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The Political Economy of Italian Football

As Europe sat on the eve of a world war, *Il Duce* was being photographed in the ornate rooms of the Palazzo Venezia with the Italian World Cup-winning team. Around him were the stars of the tournament who had successfully become the first team to retain the trophy after their 4-2 victory over Czechoslovakia in the 1938 final in Paris. The distinctive bald head and square jaw of Mussolini are unmistakable. Standing at the centre of the photo, the stocky build of the dictator draws the attention of the viewer. In the photo, he is dressed in a distinctive white suit, where the only adornment is a dark pocket square. All of the players flanking the dictator, and those crouching down in front, are sporting the military uniform of the nation. Their dress is distinctive from that of the Italian leader. Reiterating the militaristic connections between sport and war in fascist Italy, Mussolini was highlighting how these successful players were both warriors and model Italian citizens. The photo was to be used as propaganda to celebrate the Italian victory, and for the dictator to be seen basking in their reflected glory. It also highlighted how he was central to their success. He had imposed an Italian identity onto Italian football and mixed this with fascist symbolism, even to the point that in the match against France in the 1938 tournament, the team wore black shirts and performed fascist salutes. *Il Duce* had managed to impose a sense of order and success onto Italian football.

Triumph and crisis have been regular partners in Italian football. Italy's short but colourful history has left an indelible mark on its football. Many of the social elites operate across the fields of politics, business and football. The over-reliance on familial and patrimonial networks can provide rapid outcomes, but can quickly collapse. Globalization, however, has seen other nations surpass Italy's industrial success. Global patterns of deregulation were initially successful within Italy as these networks quickly adapted to the new order. This pattern was replicated in football where the initial success of Italy has been surpassed by the English, German and Spanish. It is compounded by the central authority's failure

to adequately impose the necessary requirements on the federations and clubs to rectify the issue. The vacuum in national politics is replicated even within the club structure as fans continue to remain outside the organizational hierarchy, yet still operate within the patrimonial system.

To enable the reader to witness these transformations within the Italian game, this chapter will present a history of Italian football to introduce the organizational structure of the Italian game. Several recurring themes lie within the context of football. In particular, there is a profound crisis of legitimacy of the central authorities that is undermined by widespread familial and patrimonial networks. These dense networks manifest in strategic cities, intensifying regional differences. Building on the theoretical frameworks illustrated in the previous chapters, this chapter will chart the development of football since its inception, from fascism to the Miracle, and into the 1970s. It will then chart the fragmentation that occurred after the 1970s and illustrate the transformations that occurred in the subsequent decades, the era of globalization. Italy's development and approach to these transformations helps explain the subsequent crises, which will be detailed in the following chapter.

The development of Italian football

Football in Italy is entwined with the formation of the nation state and the global diffusion of the codified sport. During the nineteenth century, the modern nation state began to crystallize and the newly codified sports provided an apposite opportunity for identification for nations and citizens. As occurred elsewhere in the world, playing organized games of football dispersed from the ports. British sailors landing on the docks of Livorno, Genoa and Naples stimulated an interest in these cities at the same time they were undergoing extensive urbanization and industrialization. In keeping with the origins of the organized game, the English word *football* entered the Italian lexicon. As a result, the original governing body that was set up in 1898 adopted the name Federazione Italiana Football (FIF). The nascent governing body subsequently set up a national championship, which was won by Genoa Cricket and Football Club. Increasing internationalization of the sport led to the development of FIFA and UEFA, which Italy joined as a founding member.

The governing body in Italy has faced a crisis of legitimacy ever since its inception and struggled to impose national regulation. Conflict occurred over the foreign influence on the sport, establishing a love-hate relationship

with its English roots. Early teams were established and populated by foreign players. The football section of Genoa Cricket and Football Club was founded by James Richardson Spensley in 1897. AC Milan was founded in 1899 by another Englishman called Herbert Kilpin. Elsewhere, Torino was formed by a collection of English and Swiss businessmen, whereas Internazionale was set up by Swiss and Italians. Meanwhile, in 1905 the first club formed in Livorno, Virtus Juventusque, was founded by Carmichael Montgomery, the son of the British vice consul in Livorno. Similarly, the English origins of Florence Football Club and Naples Football and Cricket Club can be traced in their names. The English influence of the game in Italy has resulted in the coining of the Italian colloquial term *Il Mister* (named after the first organized manager William Garbutt) for a 'manager'. Yet, this extensive foreign influence in the Italian game led to the first site of conflict as the FIF banned foreign players in 1908. This also provides the first significant challenge to the federation's legitimacy. Milan, in particular, felt that this ban prevented them from winning their third championship in a row. This success would have conferred the Spensley Cup upon them for winning three championships in a row. As a consequence, Milan, Torino and Genoa boycotted the tournament. With three of the larger clubs absent, the federation backed down and readmitted foreign players for the following season.

Conflict between burgeoning Italian nationalism and the sport's historical English roots re-emerged in the following season. Football in Italy provided an early opportunity for nationalist symbols to be constructed. In 1909, the governing body, FIF, changed its name to Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio (FIGC) to reflect the adoption of the Italian word *calcio*, rather than the English word 'football'. This made an explicit reference to the historic game of *Calcio Fiorentino* which had been played in Florence during the Renaissance. The historic version of the sport, what Hobsbawm (1983) terms an 'invented tradition', bore little resemblance to the organized game introduced by the English; *Calcio Fiorentino* was more akin to modern rugby and the hurling games of Britain. Mussolini continued this desire to Italianize the game. *Calcio Fiorentino* was reintroduced to Florence in 1930 to construct a clear link between the Medieval and modern games. Indeed, Foot suggests that the historic Florentine game 'has been adapted to *appear more like football* [original italics]' (Foot 2006, p. 3). In emphasizing this reinvented tradition, we see historical symbols of football being incorporated into the nationalizing tendencies of modern Italy.

