

THE SOCCER WAR:
The social implications of a 100 hour war
between El Salvador and Honduras

By
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Le Colonel Fernando Soto Henriquez filmé par la télévision devant le FAH 609



Returning from the West Indies in the late nineteenth century, Captain Lorenzo D. Baker of Wellfleet apathetically threw a peculiar yellow fruit into his cargo ship. Although Captain Baker failed to realize the fortuitous nature of this action, upon arriving in the United States, he discovered the commercial potential of the now ubiquitous fruit known as the banana. Due to an extraordinary amount of success, Captain Baker's original enterprise merged with the Boston Fruit Company in 1885 and began a process of acquiring every fruit trading company in Central America. By 1899, the Boston Fruit Company had become a virtual monopoly on the fruit trading landscape. Subsequently, this monolithic company changed its name to the now infamous moniker the United Fruit Company, thereby establishing the "greatest of all tropical fruit shippers and the hated octopus of anti-gringo legend."¹

Approximately seventy years after this obscure footnote in the history of the banana trade, Honduras and El Salvador erupted in war on July 14, 1969. Prior to this day, these countries' soccer teams met for the first time in a qualifying round for the World Cup Soccer Championship. Due to a seemingly spontaneous emergence of nationalistic identity, the citizens of these countries began to physically threaten spectators at their respective home games. Unfortunately, because of a sensationalistic media grossly exaggerating hostilities, these two countries engaged in a 100-hour war that would forever be labeled as the 1969 Soccer War.

In hindsight, historians point out that this war did not emerge as a result of a simple soccer game. In fact, some scholars point to Captain Baker's innocuous beginnings as one of the early precursors to this infamous conflict. However, to assert that Captain Baker is the sole cause for a war that left thousands dead, created 100,000 refugees, obliterated El Salvador's oil refining industry, and paralyzed any hope for a unified Central America would be simplistic at best. Indeed, the capitalistic dynamic introduced by the banana companies contributed to the massive immigration problems between El Salvador and Honduras during the 1920s. In turn, this created tense situation between these two relatively friendly

republics. Nevertheless, culpability also rests at the feet of numerous accomplices ranging from the governments and oligarchies of El Salvador and Honduras to a history plagued by border disputes. Unfortunately, the literature on this moment in history has yet to completely incorporate every multifarious motivation behind this event. For this reason, this analysis will examine the work of Thomas Anderson, William Durham,² Mary Martz,³ and Ryszard Kapuściński.⁴ Combining these authors' works, this analysis will create a complete historiography of this event. Simultaneously, the following discussion will elucidate the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments, while encapsulating their theses within a theoretical framework. Aiding in this process, this study will examine the work of Benedict Anderson⁵ and Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan.⁶ Together, these authors supply a framework for understanding the construction of nationalism and the ability of a decentralized nation to control its borders.

Excluding the work of Ryszard Kapuściński and William Durham, the authors discussed in this analysis point to nationalism as a key factor behind the Soccer War's manifestation. In this regard, Anderson's seminal work, *Imagined Communities*, offers a plethora of starting points for examining the construction of nationalism. According to Anderson, scholars historically viewed nationalism within an ideological context. Because of the limiting aspect of this origin, he believes that an individual's sense of nationality must incorporate the personal and cultural feelings associated with belonging to a nation. As Anderson suggests:

It would, I think, make things easier if one treated [nationalism] as if it belonged with 'kinship and 'religion', rather than with 'liberalism' or 'fascism'.⁷

Building from this ontological origin, Anderson traces the precipitous demise of cosmological conceptions of power, the abolishment of a single script-language created solely for the elites' utilization, and an emerging historical awareness of universal egalitarianism. Anderson then suggests that the rise of print capitalism created the possibility "for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves...in profoundly new ways."⁸ The impetus for this new dialectic, according to the author, is complimented

by the rise of capitalism and its relentless pursuit of new markets. Through this economic institution's proliferation, new dialects and languages seep into the vernacular of print-language. This has the effect of creating a new nationalistic phenomenon that allows members of a community to imagine themselves as part of a broader entity. It is with this proliferation of print-capitalism, in other words, that nations are capable of instilling a collective cultural affinity between diverse groups residing in a particular geographically contained area. Based on a common language, this incipient form of nationalism lures individuals into conceptualizing their part in an "imagined community." In turn, this identification with a broader, nationalistic identity is powerful enough to induce millions of people to die for a cause as arbitrary as borders or nationalistic pride.

