

Identity, Multiculturalism, Representation and *Die Mannschaft*

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How a country identifies itself and its culture and represents its people can establish and set the foundation of how that country reacts and responds to situations where change might occur or where this identity might intertwine with another identity and culture. With the current national refugee crisis occurring in Germany, the national identity and culture of Germany is coming into contact with large populations of people that do not share the German culture and who may not necessarily possess the »traditional« German identity or background. One way that this narrow view of German identity and representation is challenged is on international sports stages such as the World Cup. By analyzing the evolving composition of *Die Mannschaft* or the German Men's National soccer team, it has revealed the evolution as well as continued growth of the identity and representation in sports as well as stood as a reflection and symbol of the multicultural and diversified German society.

With a current increasing number of refugees trying to resettle their lives in Germany every day, it is no surprise that anti-immigrant rhetoric has increased as many Germans, especially right-wing extremists, try to dissuade more refugees and immigrants from coming to Germany. The increased intolerance has also caused a deep concern for the spike in the activity and hate coming from *PEGIDA* (*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*), an anti-Muslim German group.¹ In the 1960s and 1970s, a similar situation of intolerance and anti-immigration rhetoric was also seen with the arrival of primarily Turkish guest workers or »Gastarbeiter« as they also tried to come and settle into a culture and society that neither followed nor aligned with what was considered »traditionally« German.

Without a doubt, Germany has a very complicated past in terms of their national identity and culture, especially after the aftermath of the Nazi regime. Following World War II, it seemed like an economic recovery would be almost impossible due to the complete destruction of extensive parts of the country.

1 | The German Lynchmob: Islamophobe Movement Returns With a Vengeance. In: Spiegel online, 15 Oct. 2015, online www.spiegel.de/international/germany/deep-concern-over-return-of-anti-muslim-pegida-protests-a-1057645.html.

However, a few years after the war, West Germany saw an unprecedented »rapid reconstruction and development«² of its economy. This time of speedy economic growth came to be known as the *Wirtschaftswunder* or »economic miracle«³. With the economy already revived and booming by the 1960s, an increased need for workers in a country still partially recovering from the war became a necessity. This is what led to the eventual arrival of the »guest workers« in 1961 and is what would add to the complicated national identity and culture of the country.

Initially, Germans welcomed the laborers but with the expectation that they would eventually return to their country of origin after playing a large role in the German economy after World War II. When Germany halted the program in 1973, many of the Turkish workers did not return to Turkey and decided to settle in Germany permanently, eventually bringing their families along to Germany in the following years. As time progressed and the Turkish population increased as well as the population of many Eastern European peoples in Germany so did the xenophobia within the country. Many Turkish immigrants struggled for acceptance and equality in Germany.⁴

With the current and future arrivals of refugees into Germany, this clash of culture and identity seems to be happening all over again and heightening the already tense anti-immigration conversations occurring in Germany, and the fact that the refugees coming in are predominately Muslim, like the Turkish *Gastarbeiter*, has created even more worry and fear as to what the future implications of their arrival might mean for Germany.⁵ The threat at hand is the threat of change to German culture and the German national identity but more specifically the threat of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity. The question will become who is and is not German and who can and cannot be German? With the precedent of the Turkish guest workers already in place, it would seem that integration and successful multiculturalism were not conceivable concepts in German society. However, the international stage of sports such as soccer provide a unique opportunity to display what the ideal successful multicultural and diverse society might look like if not for societal, cultural, and political restrictions and stereotypes placed on those who go against the ideal »German« identity.

2 | Art. »Wirtschaftswunder.« In: Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation (5 May 2016), online <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wirtschaftswunder>.

3 | Ibid.

4 | Henning Hoff: Fifty Years After the Invite, Turks Are Still Outsiders in Germany. In: Turkish Forum Archive, (3 Nov. 2011), online www.turkishnews.com/en/content/2011/11/05/fifty-years-after-the-invite-turks-are-still-outsiders-in-germany.

5 | Matthew Karnitsching: Germany's Identity Crisis. As refugees keep coming, Germans ask »Who are we?« In: politico Germanys Identity Crisis Comments (11 Oct. 2015), online www.politico.eu/article/german-identity-threat-refugees-migration-merkel.

Despite all of the negative implications of multiculturalism presented by those who oppose it and surmounting data that documents an increasing intolerance for multiculturalism and integration with immigrants and their families into the German population, this is disputed with the successful multiculturalism of the German Men's National Soccer team or *Die Mannschaft*. In the 2010 World Cup, Germany's roster saw the arrival of soccer stars such as Mesut Özil, Sami Khedira, Jerome Boateng, and many others. For the first time, Germany showed internationally visible signs of the ethnic diversity that had been growing in Germany.