Football in Italy quickly became incorporated into the industrial urban fabric. Industrialization and urbanization ensured a rapid participation rate in the new sport as the new urban working classes sought new pastimes. This is

reflected in the clubs that found early success; the teams came from the port of Genoa and the industrial cities of Milan and Turin. Industrialists quickly adopted the game's popularity and incorporated football into their industrial network. The owner and founder of Pirelli was an early member of AC Milan and he was the president of the club from 1908 to 1929. Edoardo Agnelli, the son of Fiat's founder, became president of Juventus in 1923 and initiated the long and successful association between the club and the company that has continued into the twenty-first century with the club's current chair, Andrea Agnelli. Back in Milan, Inter's president from 1923 was Enrico Olivetti, from the typewriter manufacturers of the same name, before he sold it to Senatore Borletti from another leading industrial family.

The industrial growth of Turin and Milan led to political and economic conflict between the two cities. It was also reflected in the football clubs of these cities. Power struggles between the clubs took place within the corridors of the federation. The internal power struggle also undermined the legitimacy of the federation as it sought to appease Torino and Juventus on one side, and AC Milan and Inter on the other. The headquarters of the federation were transferred several times between the two cities as a strategy for appeasement. Yet, ultimately, it only weakened the federation's legitimacy and its ability to impose its authority.

The amateur ethos that was introduced by the English provided another site of conflict. The early game in Italy replicated its English forebears through the pursuit of amateurism. The kudos of victory and the reflected glory onto industrial patrons challenged this ethos. A sham amateurism emerged as patrons made clandestine payments to star players. For example, in 1913 Genoa's star player, Renzo De Vecchi was provided with employment as a bank clerk and also was reimbursed with 'travel expenses' (Foot 2006). The clandestine system was exposed in the 'Rosetta Case', which resulted in Juventus paying 50,000 lire for the Pro Vercelli player Virginio Rosetta in 1923. The president of Pro Vercelli, a lawyer called Luigi Bozino, was also the president of the FIGC and authorized the sale of Rosetta. The player meanwhile was an accountant and was set up with a new accountancy post in Turin, underwritten by Juventus (and by extension, Fiat, the owners of Juventus). The amount of money involved ignited the scandal and challenged the morality of the time. It also led to a number of resignations from the federation. Ultimately, the FIGC docked Juventus points that prevented them from winning the title and barred Rosetta from playing. The following season, however, he was allowed to rejoin Juventus and went on to win six championships with the club, as well as winning a bronze medal in

the 1928 Olympics and the World Cup in 1934. Despite the dramatic showdown from with the federation, Juventus and Rosetta effectively carried on as before.

The federation's legitimacy has also been challenged in relation to match-fixing. The Allemandi scandal emerged in 1927 after Torino had just won their first *scudetto* (Foot 2006). A newspaper revealed that Torino had paid Juventus defender Luigi Allemandi 50,000 lire to underperform in the derby. The FIGC rescinded Torino's title and banned Allemandi for life. Yet the conflicted approach of the federation reaffirmed its crisis of legitimacy. The 1926–7 *scudetto* remained vacant, but Allemandi's ban was granted a pardon a year later after Italy won the bronze medal at the Olympics. Allemandi subsequently captained Italy and won the 1934 World Cup. Just as the Rosetta case showed, the initial show of strength from the federation was subsequently undermined.

Fascism attempted to assert a nationalist and centralized control over the national game. Mussolini saw football as the perfect way to create the necessary national symbols to unite the young nation. The last vestiges of English were removed from the sport. Foreign names of football teams were changed. Genoa Cricket and Football Club was renamed Genova 1893, while AC Milan was renamed Milano. Meanwhile, Internazionale changed its name to a more Italian-sounding Ambrosiana, after the patron saint of Milan. Alongside the reinvented tradition of *Calcio Fiorentino*, Mussolini also incorporated the powerful symbols of Ancient Rome, which included the notion of *mens sana in corpore sano* (a healthy mind in a healthy body) (Martin 2004). Mussolini supported the building of a number of municipal stadiums that would house the various sports clubs he initiated. This permitted Italy to host the second World Cup in 1934. Not only did they act as powerful symbols to the power of fascism but they also simultaneously harked back to Ancient Rome and looked forward to a Modernist future; the image of the Colosseum was incorporated into the smooth lines of Modernist architecture. As a consequence, many stadiums in Italy date from this period, in particular, the Stadio Olimpico in Rome, the Stadio Artemi Franchi in Florence and Stadio Armando Picchi in Livorno.

Fascist centralization and nationalism led to a major restructuring of football in Italy in 1926. The Viareggio Charter revolutionized football within Italy and instituted many of the features that exist today. The charter introduced a professional national league and set up Serie A and Serie B. This abolished the previous provincial leagues and likewise illustrated the boundaries of the Italian nation. The city of Trieste, acquired in the settlement of the First World War, could now be affirmed as Italian as it would play in the Italian national league (Foot 2006). Furthermore, the charter permitted professionalism that allowed

for the best players to participate in these national leagues. Finally, echoing previous attempts to ban foreigners, the charter instituted a ban on non-Italians playing in the national leagues. Even under fascism, the illusion continued. Hungarians or Austrians were obviously barred from playing; however, players of Italian extraction (an *oriundo*) were permitted. Owing to large numbers of Italians immigrating to South America in the previous century, a number of *oriundi* transferred from South America to play in the new professional Italian leagues. Ultimately, some of these *oriundi* represented Italy in the national team and consequently won an Olympic gold medal in 1932 and the World Cups in 1934 and 1938.

