“Sport has the power to change the world” is the beginning of a famous quote from Nelson Mandella in reference to the Springboks rugby teams World Cup final game in 1995. His hope was that a game of rugby could bring his country together creating a shared identity and increasing a sense of pride and nationalism. Thibeault (2006) states that “South Africa Springbok’s World Cup victory not only led to a successful nation-building achievement, it put the country of South Africa and the new anti-apartheid regime on the global map” (p.4). This is a modern example of how politics has used sports in a global context to help build pride in their nation. Canada and Russia (formerly the USSR) are two historical examples of how state involved policies through globalization increased nationalism using the sport of hockey (Jokilispia, 2006). Each nation used a realistic approach through state driven policies to build unity in order to create a shared identity within their respective countries. It is the purpose of this paper to discuss how Canada and the Soviet Union used Hockey utilizing the examples found in the article “Maple Leaf, Hammer, and Sickle: International Ice Hockey during the Cold War” to explain how globalization and sport has been used to heterogeneously to increase nationalism in each country. It will be discussed how each state homogenized their people’s ideologies and politically created nationalism through policies that were cultural, social, and economic in their respective states.

Sport plays a critical role in developing national policies. Jokisipilia (2006) states that during the interwar period (1919-1939) the Soviet Union isolated themselves from the West and advocated that "competitive sports should have no place in their society...Soviet athletes were not allowed to participate in the Olympics because communist ideologist denounced them as capitalist" (p.37). This time period led to a boycott of Western ideologies due to the homogenized hegemonic Marxist style of rule to isolate its people from the capitalistic influence. This isolation ideology was altered after the end of World War II as “isolation rapidly broke down and the Kremlin’s sphere of influence ballooned” (Jokisipilia, 2006, p.37). Jokisipilia (2006) indicates that this led to the extermination of the homogeneous game of Bandy that had been popular in the Soviet Union as it no longer “fit with Stalin's new extrovert sports policies...a country's international prestige and foreign policy would be better served by an internationally established game like hockey” (p.37). This led to the glocalization of hockey as the players incorporated social cultural and political aspects found in soccer and bandy and transferred them to hockey which framed the way they played the game which could be seen by the Soviet Union’s unique style of play (Jokisipilia, 2006).

Canada’s sovereignty from British colonial rule in 1867 initiated an identity transformation linking policies to both heterogeneity and homogeneity (Jokisiplia, 2006). This fairly new nation state had taken elements from games such as lacrosse, shinny, and rugby and glocalized the sport of hockey
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to give the game a Canadian feel in the latter part of the 19th century (Jokisipilia, 2006). The traditional masculine rule was one homogenous aspect of this budding new society (Jokisipilia, 2006) writes that this single characteristic influenced the Canadian style of hockey which initially made the game very physical and barbaric. This cultural resemblance at a societal level is what attracted the typical Canadian to play the game which allowed players to form a sense of identity with their country and increased nationalism within the nation (Jokisipilia, 2006). Jokisipilia (2006) writes that the “aggressive and remorseless style of play” (p.41) increased during the interwar period and became a metaphor for North American continent. This fairly new nation state was using hockey to create a shared identity and increasing the feelings of nationalism (Jokisipilia, 2006). Canada was also feeling more connected as a country due to the end of World War I (Joklispia 2006) as Wagg Brick, Wheaton and Caudwell (2009) indicates war is a key instigator in increasing national sentiment and Canada was feeling an exponential increase in this ideology. The increased globalization essentially ‘shrinking the world’ saw increased international hockey competitions (Joklispia, 2006) where Canada continued to dominate in the world of hockey therefore increasing national sentiment culturally. At this time there was little political involvement in the game of hockey in Canada as pride in the nation was being created by the continued dominance of other teams in international play (Jokisipillia, 2006). As a society Canadians could identify themselves with the violent nature of sports which became a commodity that people attach themselves to the homogenous culture that was developing within this new nature (Jokisipillia, 2006).