That same year the team placed third in the tournament, forcing those who stood against anti-immigration to question their own thoughts and beliefs on the matter. With popular non-ethnically German players, the team helped to unite the country together on a national and international stage as the players, despite coming from different ethnic backgrounds, were able to succeed in one of the most popular sports and watched events in the world.⁶ This seemingly flawed ideology of the supporters of anti-immigration policies was even further emphasized when the diverse German team won the World Cup in 2014. Once again *Die Mannschaft* had shown the world an image and national identity of Germany that was young, inclusive, successful, and diverse through their roles as representatives of their country.

While the diversification of the German national soccer team proved to be a success in showing the world a pursuit of inclusivity and multiculturalism, it did not work in all countries such as France. France's national soccer team also attempted to pursue a more diverse and accepting identity through their soccer team, however, they failed. In the case of the French national team, they were seemingly successful initially. In 1998, France took home the world cup, but what truly made that team and year special was not just their win but the fact that the French team had won with a team made up of players of varying cultural backgrounds as well as different backgrounds of socioeconomic status. Most importantly, however, was the fact that the team was led and orchestrated by Zinedine Zidane, a player of Algerian parents, and Lillian Thuram, who grew up in the banlieu (which is the equivalent of the ghetto or slums in America).⁷ It seemed at the time that this team, who continued to increase the diversity of their racial and demographic makeup and also went on to win the Euro in

6 | Sunder Katwala: Football Patriotism Has Saved Modern Germany from Its Worries about National Identity (14 Jul. 2014), online www.newstatesman.com/staggers/2014/07/football-patriotism-has-saved-modern-germany-its-worries-about-national-identity.

7 | Robert Mackey: Germany, Not France, Delights in Multicultural World Cup Squad. In: The Lede Germany Not France Delights in Multicultural World Cup Squad Comments (24 Jun. 2010), online http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/06/24/germany-not-france-delights-in-multicultural-world-cup-squad/?_r=0.

2000, was the signifier of the evolved identity of France as well as the proof of successful integration and inclusivity of foreigners and those of different racial or socioeconomic background.

However, with the failure and embarrassing performance of the French in the 2010 World Cup, some have claimed that »it [their terrible performance] seems to have undone all of the hopes for a new multicultural sense of national pride« that was ignited with the French 1998 World Cup team.⁸ Their poor performance and attitudes led many to blame the »unruliness« of certain ethnic players, especially those who came from the banlieu. As one individual from a French report put it, »when the team wins, the players are French. When it loses, they are Africans with French citizenship«⁹. Clearly, the hoped for and desired change in identity proved to be a failure and was revealed as a shallow and a seemingly temporary fix to a much larger problem at hand.

While a successful and multicultural Germany seemed to be more effective than France's outcome with their national soccer team, *Die Mannschaft* eventually came upon some problems of its own. Although Germany appeared as if they were making great strides to change the »monotony« of their national and international identity through the diversification of *Die Mannschaft*, after both the 2010 and 2014 World Cups, anti-immigration rhetoric soon picked up again once more. For instance, shortly after the success and positive messages of diversity and multiculturalism in the 2010 World Cup, »a book that argued that Muslim immigrants, like Özil, are destroying Germany became a bestseller«.¹⁰ After the 2014 World Cup, Germany soon found itself with the crisis that it is in now as refugees, especially Syrian refugees, realized that the violence in their country would not end as soon as expected. This step backwards only begs the question of what happened and how did the people forget the successful multiculturalism and diversification of *Die Mannschaft*?

Despite this, it is important to realize that though it might be tempting to connect the ultimate failure of multiculturalism within the French national team to the multiculturalism and diversity in *Die Mannschaft* that is arising now, it would not be an accurate comparison. The difference between Germany and France is that while both experienced multiculturalism among the players on their national soccer team, Germany's backlash was not nearly to the degree of France's. The success of the German team has continued as have the increased

8 | Haby Assevero: Black Blanc Beur: A French Story. In: E-Sports, 9 Nov. 2005, online www.e-sports.com/articles/959/1/Black-Blanc-Beur-A-French-story/Page1.html.

9 | Ibid.

10 | Jacqueline S. Gehring: How Diverse National Soccer Teams Challenge Anti-immigrant and Racialized Politics in France and Germany. In: The Washington Post, 3 Jul. 2014, online www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/07/03/how-diverse-national-soccer-teams-challenge-anti-immigrant-and-racialized-politics-in-france-and-germany.

number of players with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in contrast to the French team.

Also, how each country reacted to the initial success and multiculturalism of their national teams was different. In regards to France, the French saw the success with the multicultural World Cup team of 1998 as proof of the successful integration of foreigners into French society and culture.¹¹ On the other hand, the Germans saw the success of their newly diverse and successful team more as symbolism of what being German meant and the idea of who was allowed to be German and who could be considered German.¹² The increased multiculturalism of the makeup of *Die Mannschaft* gave Germany an opportunity to present themselves with an identity that defied international stereotypes that connected anything German back to World War II or the Nazi regime.