Direct central fascist control did not minimize scandal within Italian football. Also, Fascism influenced the patrimonial structure of Italian football. For example, the leader of the Bologna Fascists (and future mayor of Bologna), Leandro Arpinati, took an active interest in the championship play-off between Bologna and Genoa in 1925 (Foot 2006). The federation's rules declared that when teams finished level at the end of the season, they should take part in a play-off. This was to be replayed in the event of a draw. In the 1925 play-off final, the two teams had already played two games and had them both end in draw. The third match was played in Milan, watched by 20,000 fans. Genoa proceeded to take a 2-0 lead before Bologna went on the offensive in the second half – the shot was made, the keeper dived and the referee indicated a corner. This resulted in a pitch invasion led by a group of 'black-shirts', delaying the game for fifteen minutes. The referee changed his mind and gave a goal – a 'goal' that Bologna subsequently doubled to force another draw. Under federation rules, the pitch invasion should have Genoa being awarded the championship. Arpinati, however, pressured the referee to attribute no blame for the pitch invasion. This permitted the federation to call for another play-off. The subsequent play-off, in Turin, was marred by gunshots being fired among fans at the train station after the match ended in yet another draw. Turin refused to allow another game to be held in the city, on the grounds of public order, so the following match was held in Milan two months later, a match Bologna duly won. Arpinati went on to become president of the FIGC and his tenure witnessed unprecedented success for the Italian national team and the Bologna football club. The control and influence exercised over football by Arpinati and Mussolini also led to a number of accusations being made regarding the 1934 World Cup final, hosted by Italy. Despite this, Italy successfully defended their title four years later in France after Mussolini sent the team a telegram saying 'win or die!'

The FIGC has faced a long-standing suspicion of its central authority. The referees have come to symbolize this crisis of legitimacy. They became victims of abuse, violence and suspicion (Foot 2006). Through the 'deep play' of football, historian Paul Ginsborg (2003, p. 113) makes a clear comparison with wider society:

Reactions to the game's rules and refereeing can be seen as a mirror of wider reactions to authority in contemporary Italian society. It is not difficult to discern ... a series of emotions – suspicion, contempt, cynicism, even hatred – that characterise the relationship between Italians and the state.

The pressure that Arpinati exerted on the referee in the Genoa–Bologna game in 1925 is merely an extension of this struggle for authority. The 1926 Viareggio Charter attempted to limit the opportunity for corruption by establishing a committee to select referees who were announced only on matchday. However, by the 1950s, this confidential information had become valuable to third parties who sought to gain an advantage. One such scandal involved the Catania football club. A local reporter claimed that while working for Catania, he bribed a referee and his cousin in order to gain access to the information (Foot 2006). In the following decade, the big clubs also tried to exert pressure on the selection of certain referees. In one case, Juventus threatened to go to court to bar a referee from officiating their matches and reinforced the lack of legitimacy of the central federation. This has continued into the twenty-first century as Silvio Berlusconi has frequently used the media to accuse referees of being left wing and biased against Milan.

Italian football during the 'Miracle'

The economic 'Miracle' of the 1950s reaffirmed the hegemony of Turin and Milan. At the end of the Second World War, Torino emerged as the major force in Italian football. After winning the 1943 *scudetto* by one point over Livorno, the team won five consecutive titles and became known as the Grande Torino (Great Torino). The team created a number of records in Italian football and a majority of players represented the Italian national team. Tragedy struck on 4 May 1949 when a plane transporting the players encountered difficulty in fog around Turin and crashed into Mount Superga. All thirty-one passengers were killed. The catastrophe marked the decline of Torino (despite a brief resurgence in the 1970s) and permitted the consolidation of the three major clubs of Juventus,

Milan and Inter. The economic support provided by the industrial patronage of leading families ensured that these Italian clubs could afford to pay the highest transfer fees for players. Since 1952, the world-record for transfer fee was held by Italian clubs, and by Milan, Inter and Juventus in particular, for nearly fifty years. But the transfers of Johan Cruyff and Diego Maradona to Barcelona, Alan Shearer to Newcastle and Denilson to Real Betis dented the Italian monopoly. It's only in the present century that this domination was eclipsed by one club, Real Madrid.

The 'Miracle' allowed the three elite clubs to dominate financially. The rise of mass-manufacturing based on Fordist principles necessitated large numbers of industrial workers. The 'Miracle' also provided increased economic rewards with which the owners could reinvest in their team. Juventus, in particular, benefitted from the success of Fiat. The car giant contributed over 4 per cent to the Italian GDP and was the biggest employer in Italy; its staff canteen could host 10,000 employees. Consequently, Umberto Agnelli, the club's president during the 1950s and 1960s, has stated that 'The team has followed the evolution of the nation' (Alegi 2007, p. 79). Not only could the Agnelli family provide industrial patronage to finance the club's success but also the extensive internal migration caused by the Miracle could transform the supporter base of the club. Millions of workers left their hometowns, particularly in the south, and moved to Turin to work in the Fiat factories. The subsequent return of these workers to their hometowns has resulted in Juventus being the most widely supported football club in Italy, with every town and village having a Juventus supporters' club.

Financial support and industrial patronage also promoted the growth of the Grande Inter side of the 1960s. The oil magnate Angelo Moratti purchased Inter in 1955 and provided the financial support for the club to win three *scudetti* in 1963, 1965 and 1966, as well as to win consecutive European Cups in 1964 and 1965. Moratti's financial support was augmented by the club's Argentine manager, Helenio Herrera, who implemented a highly professional training regime to drill the players in a quasi-militaristic style. Herrera also bequeathed a lasting legacy on Italian football through his adoption and success of the *catenaccio* style of defence. Named 'door-bolt' in Italian, *catenaccio* was a highly defensive tactic that sought to nullify the opposition in attack and quickly counter-attack. The rigidity and discipline required to execute *catenaccio* emulated the Fordist principles operating within the factories of Milan and Turin.