The Soviet Union saw how effective it was for Canada to use hockey to attain a more international status and used a realistic approach using hockey to create a more homogenous society (Jokilispia, 2006). After World War II the USSR used a realistic approach and was determined to create national pride within the country by creating a homogenous society in order to prove itself on the world stage as a dominant leader (Jokisipillia, 2006). Jokisipilia (2006) writes that the nation’s government feared the western capitalist ideologies would influence its people but realized that the country could no longer continue to isolate and alienate themselves from this new global society. Jokisipillia (2006) states that the USSR was looking for world-level success and decided to focus on Olympic sports because its ideologies “coincided with communist notions of internationalism, solidarity, and world peace” (p.38). The state wanted to create commodities, and a new generation of communist role model athletes would be subjugated and alienated by the state and consumed by the people to instill national pride (Jokisipilia, 2006). The Soviet Union developed its athletes over a ten year period (1946-1956) in a dire economic period to become an ideological weapon dominating in international sport of hockey and creating political strife during international competitions (Jokisipilia, 2006). The Soviet Union would
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replace Canada in the top spot in the world stage of hockey increasing national pride the state was
determined to create policies to induce greater nationalism through the commodification of athletes
which would create a strong sense of shared identity (Jokisiplia, 2006).

Anatolii Tarasov was the driving force of this communist ideology which glocalized the sport of
hockey for the USSR. He was seen as the father of Soviet hockey and focused on creating a consumable
product in the form of national pride within the state of Russia (Jokisipilia, 2006). He wanted to create a
Soviet style of play that could have a cultural connection to the consumers of hockey and follow similar
political policies of the communist party. ‘Rolling back the state’ was apparent in the Soviet Union as
Jokisipilia (2006) writes that instead of having individual super stars, Tarasov believed that “an on ice
application of the socialist idea of the individual subordinated to the benefit of the collective” and
athletes would benefit from understanding the state by studying these political ideologies (p.44). These
policies would further homogenize the style of coaching and the game as Tarasov would share his notes
and give lectures enabling the homogeneity of the game throughout the nation state of the Soviet Union
(Jokisiplia, 2006).

The powerful Tarasov had glocalized the sport and heterogeneously found a way to play hockey
that would be no match for the amateur Canadian teams (Jokisipilia, 2006). The Soviet Union was able
to create its own culture of hockey where Jokisipilia (2006) states the “main emphasis [was] on skating,
technical skills, and team tactics” which shocked the Canadians whose play was dominated by “checking,
grabbing and rigorous shooting” (p.40). The demise of Canadian dominance could be felt throughout
the nation when Canada suffered its first loss to the Soviet Union. One of the players stated “you would
have thought we had lost World War III, not a hockey game” (as cited in Jokisipilia, 2006, p. 40). The
international stage was no longer Canada’s as the Soviet Union would win nine consecutive world
championship titles (Jokisipilia, 2006). The economic impact of World War II led to an increase in
consumption and commodification of sports in North America (Jokisipilia, 2006). The NHL would begin
to expand its league by end of the 1960’s creating more opportunities for professional hockey players,
Jokisipilia (2006) indicates that deterritorilization would occur as Canadian amateur athletes would be
drawn to the NHL to increase their social, and economic status. The amateurism policy was still in place
for international competition and the deterritorilization was also another negative contribution to
Canada international hockey status (Jokisiplia, 2006). This can be seen in the modern example of Latin
and Central America’s loss of their baseball and soccer stars to American and European professional
leagues which “deskills the donor countries” (as cited in Thibeault, 2006, p.7). As more and more
Canadian hockey players became professionals they could no longer play in international competition
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thus ‘deskilling’ the amateur teams which would lessen Canada’s world dominance (Jokisiplia, 2006). Canada was no longer dominating the global sport of hockey and this would create alienation for the people of Canada and a decline in the identity and nationalism that had been created by its earlier supremacy in the world of hockey (Jokisiplia, 2006).

Nationalism was also created through commodification and commercialization of hockey created by the economic driving force created by technological advancements (Jokisiplia, 2006). During the 1950’s and 1960’s the technological advancements in media and the creation of the television led to an increase of the global consumption and the commodification of hockey (Jokisiplia, 2006). This also created more cultural and social awareness for people living in different nation states. As the hostilities from the Cold War continued to escalate, it was inevitable that politics would become synonymous with the international world of hockey (Jokisiplia, 2006). Jokisipilia (2006) says that the imagery created by the media to further incite political strife between the nations described North American players as “mannequins of capitalism” who were stalked by Red Army officers that were dictated by a “military sports unit refined into a smart bomb of communist propaganda” (Jokisipilia, 2006, p.39). The Soviet Union commodification of her players was a form of political commercialism that was very effective during international play in tournaments such as the Summit Series (1972) and the Miracle on ice (1980) (Jokisiplia, 2006). Top Soviet players “were rewarded with commodities completely unattainable by ordinary Soviet citizens...with failure to perform or disobedience...these benefits would be stripped away” (Jokisiplia, 2006, p.50). An additional motivating factor was “patriotism...successful athletes were rewarded and respected” Jokilispia (2006) writes “that the players realized they owed their success to the community and the state and wanted genuinely to win for the good of their people and country” (p.50). This could be seen as a form of nationalism and consumption, where the Soviet players would feel a strong connection for their nation Mother Russia as well as consuming the beliefs and ideology of the communism. However, it could also be seen as patriotism. Stephen Nathanson writes that patriotism has four elements; “special affection for one’s country; a sense of personal identification with the country; special concern for well-being of the country; and willingness to sacrifice to promote the country’s good” (slide 10). The Soviet Union athlete was driven by state initiated policies increasing the patriotic feelings throughout peoples’ cultural ideology. Pairing with communist ideology of state first, most players during this time would not think of playing for the capitalist NHL (Jokilispia, 2006) therefore the deterritorialisaton of Soviet hockey would not occur until the 1990’s.