Even more interesting is the fact that those who typically die for the superficial elements associated with nationalism tend to materialize from marginalized and destitute populations. As Anderson states, "this willingness to sacrifice on the part of comfortable classes is food for thought."⁹ Ironically, the author proposes this mental quest as it relates to the Americas. He suggests that this area of the world did not originally share a common language. Yet, due to an increasing recognition of commonality between Creole functionaries, an American nationalistic identity emerged in 1810 with the quest for independence from Spain, twenty years before the rise of a European nationalism. Anderson attempts to reconcile the fact that they did not share a common language by suggesting that the Creole functionaries of the Spanish empire shared a common journey with the European population in Spain. In other words, they "had virtually the same relationship to arms, disease, Christianity and European culture as the metropolitan."¹⁰ This commonality created a reason for a mutually beneficial consolidation throughout the Americas.

Anderson points to another element that is critical for understanding this nationalistic consolidation. Ostensibly, with the advent of the printing press in North America, printers "discovered a new source of income—the newspaper."¹¹ Consequently, as

newspapers infiltrated the expansive landmass of New Spain, a new means of conceptualizing an “imagined community” began to consolidate the Creole functionaries. As more creoles came into contact through the printed word, they began to demand recognition as an equal functionary in a colonial state. Indeed, as this analysis will illustrate in El Salvador and Honduras, the ubiquitous nature of the newspaper is critical for understanding how a nationalistic hysteria is achieved.

Although Anderson’s thesis offers a plethora of intriguing beginnings for understanding the rise of nationalism in Honduras and El Salvador, his argument contains a few flaws that should be discussed before applying it to the nationalistic discourse behind the 1969 Soccer War. First, his ontological belief that nationalism is a religious or dynastic construction justifiably merits recognition. Nevertheless, when one considers the rhetorical question: can one “imagine a Tomb of the Unknown Marxist?”¹² it seems problematic to completely discredit ideology as not having the capability to induce people to die for a cause. Clearly, some ideology exists in any country’s appeal to nationalism. Consider the liberal rhetoric for democracy and freedom in the United States. Without a doubt, this country uses ideology as a means of galvanizing support for a war. Furthermore, the thousands of Salvadorans who died in the 1980s for embracing a Marxist belief in agrarian reform did not sacrifice their lives for an elite oligarchy. On the contrary, nationalism could no longer disguise the gross inequities in this country, and as a result, civil war ensued. Perhaps Anderson would suggest that these revolutionaries adhered to a subaltern imagined community, nevertheless he does not address the issue of rebellions and revolts in his thesis.

Second, Anderson fails to consider the ambiguity that arises when peasants and indigenous people are fearful of an oppressive government. In fact, as the journalist Ryszard Kapuściński will point out, fear of the government was a powerful influence for fighting in the Soccer War, especially for those in the Honduran contingent. Renato Rosaldo and William Flores make a similar critique of Anderson as it pertains to their research of Latino identity in San Jose, California.¹³ According to these authors, Anderson perceives the

construction of nationalism through state elites and neglects to include the “subordinated, marginal, or excluded groups” that are inherently involved in the process.¹⁴ Furthermore, one has to question Anderson’s monolithic emphasis on language. Reading his work it is clear that without the proliferation of capitalism and its spread of technology, advances such as the printing press would not have had the impact they did. In addition, Anderson emphasizes technological advances and yet marginally discusses radio, arguing that it is an ally of the print medium. Furthermore, he completely neglects the proliferation of video language, which exists throughout Latin America in the form of the ubiquitous television set. Considering the way the media, particularly radio, instilled a nationalistic hysteria within the populations of Honduras and El Salvador, it seems particularly absurd to use print as the only means of creating a sense of nationalistic identity. In fact, in the case of the Soccer War, it seems that even a sport as trivial as soccer has the power to conjure up a heightened sense of nationalism. Again, Rosaldo and Flores adhere to a similar point-of-view. In their research, Latinos did not use print as a means of creating community, instead they relied heavily upon public celebration and protest rallies.¹⁵ From this perspective, it seems necessary to expand on Anderson’s thesis. Indeed, capitalism and the printing press allow nationalistic rhetoric to flourish, but an analysis on nationalism should examine other forms of creating a nationalistic consciousness as well.

