

"They are perhaps the most nationalist people in the world": English nationalism during the 2012 Diamond Jubilee and London Olympic Games [abstract only]

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“They are perhaps the most nationalist people in the world”: English nationalism during the 2012 Diamond Jubilee and London Olympic Games

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Abstract

The 2012 London Olympic Games provided Britain a unique opportunity to celebrate its national identity, character and culture. However, despite the success of ‘Team GB’, references to English nationalism, amongst the English press, were largely absent. Indeed, this stood in contrast to examinations of newspaper coverage in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, where constructions of national identity were vividly represented. Certainly, whereas depictions of English culture may be widely known, the distinct lack of cultural expression in areas such as the media, reveal a notable polarity between England and the other home nations. In the face of a possible Scottish exit from the Act of Union and in light of recent comments by English footballer, Jack Wilshere, the desire for England to have its own ‘constitutive story’ within Britain, presents an opportunity to discuss and debate English identity, post 2012 (Colley & Lodge, 2013). Accordingly, this paper will present a selection of the English press’ coverage on both the Diamond Jubilee and London Olympic Ceremonies in order to reveal how both tabloid and broadsheet publications reflected notions of anxiety, self-deprecation and national malaise. Here, it will be argued that while such notions suggest a lingering attachment to the former British Empire, when placed in the context of Britain’s post-imperial decline, these findings can help to elucidate upon discussions pertaining to English national identity, the post-imperial decline of Britain and the possibility of an independent Scotland.