with higher FIFA rankings, are the run-away favorites. Moreover, with an overwhelming majority of the players and spectators being people of color, it is just natural for the narrator to show patriotism by condemning racism and xenophobia at the earliest opportunity possible.
Bad patriotism can also assume the form of revenge for past injustices or defeat, as discernible in the utterances of the 2014 World Cup commentators. An atmosphere of vengeance is created in the game between Argentina and the Netherlands. John Champion, the main commentator, points out that Netherlands will be seeking to avenge for the 1978 loss in the hands of Argentina. It is not only the Dutch who begrudge the Argentines in this game, but also the Brazilians who would loathe to see the trophy going to their arch rivals. Thus, as Champion puts it, “Holland have the support of all Brazilians,” but a kind of support that is motivated by loathing, antagonism and revenge. According to Champion, “what can make things even worse for the host nation … will be Argentina to win….” This forecast finds fulfillment during the penalty shoot-out to determine the winner later in the game. After the dramatic shoot out that goes Argentina’s way, Champion remarks: “Brazilians’ worst nightmare has just got worse.”

Similarly, bad patriotism can manifest itself through unfairness or acts of injustice meted out against opponents. This is evident in the tournament’s opening match between hosts Brazil and Croatia. The circumstances surrounding Brazil’s second and the winning goal of the match present a case study of abuse of patriotism. Oscar for Brazil sends a cross to Fred in the penalty area. The latter gets his leg on it with his back to the goal before going down theatrically with very minimal contact with the surrounding Croatian players. The referee awards Brazil a penalty kick and gives a yellow card to Dejan Lovren for protesting. The narrator calls the referee’s judgment “a massive call” and “an extremely charitable decision.” Fred is shown stretching his hands to the skies and close to him Neymar with his eyes closed, both evident postures of thanksgiving. The Croats are extremely furious and according to the narrator, “they are very much on the case of the referee and this is understandable.” The Brazilians, in contrast, are heartlessly applauding this barefaced act of injustice perpetrated against their opponents. The
narrator captures this intense callousness by stating that “Fred doesn’t care,” and “Neymar is going to take it of course.” Brazil now lead, notwithstanding what the narrator calls “raging controversy,” and thus the subsequent celebrations by players and fans alike present a blatant manifestation of bad patriotism.

But the match also offers cases of constructive patriotism. The narrator sets the tempo of the match by stating that although many of the players lining up have played in many competitions such as the UEFA Champions League, “there is nothing like representing the country at the World Cup.” Thus, according to him, playing for one’s country at the World Cup is one of the most ostentatious expressions of patriotism. Besides the players, there is also an overwhelming show of partisanship by fans in and around the stadium. As the camera images show, an engulfing majority of the spectators in the stadium is draped in the canary yellow and green colors of the Brazilian flag. The colors are powerful symbols of the natural beauty of Brazil. The dark green represents the lush Brazilian forests while the yellow symbolizes Brazil’s gold reserves.

The same scenario plays out in the commentary of Argentina versus the Netherlands match called by Jon Champion and Stewart Robson for ESPN. This show of patriotism, though largely constructive, can be overstretched by some individuals. For instance, Champion observes that legions of Argentine supporters have demonstrated their patriotism by travelling “thousands of miles by road from Buenos Aires.” Similarly, some players may pull perilous stunts in the process of fighting for their motherland. Such a daredevil attitude is demonstrated in the match between Argentina and the Netherlands. Javier Mascherano for Argentina goes down after a collision with an opponent in what appears to be a concussion. He is stretched out but moments
later he is back on the pitch amid a deafening applause from the Argentine fans. The narrator observes that there is “a thin line between brave and foolhardy” and advises that the medical staff should insist on seeing the players and making the decisions themselves.

5.3 Symbols of Patriotism
One major universal emblem of patriotism is a country’s national colors, majorly displayed in the national dress and flag. At the commencement of the commentary of the Netherlands versus Argentina semifinal match, for instance, the narrator states that the stadium is “hosting blocks of orange amidst a tide of blue and white.” He is referring to the dominant colors of the Netherlands and Argentina respectively. Even though the official colors of the flag of Netherlands are red, white and blue, nearly all Dutch people dress in orange during national occasions. Orange is the color of the Dutch Royal Family which originates from the House of Orange, an exceedingly popular lineage in the Netherlands. Indeed, an unidentified fan is shown clad in the official attire of the monarch. Thus the color has come to embody the country and to denote national pride. As a result, the moniker for the Dutch national soccer team is Oranje, Dutch for orange. This explains the narrator’s use of ‘orange’ as a metonymy for the Dutch team when he says: “Orange are within touching distance of back to back finals.” The Argentine flag colors are light blue at the top and the bottom and white in the middle. The meaning of these flag colors is borderline, though the white is believed to represent silver, or argentium in Latin and light blue to signify the Spanish royal house of Bourbon. The implication of dressing in these colors is that patriotism is premised on institutions and, to some extent, individuals who embody those institutions.
Likewise, the narrator in the Brazil versus Croatia match makes a number of ingenious allusions to the patriotic dispositions of the host nation by referring to the colors of their flag. For instance, he states rather clairvoyantly “that there’s going to be one result today, and that will be a victory for the men in the yellow shirts.” Yellow shirts is in this context used as a synecdoche for Brazilian players and their fans. During a substitution stoppage in which Bernard comes in for Hulk, the fans express their endorsement of the change through the national colors. One male fan celebrates the change by clutching the front of his yellow T-shirt while a female enthusiast gleefully holds a placard that displays a yellow cupid heart.