Before moving to a discussion that incorporates Anderson’s thesis within the causes of the Soccer War, it is important to briefly discuss an element of Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson’s thesis on border identity. According to these authors, “the state cannot always control the political structures which it establishes at its extremities.”¹⁶ Furthermore, they point to ‘frontiers of culture’ as a critical factor in determining a state’s effectiveness within a border area. They suggest that it is the strength of the state that determines how cultural ties in a border area are utilized.¹⁷ This is especially pertinent to the conflict between Honduras and El Salvador because, as we will see, the decentralized nature of these nations hindered their ability to control migration at their borders. Perhaps

if these nations possessed the ability to control their borders from a more centralized and controlling system, the migration and then repatriation of Salvadorans into Honduras would have never occurred. Because some scholars argue that the true impetus behind the 1969 Soccer War is this fact, it is important to acknowledge the inability of these states to control their borders effectively. Yet, to understand the complete veracity of this claim, this analysis must turn towards three different authors' conceptions of why two countries with relatively similar cultures, languages, and ideologies went to war on July 14, 1969.

Two days after Honduras and El Salvador engaged in war, a New York Times article quoted a diplomat as suggesting that the sources of this war were "telegraphed a long, long time ago."¹⁸ Indeed, as this analysis previously suggested, many of the historical trappings for this war began in 1899 with the inception of the United Fruit Company. Tracing the implications that abounded after this corporation came into existence, William Durham constructs a lucid argument that combines history with ecology and, ultimately, refutes the myth that the Soccer War was strictly a manifestation of population density and Malthusian principles of resource scarcity. According to Durham, "we must extend models of resource competition to include a distributional component."¹⁹ To conceptualize this thesis, Durham begins with the introduction and expansion of coffee production in El Salvador during the 1850s. According to this author, in 1866 coffee exports accounted for 10 percent of the country's exports, but by 1915 they increased to include 85 percent of the market in El Salvador.²⁰ Durham believes that:

This dramatic expansion in the cultivation of coffee for the external market is sometimes ignored by those who claim that the destruction of El Salvador's forest cover is the result of population growth.²¹

From here, the author suggests that this massive coffee expansion created a temporary shortage of basic food crops (a process that would continue into the distant future). This, in turn, led to a sharp increase in "prices followed by the first sizable imports of food in the country's history."²² Dramatically, Durham justifies this assertion by pointing to statistics

such as maize prices increasing 100 percent, rice increasing 300 percent, and beans increasing 225 percent between 1922 and 1926.

With this in mind, Durham agrees that aggregate statistics from El Salvador substantiate the claim that rapid population growth accounted for the increasing scarcity in food and land among the peasants. Nevertheless, he points to a statistical myopia that ignores the fact that government and foreign investors converted large tracts of communal land, known as ejidos, into farms that specialized in export commodities. In fact, Durham traces this trend as far back as 1520 with the introduction of the encomienda system by the Spanish. Because of this system, large haciendas were able to incorporate ejidos into land utilized for indigo production. As a result of this nefarious practice, peasants and indigenous communities became dependent upon wage labor, which in turn deteriorated their ability to live a subsistence lifestyle. Then, in 1881, the Salvadoran government officially abolished the traditional communal land system and issued the decree:

The existence of lands under the ownership of comunidades impedes agricultural development, obstructs the circulation of wealth, and weakens family bonds and the independence of the individual. Their existence is contrary to the economic and social principles that the Republic has accepted.²³

To reiterate, the aggregate affect of this gradual expropriation of land to local elites and foreign investors resulted in a rapid drop in the food supply, as the Salvadoran population continued to grow throughout the twentieth century.

By 1976, the United Nations estimated that the Salvadoran population density was 190 people per square kilometer. At the time, that was four more people per square kilometer than the world's other most populated country, India.²⁴ Furthermore, 80 percent of children under the age of 5 suffered identifiable malnutrition in 1969. On the surface, this rapid population growth, combined with an increasing scarcity of food, validates the neo-Malthusian postulation that population growth is the most devastating influence on hunger and human suffering. In the words of Thomas Malthus:

No possible form of society could prevent the almost constant action of misery upon a great part of mankind, if in a state of inequality, and upon all, if all were equal [as much as population growth]. The theory on which the truth of this position

depends appears to me so extremely clear that I feel at a loss to conjecture what part of it can be denied.²⁵

Durham, on the other hand, believes that it was not population growth as much as land distribution that was responsible for the hunger and suffering in El Salvador. He states:

To focus on aggregate data and average abundance is also to ignore an important amount of variability in the consequences of resource scarcity.²⁶

Through a comprehensive charting of this effect, Durham's hypothesis reveals a more nuanced version of the resource scarcity argument. Furthermore, Durham is historically aware of the community resistance that occurred in 1872, 1875, 1880, 1898 and 1932 when these draconian policies threatened the society at large. This only further substantiates the claim that the neo-Malthusian argument is too simplistic to accurately describe the forces behind El Salvador's population crisis. Nevertheless, from Durham's point-of-view these rebellions were a result of an economic deterministic model that fails to consider cultural identity, ideology, nationalism and government repression as reasons for instigating a revolt.