Increased professionalism within football brought greater incentives to win. A number of teams became involved in doping scandals during the 1960s, which

led FIGC to impose order through regular drug testing. In 1962, some minor members of the Grande Inter side were found guilty of doping (Foot 2006). The following year, five Genoa players were banned and the authorities decided to instigate a rule that any player who tested positive would see their team forfeit the match. Ultimately, this led to recriminations and a further demonstration of the crisis of legitimacy facing the FIGC. During the 1963-4 season, five Bologna players were tested positive for drugs following a game with Torino. Under the rules, the team from Emilia-Romagna should have forfeited the game and would have been three points behind Inter at the top of the league. Riots erupted in the streets of Bologna and the club's lawyers disputed the validity of the testing process. With Bologna and Inter tied on points at the end of the season, the authorities cleared Bologna amid stories of the possible switching of samples. As a consequence, the league declared that the title should be decided by a play-off – the only time such thing has ever occurred.

The crisis of the 1970s

The global financial crisis of the 1970s directly impacted football. King (2003) has identified that European football went through a period of 'Eurosclerosis' during the decade as clubs faced a reduced economic viability that resulted in hooliganism, decline in playing standards and increase in incidents of match-fixing (King 2003). The period marked an end to the dominance of the top clubs. Both Milanese clubs failed to win a *scudetto* during the decade. Although Juventus remained dominant, provincial clubs won a number of championships. After the 'hot autumn' of 1968, Fiorentina won their second *scudetto* in 1969; Cagliari in 1970, followed by Lazio in 1973. Meanwhile, the year 1975 saw the brief re-emergence of Torino after the Superga tragedy. A similar pattern emerged in the early 1980s when Roma and Verona won titles in 1982 and 1984, respectively.

Footballers replicated the political militancy that transpired in the piazzas and the factories. The players became more political and demanded increased legal rights. In 1968, the Italian Footballers Association, the *Associazione Italiana Calciatori*, was created.¹ It called for greater freedom for players and instituted the Italian Footballer of the Year award to recognize outstanding players. In 1974, footballers protested by arriving ten minutes late for kick-off. The protest was to highlight the restriction of movement on players as they were forced to move to whichever team their club decided to sell them to. Players also reflected

the extreme politics of the piazzas. For example, Paolo Sollier of Perugia was a visible supporter of far-left organizations (Foot 2006). Elsewhere, and the Lazio team of the 1970s exhibited fascist sympathies. Many of the *biancoceleste* players carried guns, which they took to training and away games. Their frivolous approach to their weapons resulted in the death of their midfielder, Luciano Re Cecconi, in 1977. As a practical joke, he pretended to rob a jewellery store and was shot by the owner.

The failure of the central authorities to effectively regulate the sport saw allegations of match-fixing re-emerge during the same period. In addition to the allegations of drug abuse detailed previously, the *Sunday Times* journalist, Brian Glanville, exposed, in 1974, a wide-ranging account of match-fixing of European Cup games by Italian clubs, called the 'Golden Fix' (Glanville 1999a; Glanville 1999b; Foot 2006; King 2003). The allegations centred on Italo Allodi, who was the sporting director at Inter in the 1960s before moving to Juventus in the 1970s. In the 1980s, he became the national team manager before moving to Napoli – the Napoli that contained Maradona and that finally wrested the title away from the powers in the north. Glanville suggested that Allodi used an intermediary to attempt to bribe referees. The intermediary worked for Allodi at both Inter in the 1960s and Juventus in the 1970s. In some cases, the bribe was deemed to have worked, such as with Inter in the 1960s, and allegedly with Juventus against Derby County in 1973. However, the allegations only came to light after a Portuguese referee, Francesco Marques Lobo, refused to be bribed the following year.

Another match-fixing scandal erupted in 1980 based on the Italian version of the Football Pools called Totocalcio. Two Roman shopkeepers attempted, unsuccessfully, to fix a number of games in a scandal that came to be known as *Totonero* (Foot 2006). The scandal included a number of players and coaches and led to seven clubs having points deducted while Milan and Lazio were relegated. The scandal also led to the suspension of several players, including the superstar of Italian football, Paolo Rossi. Rossi was suspended for three years, but in an act reminiscent of the Rosetta and Allemandi cases in the 1920s, the suspension was subsequently reduced to two years. This allowed him to take part in the 1982 World Cup final where he went on to become the leading scorer in the tournament as Italy won the cup for the third time. The inability of the Italian authorities to deal with the causes of corruption was highlighted six years later. *Totonero* was replicated on a wider scale in 1986. This time nine teams were relegated or deducted points and as many as seventeen coaches and thirty-four players were suspended.

Deregulation in the Craxi years: The emergence of neo-television

The 1980s represented a significant shift in Italian football. Deregulation and changes to the Italian political economy facilitated a major transformation of Italian football. Significantly, deregulation of television directly impacted the presentation of football. This led to an increased popularity of the sport. The following section will illustrate the importance of television in the world of football. Significant focus will be placed on Silvio Berlusconi's contribution in transforming Italian television and football. Mirroring the continued challenge to the legitimacy of the FIGC, this section will show how Berlusconi continually challenged the legitimacy of the state, and the state broadcaster RAI. It will also demonstrate how connections between businesses and football intensified as leading organizations incorporated football clubs into their family of businesses. Despite the initial success, however, the system collapsed at the end of the twentieth century.

Global deregulation has re-articulated the interrelations between sport and industry. In contrast to earlier forms of industrial patronage, post-industrial patronage centres on services and information, particularly television. The resulting 'sport-media complex' (Maguire 1999), or '*media-calcio*' (Porro 2008), provides a mutually beneficial relationship. Football was the primary component of Berlusconi's programming despite regulations preventing the broadcast of live footage. Italy's victory in the 1982 World Cup led to an upsurge of interest in football. This coincided with the newly emerging commercial networks that were seeking to increase viewership and advertising revenue. Berlusconi announced his entry into football broadcasting in 1980 by purchasing the rights for £1 million to an international event called the *Mundialito*. This mini tournament brought together all winners of previous World Cups in Uruguay. Berlusconi's television networks would also broadcast friendly football tournaments so as not to conflict with RAI's monopoly of official tournaments.