Thus the donning of distinctive national costumes in this tournament, often containing the national flag colors and sometimes complemented with body painting, is viewed as a show of one’s identity, an expression of one’s dedication to the motherland and the celebration of athletic triumph. These get-ups, flaunted in a majority of the commentaries, perform a unifying role as they create visual representations of the people and their national values, goals or history. More importantly, they embellish the exposition of patriotism with drama and spectacle just like in any other theatrical performance.

Patriotism also finds expression in the national flags hoisted during important national events. Flags are venerated by patriots since they epitomize the sacred nature of nations, according to Billig (1995). A case in point is the Brazilian flag, a blue disc that depicts the Southern Cross in a starry sky crossed by a curved band and, unlike most other flags, inscribed with the national motto "Ordem e Progresso" within a gold rhombus on a green field. The motto - Order and Progress in English - is inspired by Auguste Comte's (1975) motto of positivism. Comte describes positivism as a system of philosophy which acknowledges “only positive facts and observable phenomena … abandoning all inquiry into causes or ultimate origins as belonging to
the theological and metaphysical stages of thought, held to be now superseded.” As a philosophical theory, positivism holds that information derived from sensory experience and construed through reason forms the sole basis of all knowledge. Positivism rejects contemplative or intuitive knowledge, metaphysics and theology. According to Comte, genuine knowledge comes through meticulous scientific techniques for investigating phenomena which involve gathering of observable, empirical and measurable evidence.

Thus while the narrator makes no mention of the Brazilian flag as it is displayed, the aesthetic and philosophical implications of the motto inscribed on it are in no doubt. The extravagant flaunting of the colors of the Brazilian flag within the stadium is meant to give the tournament local color. At an abstract level, however, the Brazilian brand of football, defined by its indifference to an empirical approach, puts the fundamental beliefs of positivism into ridicule. Many Brazilian players rely on religious symbols, magic charms and prayer rather than sound tactics and techniques for their success in football. In the opening match between Brazil and Croatia, for instance, Ian Darke, the ESPN match commentator observes that Brazil need some kind of magic to win. Thus the presentation of the contrast between what the Brazilian flag stands for and what is displayed in the field creates irony that embellishes the commentary with drama and hilarity.

Some important celebrities, as well as national days, also act as symbols of patriotism, and thus a source of inspiration to the players. This manifestation of patriotism is displayed in the match between Argentina and the Netherlands. According to the narrator, Argentina are convinced that this will be their day since the Pope, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, comes from Buenos Aires and even Queen Maxima of the Netherlands was born in Argentina. Principally though, the narrator observes that the players would wish to “pay tribute to one their own.” He is referring to Alfredo
di Stefano, a celebrated Argentine football legend who had passed away earlier in the week. He describes Stefano as “one of the greatest wizards ever” and “a colossal figure in the sport’s history.” And to complement these remarks, the obituary picture of Stefano is displayed on the big screen. Argentina’s entitlement to a victory here is further cemented by the fact that the game is played on their Independence Day. Reference to national days is also apparent in Brazil versus Colombia match. According to the narrator, Colombia had declared the match day a holiday since it is their team’s first quarter final match at a World Cup.

5.4 Patriotism and Political Ideologies
The narrator’s interpretation of the events unfolding in a football match will often wander off into certain ideological orientations that find expression in the course of the commentary. The contrasts and conflicts may shift far beyond skills and performance and into international politics, as illustrated in the Brazil versus Colombia match in which Ian Darke, the ESPN commentator’s aversion for Marxism and Communism is exposed. Regarding to James Rodríguez, the Colombian star striker, the narrator intimates that all that he can hope to learn (in Colombia) is Marxism among other political ideologies. Colombia has had a long history of Marxism and Communism. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People’s Army (FARC–EP), a guerrilla movement involved in the continuing Colombian armed conflict since 1964, was formed during the Cold War period as a Marxist–Leninist peasant force to promote a political line of agrarianism and anti-imperialism.

Colombia's center-right government and the Marxist FARC rebel group signed a peace deal in 2016 to end a half-century war that killed a quarter of a million people. This came two years after the 2014 World Cup, and Darke can be forgiven for his aversions. He however fails to make any assumptions about Neymar, though the Brazilian political landscape had not been
different from that of her Latin American neighbors. Like Colombia, Brazil has a long history of communism: the Communist Party of Brazil has a deep national penetration, especially in the trade union and students movements, and has participated in both Luiz Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff’s administrations. Brazil’s former leftist ties notwithstanding, Darke’s commenting on Rodriguez is evidently a thinly veiled exhibition of his own, and probably, the host nation’s pro-capitalism and pro-democracy orientations. Brazil’s contemporary political landscape, therefore, viewed against the background of Colombia’s communist leaning regime, sets the background for the narrator’s patriotic predisposition.

5.5 Conclusion
All in all, patriotic fervor is a noteworthy aspect of the 2014 FIFA World Cup. The tournament endeavored to propagate a kind of patriotism that celebrates equality, universality, and the enjoyment of basic human rights. Nevertheless, the commentaries expose numerous instances where nationalistic values and emotions are tarnished by chauvinism, vengeance and injustice. Occasionally, commentators digress from the events in the field to express their political and patriotic inclinations by acclaiming certain ideological perspectives. This clearly perceptible thematic concern in the football commentaries analyzed in this study accentuates the status of football commentary as a form of narrative.

References