Despite this relatively important oversight, Durham continues his examination into Honduras. Like El Salvador, Honduras experienced similar forces of land expropriation with the introduction of export commodities. In Honduras, however, bananas represented the resource of choice for foreign investors and local elites. Moreover, the Honduran government also played a role in the banana industry's proliferation. As a means of luring the banana companies to their country, the government offered large tracts of land to any proprietor willing to construct railroads throughout the countryside. It is here that the United Fruit Company seized the opportunity to become the primary exporter in the region. By 1914, Durham explains, 416,500 hectares of coastal land in Honduras resided in the hands foreign investors.²⁷ At first, this consolidation of land by foreign investors did not displace peasants and indigenous groups from their communal land. Nevertheless, by 1961, a burgeoning population began to seek out new land for cultivation only to discover that they "were competitively excluded from 38 percent of the total farmland"²⁸ in their country.

As a result, rural populations migrated into the southern and western departments of Honduras, which were already densely populated.

In one of the more twisted ironies behind the Soccer War, the United Fruit Company, headquartered in San Salvador, originally recruited many of the 300,000 Salvadoran immigrants that resided in Honduras during 1969. According to Durham:

Thirty percent of all the workers on the Honduran banana plantations were Salvadorans, or about 4,800 in a total labor force of 16,000.²⁹

Despite his acknowledgement of this fact, Durham does not consider the government's role in encouraging Salvadoran labor to migrate to Honduras. According to Thomas Anderson, in 1903 the Honduran government restricted Black labor from entering into the banana plantation work force. Ostensibly, the banana companies began to look towards the people of El Salvador as a means of resolving this labor shortage.

In perhaps a more substantial oversight, Durham discusses the role of the agrarian reform law that, in 1962, "excluded all but Honduran citizens by birth from agrarian reform projects."³⁰ Yet, he does not elaborate on the tensions that this law created. Indeed, both Martz and T. Anderson point out how this law instilled a sense of nationalism among the Honduran and Salvadoran populations. According to these authors, this led to an increase in confrontational situations between these people. Furthermore, Anderson discusses how the agrarian reform laws further complicated historical border disputes between these two countries.

Overall, Durham possesses an acute historical awareness of the factors influencing the Soccer War. Without a doubt, he offers an exemplary piece of work that refutes the assertion that the Soccer War is the "best example of density-dependent processes."³¹ Fortunately, where Durham neglects to discuss the construction of nationalism and the long history of border disputes between these two countries, Thomas Anderson and Mary Martz succeed.

Because Durham's examination concentrated on an economic impetus for the Soccer War, the theses of Benedict Anderson and Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan do not

aply apply. Nevertheless, in the analyses of Thomas Anderson and Mary Martz, their framework becomes invaluable for not only conceptualizing their arguments, but also for pointing out their flaws. Like Durham, Anderson believes that the heavy migration of Salvadorans into Honduras represents one of the many causalities explaining why these two countries engaged in a brutal confrontation. In fact, because Durham provides a thorough understanding of the impetus behind this migration, Anderson refers to his work on numerous occasions. Nevertheless, a historian by discipline, Anderson also points to other historical precursors that foreshadowed the coming of the Soccer War. First, he argues that the long history of boundary disputes between these two nations served as “a smoldering source of discord” that fueled the war rhetoric in 1969. Second, he discusses how the Honduran agrarian reform law of 1962 and the creation of the National Agrarian Institute (INA) in 1961, gave authority to members of the Honduran government to displace thousands of immigrant Salvadorans from their land. As expected, this created a population crisis in El Salvador, which responded to a large influx of expatriates by closing its borders to this recently dispossessed population. Anderson further suggests that the two oligarchies in these countries entered into a tacit conspiracy where:

The Honduran oligarchy could persuade its campesinos to attack Salvadorans, thus ultimately provoking a war, while the Salvadoran Catorce³² could get the peasantry there distracted from a program of land reform by drumming up a national war with Honduras.³³

Finally, Anderson examines the role of the media and how it concomitantly sensationalized accounts of brutality between these two countries during the World Cup soccer match. Over the course of four days, this exaggerated form of journalism created a nationalistic hysteria that resulted in numerous conflicts between the people of these two nations.