Mediaset's style contrasted with the state-controlled and heavily regulated RAI channels. This fuelled consumer demand for televised matches and the shows focused on football. Owing to regulations preventing the broadcast of live images, neo-television led football debate shows to proliferate. The principal purpose of these programmes was to talk about football and the live matches became superfluous to the debate that was taking place in the studio. Outside broadcasts provided accounts of live matches, while back in the studio,

the important features of the matches were simulated in various ways. Often, chalkboards were used to illustrate the players' position as the action unfolded. Telelombardia, for example, used ex-footballers to re-create the goals, often with more spectacular effects (Foot 2006). Computer-generated players have also been used to re-create the goals and have removed the human element altogether. When debating games, the *moviola* (slow motion replay) was extensively implemented to decide if a player was offside, if contact was made with a player in the penalty area or if a goal was actually handball. The *moviola* was also used to display other controversial events. For example, in September 2008, when the Milan and Italy midfielder Gennaro Gattuso was injured after falling backwards into the tunnel leading out from the changing rooms, the event was replayed and debated for several minutes, and the *moviola* was used more than twenty times to show how Gattuso fell into the tunnel.

Without any live footage of football, the debate becomes a fragmented collection of spectacles. Reflecting similar transformations in politics, a charismatic host helps to appeal to a wide audience and provide cohesion. Like the neo-television variety shows, football shows create hosts who are personalities. Foot (2006) dubs this phenomenon 'Biscardism' after Aldo Biscardi, the host of the longest-running football show *Il Processo* (The Trial). Personality hosts, like Biscardi, facilitate the emotion and spectacle of the debate. They are supported by partisan pundits who do not hide the fact that they are fans and show the excitement of the game taking place. They discuss the team, manager and performance and reflect the passion of the fans at home. The fan-pundits, such as AC Milan fan and pundit Tiziano Crudelli, have become celebrities in their own right. Crudelli has capitalized on this persona by making a series of adverts for the British betting firm Ladbrokes.

The debate in the studio is fuelled by audience participation. Many shows will have a studio audience who contribute opinions. Media technology also extends this debate into the homes of the viewers. Fans at home send emails, tweets and text messages, and these are read out by another (usually female) host. These actions stimulate a dialogue and emotional interaction that maintains interest in the sport. Football not just is played during the ninety minutes on a Saturday or Sunday but is replayed throughout the week in the conversations of fans (Nowell-Smith 1979). Television shows like *Il Processo* create and re-create the events throughout the week. They provide a space for debate to maintain the emotional involvement of fans. These shows are so popular that they account for the top twenty-five most-watched shows in Italy (Baroncelli and Lago 2006).

Berlusconi enters the football field: AC Milan and the transformation of football

Alongside transforming the media presentation and popularity of football, Berlusconi transformed the operation of football. He introduced a 'business'-orientated, media-friendly approach to football that Liguori (2003) has called *neo-calcio* (neo-football) and Russo (2005) dubbed *ultracalcio*. AC Milan was one of the most successful clubs in Italy but had endured a difficult start in the 1980s. It was relegated for its role in the Totocalcio betting scandal of 1980, and despite winning Serie B the following year, it was relegated again in 1982. A second promotion saw them become a mid-table Serie A side and in serious financial turmoil. In March 1986, Berlusconi purchased the club he supported as a child, and commenced a major restructuring. Berlusconi signalled his intentions as he unveiled the team in July 1986. They arrived by helicopter to the stadium, to the tune of 'The Ride of the Valkyries' in front of 10,000 fans. Berlusconi then utilized his television channels to broadcast the event. Berlusconi was signalling a new approach to football. In his own words, he stated that 'I knew very well that people would laugh at me, even treat me with irony. But we needed to show that the whole way of thinking at Milan had changed' (Ginsborg 2004, p. 53). By turning it into a media-orientated spectacle, he was transforming the way the game was organized, not just at Milan but across Italy and Europe.

Berlusconi was initially successful at Milan as he combined his media panache and business acumen. He viewed the club as a business organization and placed the club under the management of some of his senior managers of his umbrella company, Fininvest (Poli 2001; Porro and Russo 2000). The role and importance of the Milan press office was transformed as Berlusconi carefully cultivated the image of the football club. To increase customers, Berlusconi targeted season ticket sales using television commercials created by his advertising company, Publitalia. He then broadcast these on his television channels. Automatic booking systems for the season tickets were introduced as well as designated seating. The popularity of football after the 1982 World Cup win saw Italy successfully bid for the 1990 World Cup. This led to a major state-funded renovation project of Italian stadiums. This saw Milan's San Siro stadium transformed into a world-class, all-seater stadium. The combination of a comfortable stadium, improved ticketing and extensive marketing saw Milan sell over 65,000 season tickets for the 1986-7 season (Ginsborg 2004).

Berlusconi also sought to increase revenue through merchandising. The range of the club's playing kits and other official merchandise were increased to provide more marketing possibilities. As a consequence, fans could use post-Fordist consumption to display their football identity. These identities were strengthened through the promotion of official supporters' clubs. Supporters' clubs were affiliated to the football club and provided additional benefits to club members. Official merchandising became available to club members, as well as to a new official Milan magazine, *Forza Milan*. This gave Berlusconi another platform to promote his personal and business interests. The covers of the magazine would depict the president in a variety of poses and refer to his channels when highlighting information regarding AC Milan. In addition, Berlusconi introduced other commercial initiatives, such as discounts on merchandise and events, that were advertised through his various media outlets. Brand loyalty was also fostered through events that players would attend, thus giving fans proximity to the stars of the club. As a result of these transformations, by the early 1990s, there were over 350,000 members in the AC Milan official supporters' clubs.