Politics had yet to enter into the sport of hockey in Canada, but in the late 1960’s after the Soviet Union and other European countries continued to embarrass Canadians on the world stage
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hockey soon became a political matter (Jokilispia, 2006). Similarly to the Soviet Union, Canada was also trying to “establish the country as a force in world politics” (Jokilispia, 2006, p.41) and deterritorilization of players to the NHL was creating negative political impact. Trudeau, Canada’s Prime Minister in 1968, realized that the geographical distance Canadians felt diminished the national identity and commodifying hockey and its players was needed to increase the nationalism within the country (Jokisipilia, 2006). A policy that Wagg et.al (2009) describes as “rolling back the state” (p.221) where the state becomes more politically involved in sports, saw Trudeau “set up a special task force to deal with Canada’s hockey misfortune” (Jokilispia, 2006, p.42). Jokilispia (2006) states that by using hockey as a “psychosocial nation builder” (p.42) this task force could decrease diversity that was increasing through Canadian society to increase national pride and identity. Jokilispia (2006) argues that Canada had to stop the capitalization of the Soviets in hockey by creating a consumable product of the game of hockey “by associating the state with hockey, the game could be used to construct a particular Canadian identity” (p.42). Amercanization was beginning to take hold of Canada and it was felt that the country needed a policy to change the face of hockey (Jokilispia, 2006). It was decided that a more democratic style of play was needed to be instilled to match Canadian society and people could connect easier with the sport (Jokisipilia, 2006). Canada was developing a cultural persona of and Trudeau believed that this way of playing would increase the prestige of the country internationally (Jokisipilia, 2006). Trudeau was determined to dominate the sport on a global level once more and a pluralist approach was used in forming a coalition called Hockey Canada (Jokilispia, 2006). One of the policies it created was through lobbying the International Ice Hockey Federation to homogenize the game internationally as the styles of play between nation states was vast (Jokilispia, 2006).

The biggest political impact in hockey on the global stage for both the Soviet Union and Canada came in the legendary Summit Series of 1972. Four games played in Canada and then four played in the Soviet Union was seen as “war on ice” (Jokilispia, 2006, p.49) Henderson who scored the winning goal to finish the series states “I guess war is the only thing that could bring a country together like that series did” (as cited in Jokilispia, 2006, p.48). The cultural and social impact of the series was so intense that it brought on the political feel that it was “more like staging the Cold War than trying to tone it down” (Jokilispia, 2006, p.48).

Wagg et.al, (2009) states that nationalism is “the sense of loyalty to a nation” (p.221) and hockey was able to increase the pride in both nation states of Canada and the Soviet Union. At first Canada was able to dominate the game through violent style of play which was homogenized throughout the country and proved effective in creating a national identity (Jokilispia, 2006). But it
would soon need the help from the state which would create policies to damper the violent nature of sport into a more democratic style of play (Jokilispia, 2006). Which would represent the culture of Canada as it is generally seen as a peace keeper than the antagonist country (Jokilispia, 2006). The Soviet Union would try to stylize its play by using the realist approach of the “state being the principal focus” (Wagg, et.al, 2009, p.169) and follow the communist ideology playing as a unit rather than the capitalist approach where the individual comes first (Jokilispia, 2006). The political ramifications of the disintegration of the communist party saw of a more heterogeneous style of play having to be adopted by the Russians to play more of a globalized game on the international stage (Jokilispia, 2006). Both countries were able to use the power of sport to increase a sense of national identity within their respective societies (Jokilispia, 2006). Therefore increasing the nationalism and pride to unite their geographically large countries socially, culturally, and politically that could not have been done without the game of hockey (Jokilispia, 2006).
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References