Substantiating Anderson’s focus on border disputes, it is advantageous to reconsider Wilson and Donnan’s suggestion that it is difficult for a state to “control the political structures which it establishes at its extremities.” In Anderson’s analysis, this is particularly pertinent as he systematically traces the evolution between a transnational conception of a united Central America and the subsequent reality of “bitter rivalries, petty jealousies, and

political chaos³⁴ that prevented this from coming to fruition. Briefly, this conception became a reality in 1830 when Francisco Morazán, a national hero in El Salvador and Honduras, captured Guatemala City and became the first president of Central America. Since that time, “two or more countries attempted to revive the dream of unity”³⁵ but always failed to succeed. According to Anderson, the goal of unity followed a unique pattern where:

El Salvador generally took the lead...[often] supported by the weaker Honduras. Nicaragua often joined in; but Guatemala, the strongest of the Central America states, and Costa Rica, with the least populace, tended to remain aloof.³⁶

Out of this deterministic cycle, Anderson suggests that the borders between Honduras and El Salvador were relatively ambiguous throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Furthermore, the struggle to control their borders became more complicated as oligarchies decentralized their governments as a means of maintaining control over domestic and foreign policy.

This decentralization process became clearly evident in 1967 when these two countries engaged in a dispute over jurisdiction. According to Anderson:

For years, there had been intermittent struggle along the frontier, as this ill-defined area was the natural haunt of bad men of both countries who preyed upon the nationals of the neighboring territory with relative impunity, drifting back across the border to avoid arrest.³⁷

One of these “bad men,” as Anderson states, was Martínez Argueta, a cattle ranger who resided on the border between El Salvador and Honduras. Ostensibly, claiming Honduras citizenship, Argueta and his men periodically journeyed into the Salvadoran countryside and engaged in illegal activity. Over time, the Salvadoran press came to identify Argueta as “something out of the films of Pancho Villa.” According to *El Diario de Hoy*, a Salvadoran newspaper, Argueta and his men continually tortured their victims, raped women, destroyed property and participated in a form of cattle rustling throughout the Salvadoran frontier.³⁸

Then, on May 25, 1967, the Salvadoran National Guard, “supplemented by local vigilantes,” arrested Argueta, claiming that he murdered the town marshal of the Salvadoran village Lajitas. Unfortunately, Argueta happened to be a close friend of the Honduran

president, Colonel Oswaldo López Arellano. As a result, the Honduran government chastised the Salvadoran government for acting outside of its jurisdiction. To make matters worse, on June 5, 1967, forty-five Salvadorans were incarcerated after they illegally entered Honduran territory the night before. Although explanations for why these individuals crossed into Honduras's territory remain speculative, the fact of the matter was that both countries now possessed a means of bartering for their citizens' returns. With the help of the Organization of Central American States, the two countries met and agreed on a peaceful resolution that led to the releasing of their respective prisoners. Despite this pacific compromise, Anderson believes that the heightened exposure this border dispute received helped solidify a nationalistic dichotomy between the people of these two nations. In turn, this established a precedent that would be further aggravated two years later with the eruption of the Soccer War.

Although this minor skirmish foreshadowed the violent outbreak of 1969, Anderson gives equal culpability to the tension that arose between these two countries after the INA began to implement the agrarian reform law of 1962. Originally ratified under the Videla presidency, after López Arellano seized power in 1965 it remained dormant until 1969. However, with the advent of the Argueta escapade, increasing pressure from internal labor organizations and a government preference for foreign corporations, Arellano turned to Salvadoran squatters as the best way to reclaim land and appropriate it to native born Hondurans. Subsequently, in May of 1969 he encouraged the INA to begin an implementation process for Article 68, which stated that Hondurans "by birth" would receive a parcel of land from the Honduran government. Because the Arellano administration did not want to pressure the corporations to relinquish land, this tactic worked perfectly for his interests. By June of 1969, "nearly five hundred families had been officially dispossessed."³⁹