Television was central to Berlusconi's strategy. He took every opportunity to promote AC Milan on his channels by broadcasting a range of 'pseudo-events'. Team unveilings, such as his the team's helicopter entrance in 1986, were televised. Training sessions were broadcast, as well as the events where fans and players met. The club's annual budget was even televised on one occasion. He was careful, however, not to over-saturate the coverage of actual matches so that he could maintain a future market for pay-per-view. Friendly matches and international tournaments were transmitted, but Serie A matches were carefully controlled. With this coordinated use of television, commercial television rights became a central element of the club's income. In 1982, television rights provided \$2 million to the clubs. This rose to \$510 million by 1998 as pay-per-view and commercial television responded to the larger audience for football.

Deregulation of television broadcasting has directly impacted European and national leagues and has had a significant effect in Italy. As a consequence of complete deregulation of television and the weakness of the FIGC and *Lega Calcio*, the elite clubs successfully lobbied to negotiate individual television rights. This has permitted *all* matches in the top two divisions to be broadcast live on pay-per-view subscription channels. Unlike the more regulated English Premier League, which restricts the broadcasting of live football to three o'clock on a Saturday to encourage stadium attendance, any fan of Serie A and Serie B can watch their club every week without leaving their home. Combined with the problems affecting football in Italy, television deregulation is contributing to the

decline in attendance in Italian football. This is impacting the club's ability to generate revenue from fans at the stadium.

Television has also impacted the revenue of Italian football clubs by strengthening the elite clubs. The English Premier League and German Bundesliga operate with collective television contracts. This ensures greater parity of income among clubs and provides for a more competitive league (Morrow 1999; Hamil et al. 2010). However, until 2010, Italian football clubs negotiated television deals independently. This gave more power and money to the elite clubs who could guarantee a larger television audience and helped reinforce their hegemony. These renegotiations contributed to the profound restructuring of the finances of Italian football clubs throughout the 1990s. For example, Juventus was the most successful and best-supported club in Italy, and in 2010, they derived 65 per cent of their revenue from television deals. The Italian giants could generate only 8 per cent from ticket sales on matchdays (Deloitte and Touche 2010). Elsewhere, television revenue accounted for nearly 60 per cent of both Inter and Roma's income. Even with the more commercial approach of AC Milan, television revenue provided half of the club's income. In contrast, when Berlusconi purchased AC Milan in 1986, 92 per cent of its revenue came from ticket sales. With the full range of matches being broadcast live every weekend, as well as the over-reliance on television income, clubs were losing fans at the stadium, contributing to the decline in attendance.

The boundaries of spectacle and regulation in football were pushed by Berlusconi as he had previously done with television. In 1987, he deployed Arrigo Sacchi as coach, a man who had never played the game professionally but knew how to organize a team. Sacchi abandoned man-marking and introduced zonal defending, which allowed the team to play a high-tempo pressing game. This style of play was in stark contrast to the staid, *catenaccio* defensive style that typified many Italian sides in the post-war period. This style of play was well complemented by the signing of three of the best players in the world – the Dutch trio of Ruud Gullit, Frank Rijkaard and Marco van Basten. In keeping with many European nations, Italy placed restrictions on the number of foreign players who could play in each match. Throughout the 1980s the number of foreigners permitted in a team fluctuated between zero and three, before the Bosman rule in 1995 led to the suspension of quota for European players. In 1992, Jean-Pierre Papin was signed from Marseilles for a world-record fee of £10 million. This introduced the squad system to European football as Milan already had the full quota of foreign players. It prevented their rivals from having one of the best players in Europe and also provided a squad strong enough to compete

on all fronts. It is also alleged that patrimonial practices were utilized at Milan in order to maintain a financial advantage. After the signing of Jean-Pierre Papin, Milan paid another world-record fee of £13 million for Gianluigi Lentini. Milan was accused of paying the Torino chairman £5 million outside of the accounts to obtain Lentini's approval (Lane 2004). As has occurred frequently in Berlusconi's legal career, the club was eventually acquitted in 2002 due to statute of limitations as the trial ran out of time.

Milan also implemented a professional training and recruitment programme to ensure that best players were signed. As Hoberman (1992) has argued, professional sport has become more influenced by sport science, which has turned athletes into 'mortal engines'. The MilanLab is based at the Milanello training facility of the club.² It utilizes extensive research to forecast physical and psychological aptitude. Through the PAS (Predictive Analysis Server) technology they predict the possible risks to the players. This allows the club to support their current players and predict which possible new players will be able to fulfil their role at the club. As the originator and head of MilanLab, Jean Pierre Meersseman states: 'If you can predict the possibility of injuries, you stop the player before it happens' (Wilson 2009). An apposite example occurred in 2009 when Milan wanted to sign Aly Cissokho from Porto. Milan's president, Adriano Galliani said, 'Our doctors found some problems with his teeth which cause muscular trouble, which he has and which could deteriorate' (Carminati 2009). Cissokho's dental problem indicated a potential spinal problem. The deal was subsequently rescinded.

Many other clubs have initiated medical support for footballers. In many cases support came from pharmaceutical products that were outside regulations. Star players of Napoli's *scudetto* winning team were found guilty of drug abuse. Notably, this included their talismanic captain and star, Maradona, who was addicted to cocaine and was banned for the use of ephedrine in 1991. Napoli later admitted that it circumvented the dope tests through the switching of samples (Foot 2006). In 1998 the Roma manager, Zdenek Zemen, suggested that 'Football must get out of the pharmacy' (Eve and Goodbody 2004; Alegi 2007; Goldblatt 2007; Malcolm and Waddington 2008). These allegations led to an investigation that found that Juventus had 281 different pharmaceutical products, although most of these were permitted prescription substances. Many players demonstrated evidence of increased red-blood-cell levels, suggesting the possible use of EPO (and at levels that would lead to bans in cycling). In a classic 'Italian solution', Juventus was found not guilty as it could not be proved that they had ordered the administration of drugs. However, the doctor, Riccardo

Agricola, was sentenced twenty-two months but was subsequently cleared on appeal. A further doping scandal emerged in 2001 when Dutch stars Jaap Stam and Edgar Davids and Fernando Couto of Portugal were found guilty of using nandrolone. Four years later, a startling footage emerged of the Parma player Fabio Cannavaro (and future World Cup-winning captain) injecting himself with a substance he later claimed as 'vitamins'. Despite increased testing from the authorities, the clubs were continuing to circumvent the regulations in order to achieve success.