Undoubtedly, the fickleness of the German societal and political systems towards multiculturalism and diversity may be evident, but the continued emergence of diverse soccer players, especially Turkish and more importantly Muslim players, suggests something entirely different. The world of soccer seems to set itself apart from the narrow minded stereotypes and understandings of different ethnicities in comparison to the »traditional« German identity. It brings to light an even more intriguing question of whether or not soccer and sports foster a place where true diversity, inclusion, and multiculturalism could thrive? Indeed, soccer seems to be a stage where minorities, underrepresented groups, and different ethnicities can flourish and thrive in spite of political and societal views and expectations.¹³ During these brief moments that have defined nations, Germany's National Men's team may very well »challenge ethno-racially exclusive« understandings of a nation.¹⁴ After thorough analysis, it is evident that soccer is used as a transcendent tool in order to unite cultural, societal, and political differences that may be used to divide one another.

In addition to the increased diversity of *Die Mannschaft* on an ethnic front, the German Men's National team also faced an issue with the makeup of the players based on whether or not they came from East Germany or the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). It is important to note that although East Germans are still technically German and cannot completely be compared to the situation of the refugees, the prejudices and stereotypes against them as well as their unstable and fluctuating representation on the Men's National team make them a relevant perspective to analyze.

11 | Assevero, Black Blanc Beur.

12 | Brian Blickenstaff: Why Germany Wants to Look Like Its Soccer Team. In: Pacific Standard, 25 Jun. 2014, online <https://psmag.com/why-germany-wants-to-look-like-its-soccer-team-6228fe3ae073#.lly93xpx>.

13 | Gehring, How Diverse National Soccer Teams Challenge Anti-immigrant.

14 | Ibid.

After the end of World War II, Germany found itself divided by the Allies, and East Germany and West Germany were formed as two separate states that were under the control and occupation of the Soviets and the Western Allies, respectively. During the division, both states were controlled under differing ideologies based on their occupiers, therefore, East Germany struggled economically in comparison to the much more economically and financially successful West Germany. Once the wall came down in 1989 and then reunification eventually followed in 1990, the integration of the Eastern Germans into the now West German economy, society, and culture was not easy or without problems. There were many prejudices, stereotypes, and biases against Eastern Germans because they were coming from a communist society and economy and dropped into a world that thrived off of capitalism and focused more on the individual instead of the collective. It became very evident that there was an invisible divide between Germans who came from the West and those who came from the East, and that divide was not only seen in many parts of society and the economy but also in the sports world as well.

When the roster of the 2006 World Cup team came out, there were only four East Germans on the team.¹⁵ Eight years earlier there were five East German players and then seven on the German national squad in 2002.¹⁶ Surprisingly, however, there is only one East German on the current German Men's National team roster. Also, considering that »roughly 15 % of Germany's population lives in the former GDR,« it makes this sudden decrease even more problematic.¹⁷ The different ethnicities and races of the national team continues to grow and expand, however, in the area of providing an accurate identity and representation of the entire country, *Die Mannschaft* fails in providing enough representation of East German players. The question now becomes »how can a part of the country, which, in the past, has produced between one-sixth and one-third of national team squads, suddenly be left with only one representative?«¹⁸ At this moment the answer is unclear, but a possible conclusion could be drawn back to the still underdeveloped parts of East German since reunification. Nevertheless, despite the fact that their road to determining and forming their identity is still in progress, it seems quite evident that Germany has managed to accomplish and capture many remarkable representations of their identity through *Die Mannschaft*.

15 | Niklas Wildhagen: The Paradox of East German Representation in the National Team. In: Bundesliga Fanatic, 24 Jun. 2014, online <http://bundeligafanatic.com/the-paradox-of-east-german-representation-in-the-national-team>.

16 | Ibid.

17 | Ibid.

18 | Ibid.

Without question, it is clear that the issue of multiculturalism and the diversification of the German national identity will not be going away anytime soon. Considering that the refugee crisis is an ongoing issue, the importance of this discussion only increases as the anti-immigration sentiments continue to surmount as well. However, despite the inconsistent representation of East German players, an example and unique arena has been revealed in defense of multiculturalism through the successful inclusion and integration of numerous popular non-ethnically German soccer players of *Die Mannschaft* in the 2010 and 2014 World Cups. The success, prominence, and respect that this team has achieved not only in the eyes of Germany but also in the eyes of the entire world supports the idea of soccer as a space for ethnic minorities and underrepresented groups to emerge and function successfully within society. In the end, *Die Mannschaft* also stands as a representation of the positive possibilities and opportunities that successful multiculturalism could hold and how it could enhance and improve the national identity of Germany.