The success of Milan's strategies was realized both on and off the pitch. Within two years of Berlusconi's purchases, Milan had won the *scudetto*, and the success was repeated the following year with the European Cup. In the six years between 1988 and 1994, AC Milan won four *scudetti*, three European Championships, two Intercontinental Cups, and three Supercups. They had been transformed into a financial and football global super club. The success of Berlusconi's model relied on continual on-field success and maximized television income. This meant that for sustained success in European competition, maximum revenue was required. The knockout structure of the European Cup meant that there was always a danger of large clubs, such as AC Milan, being knocked out by smaller clubs. In Berlusconi's own words, 'The European Cup has become a historical anachronism. It is economic nonsense that a club such as Milan might be eliminated in the first round. It is not modern thinking' (King 2003, p. 140). In addition to the clubs, the national broadcasters and UEFA would lose revenue through the early elimination of larger clubs. This was observed in 1986 when both Juventus and Real Madrid were eliminated before the quarter finals of the competition. As a consequence, UEFA introduced seeding to the competition, before introducing a coefficient system designed to calculate the success of individual clubs and individual leagues. As King (2003, p. 139) highlights, 'The seeding system was a conscious concession to the big clubs in the biggest markets.' By weighting the competition in favour of the larger clubs from the larger leagues, UEFA could ensure that they could participate longer in the competition. This in turn provided additional television revenue and greater exposure and revenue for the clubs, and which in turn helped maintain their hegemonic position.

Television revenue and market exposure was crucial for the transformation of the European Cup in 1992. Significantly, Silvio Berlusconi was a key driver of this transformation. In 1988, Berlusconi and the president of Real Madrid, Ramon Mendoza, proposed a new European competition based on the World Cup format of mini-leagues, with the winner of each group progressing to a knockout quarter-final. When UEFA rejected this idea, Berlusconi commissioned

Alex Fynn of Saatchi and Saatchi to propose a blueprint for the reform of European football. Although Fynn's proposal of a regional Super League was not implemented, it created the right environment for further debate. Two years later, Ramon Mendoza and the chairman of Rangers, David Murray, submitted another proposal for a mini-league that was adopted by UEFA for the 1991-2 season. The following year, UEFA rebranded the competition as the Champions League. The formation of the Champions League created a new brand that was used to market the competition to investors. Replicating similar commercial practices at the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup, UEFA created a 'family' of corporate sponsors who had exclusive rights to the Champions League. Meanwhile, television packages were sold to the highest bidder based on market share. Therefore, those nations with the largest television market, such as England, Italy, Spain, Germany and France, paid more for the exclusive rights to broadcast the competition. It also provided increased revenue to UEFA and the participating football clubs, instigating a transformation of Italian football.

Italian football in the global market

Although Italian football club owners have been reluctant to integrate foreign capital into their clubs for fear of losing control, there are indications that this approach may be softening. After the death of her father, Rosella Sensi sold a majority of her shares in Roma to Thomas DiBenedetto in 2011. As an Italian-American, DiBenedetto is not only indicative of the 'transnational capitalist class' (Sklair 2001) of football club owners, but also reinforces Castells' (1996) and Millward's (2011) notion of international collaborative networks operating globally. DiBenedetto is also a partner in Fenway Sports Ltd, which is the parent company of the Boston Red Sox baseball team and the Liverpool football team, and he also owns shares in a Nascar racing team. Fenway Sports Ltd not only reinforces Castells' (and Millward's) observations of transnational global networks but also adheres to Maguire's (1999) concept of the 'sport-media complex'. Fenway own two high-profile sports teams in separate continents; they also own an 80 per cent share of a regional television network dedicated to sport, NESN. In addition, the company is also part-owned by The New York Times media company. Significantly, Roma has also signed an agreement with Disney that sees Roma visit Florida to take part in a tournament. Roma's CEO, Italo Zanzi, stated that 'Our partnership

with Disney is an important part of our efforts to connect with young fans worldwide' (Corriere della Sera 2014). Once again global sport and global media are horizontally and vertically integrated.

Inter has also been subject to foreign investment. In October 2012, an Indonesian businessman, Erick Thohir, bought a 70 per cent share of Inter. Massimo Moratti remained at the club as honorary chairman. Thohir's business activities include print and television media. Significantly, he also owns DC United in the North American Major League Soccer as well as a football club in Indonesia called Persib Bandung. Like DiBenedetto at Roma, collaborative networks are expanding globally, and into Italy. Millward (2011) has highlighted how the profitability and potential scope for global expansion of the English Premier League attracted investment from global entrepreneurs. Although this chapter has highlighted how some 'new directors' began to purchase Italian football clubs in the 1980s, this has not automatically been driven by the profit motive and consequently this has not attracted investment from outside of Italy. DiBenedetto's and Thohir's purchase of Roma and Inter are potentially significant for the future of Italian football.

It should be noted, however, that foreign investment is not necessarily new in Italy. As elsewhere in Italian football, foreign investment has helped strengthen political and business networks outside of the sport. A politically significant connection was between the regime of Colonel Gaddafi in Libya and Italian football (Foot 2006). There are long-standing ties between Libya and Italy as the former was an Italian colony. This gave Italian companies a historical advantage when accessing Libya's oil reserves. As the driver of the Italian post-war 'Miracle', Fiat was indebted to Libyan oil and the company forged strong links with Gaddafi's regime. Football became a space where these links could be reinforced. Gaddafi purchased shares in Juventus, who were owned by the Agnelli family that owned Fiat. Furthermore, the state-owned oil company, Tamoil, was an official sponsor of Juventus from 2002 to 2007. Foreign investment can come in various guises. Global geopolitics also entered the Italian football field when Saad-Ali Gaddafi, Colonel Gaddafi's son, signed for Luciano Gaucci's Perugia. Although Gaddafi did not play many minutes of football in the Italian league, his appearances were politically significant, when Gaucci stated that 'Berlusconi called me up and encouraged me. He told me that having Qaddafi in the team is helping us build a relationship with Libya. If he plays badly, he plays badly. So be it.' (Foot 2011). The *quid pro quo* of Italian politics influenced Italian football once more. Another politically significant investment took

place in October 2012 when the Al Thani family began negotiations with Silvio Berlusconi about the future of AC Milan. The Al Thani family from Qatar also owns the controlling interest in Paris Saint-Germain, to whom AC Milan sold Ibrahimovic and Thiago Motta for €80 million in the summer of 2012. The sale of these players, and no subsequent investment in new players by Berlusconi, prompted many to question Berlusconi's desire to maintain AC Milan. The crisis was exemplified when the club offered to refund the season tickets of angry fans who felt that the club had lost ambition after the sale of their two star players. This continued after the club's relatively poor start to the 2012-13 season and the club took the unprecedented step of pleading with fans to attend the Derby della Madonnina with Inter, one of Europe's biggest fixtures. The well-publicized financial problems of Fininvest, resulting from fines levied as a result of corruption, led many to speculate that Berlusconi did not have the resources to invest in Milan. The announcement of the discussion with the investors from Qatar at least highlighted the desire to bring in new investment.

Significantly, part of the proposed investment was to improve the stadium facilities of the club. Part of the debate of Milan's poor start to the 2012-13 season was due to the state of the pitch at the San Siro. Since the stadium was renovated for the Italia '90 World Cup and had a roof installed, the shadow from the new structure inhibited grass growth. Inter and Milan had to resurface the pitch up to five times a year at a cost of €200,000. In the summer of 2012 they installed a semi-artificial pitch to rectify this problem, but with the added result of impacting Inter and Milan's performances. By investing in a new stadium, or giving the San Siro a complete refurbishment, the club could address the problems of the pitch, as well as introduce a better matchday experience for fans. In contrast to the worst sales of season tickets since Berlusconi took over, Juventus had record season ticket sales. The Turin club had traditionally found it difficult to attract many fans as they come from across the peninsula. With the construction of their new stadium in 2011, however, they began to transform the matchday experience and attract more fans, which would bolster the matchday revenues for the club.

The Qatar deal reinforces Castells' and Millwards's notion of collaborative global networks. Much of Berlusconi's financial success has been derived from his establishment and ownership of the television organization Mediaset. Collaboration between Mediaset and Al Jazeera had been part of the negotiations with the Al Thani family. Al Jazeera is an apposite example of a global media organization that utilizes internet and satellite technology to access

and broadcast its content. It also operates outside the Western hegemony and draws its influence from across the Middle East, Asia and Africa. Al Jazeera is also owned by members of the Al Thani family, who are also exhibiting the tendencies of the 'sport-media complex'. Not only do they own a global media company, but also they own the controlling interest in Paris Saint-Germain, and potentially own a stake in AC Milan. With family groups controlling significant interests in sport and media, they are able to draw on a variety of patrimonial networks to collaborate and exert influence. With Berlusconi and the Al Thanis, this collaboration will operate across football *and* media. Significantly for both parties, the personalized networks that operate also extend into politics. As a royal family in the Middle East, the Al Thanis are connected to governments across the geopolitically significant Middle East region, especially as a member of OPEC. Furthermore, Berlusconi is personally connected to other leading political figures across Europe, including Vladimir Putin in Russia. Business and football creates a space where these networks can be reinforced.

Summary

Italian football has undergone a series of transformations throughout the twentieth century. From its English roots, various authorities, from the federation and fascist government tried to 'Italianize' the sport. English words were removed and Italian traditions implemented. Industrial leaders began investing in football clubs and the teams from the industrial heartlands of Turin and Milan started to dominate. This continued after the Second World War and the economic Miracle. Although Torino went into decline after Superga, the clubs from these cities established a hegemonic position that lasted until the 1970s and the social and economic problems of the time. The processes of globalization that had transformed sport elsewhere was starting to demonstrate their effect in Italy. Silvio Berlusconi introduced the media spectacle to football and a commercial approach to the sport. The forming of the Champions League helped establish a European group of elite clubs, and this contributed to the success and revenues of Juventus, Milan and Inter. With the complete deregulation of television contracts, the hegemonic position of the three elite clubs had been re-established by the 1990s.

Despite Italy broadly following wider global processes throughout the history of the game, certain specific features pervade. Replicating the wider crisis of

legitimacy of the state, the Federation also struggled to impose itself upon the football clubs. The elite clubs have consistently challenged the authority of the FIGC. From Milan, Genoa and Torino boycotting the 1908 championship in retaliation to the ban on foreign players to the pushing the boundaries of acceptable doping, the Federation has consistently failed to establish its legitimacy. This has been undermined by its own actions. Revoking bans on players shows the Federation as toothless, especially in the case of Paolo Rossi, who was permitted to rejoin the Italian national team for the World Cup after *Totonero*. The dense power networks that exist across business, politics and the Federation help maintain the hegemonic position of the elite clubs. The initial success of the globalized commercial media practices briefly permitted Fiorentina, Roma, Parma and Lazio to join the elite group. Yet their success was built on unstable foundations. The following chapter illustrates how the Italian game went bankrupt at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Financial irregularities and match-fixing scandals blighted the Italian game and demonstrated the bankruptcy of the patrimonial system. The following chapter builds on this historical analysis to highlight how financial problems and scandal have intensified since the 1990s as power has concentrated around a few specific personalized networks.