Over time, headlines such as "SALVADORANS CLEANSED FROM TEN TOWNS IN YORO" seeped into the people's consciousness. Consequently, tensions

between Honduran natives and Salvadoran squatters rose to an unprecedented height. Indeed, Anderson is thorough in examining the role the media played in creating a nationalistic hysteria. In fact, although the scholar Mary Martz focuses more heavily on the Organization of American States (OAS) and its overemphasis on nonintervention as a detrimental aspect to their ineffectiveness in the Soccer War, she also points to nationalism as an important element to the war's inception. According to Martz:

The vilification by the press, radio, and television heightened fears and antagonisms. The mass media—especially radio—played a significant role in raising public sympathies to a fever pitch.⁴⁰

Furthermore, she points out that even the OAS “felt that much of the extreme rancor between the two nations was due to incitement by the mass media.”⁴¹

Curiously, however, neither of these authors examines the theoretical underpinnings of nationalism's construction. It is here that Benedict Anderson's thesis becomes critical for understanding the inception of this phenomenon. Anderson's assertion that newspapers allowed a nationalistic identity to emerge among Creole functionaries in the Americas, for instance, helps to understand how a similar process existed for the people in El Salvador and Honduras. In fact, Thomas Anderson inherently reflects on this process when he states, “sometimes the feeling of historical unity can transcend the boundaries of diverse languages, religions, and customs.”⁴² Clearly, from this perspective, Thomas Anderson alludes to Benedict Anderson's understanding of how people identify with each other as a result of a “common journey.” Nevertheless, Benedict Anderson's work remains neglected in the analyses of both Thomas. Anderson and Martz. In fact, any form of a theoretical foundation eludes both of these author's works, and in this regard, represents a glaring flaw in their interpretations. It is hard to imagine, after all, that their work would not have benefited from an incorporation of Benedict Anderson's theory on nationalism or Wilson and Donnan's discussion of the issues behind a nation's ability to control its extremities.

In the work of the last author examined in this analysis, Ryszard Kapuściński's journalistic format offers an alternative, albeit sensationalized, account of the Soccer War.

Like Anderson and Martz, Kapu_ci_ski enumerates the multifarious attempts of the Honduran and Salvadoran media to sensationalize the war. In this regard, his journalistic point of view offers an insider's perspective. At the same time, however, Kapu_ci_ski falls into the same discursive pungency as those he is criticizing. For instance, in his sensationalized discussion of Salvadoran motivations for attacking Honduras he states:

The Salvadorans were moving to order: push through to the Atlantic, then to Europe and then the world!⁴³

Not only do these comments ignore the entire historical understanding of this war, but they also paint the Salvadoran people as adhering to a hyperbolic conception of manifest destiny. In this regard, Kapu_ci_ski's work clearly reveals a Honduran bias that offers little understanding to the reason behind this conflict.

This is not to say, however, that his work is absent of any insight into the mechanisms behind this war. In fact, in perhaps the only redeeming quality of his work, Kapu_ci_ski reveals an important element that none of the aforementioned authors fully acknowledge, fear. He does this by immersing himself in the war zone of these two nations. Although he claims to do this in order to capture the war's true pageantry, given the fact that he is a journalist by trade, it seems that his true motivation exists in the quest to sell more papers. Nevertheless, after requesting an airplane, which would transport him and his fellow colleagues "into the very midst of the fighting, into the hell of gunfire, on to ground soaked with blood,"⁴⁴ he finds himself face-to-face with a Honduran soldier. In a brief interaction, he asks the soldier why he was fighting. According to the author, the soldier replied:

That he did not know, that it was a government affair...He answered that when you live in a village it's better not to ask questions because questions arouse the suspicions of the village mayor, and then the mayor would volunteer him for the road gang, and, on the road gang, he would have to neglect his farm and his family, and then the hunger waiting for him on his return would be even greater.⁴⁵

Indeed, if Kapu_ci_ski was accurate in his translation, fear of hunger and further destitution seems to be a critical influence for peasants fighting for their country. As this analysis already discussed, this is one of Benedict Anderson's glaring flaws in his work and, as

Kapu_ci_ski illustrates, it is an element that must be considered when one purports that individuals are willing to die for superficial constructions of nationalism. Furthermore, Kapu_ci_ski's work suggests that the government, at least in Honduras, possessed some form of control over those who resided in the border area. From this perspective, Wilson and Donnan's argument fails to apply as well. Furthermore, if the Honduran government indeed had the power to control those who resided along the border of El Salvador, it would seem that the previous analysis by Thomas Anderson fails to understand this concept too. Nevertheless, considering Anderson's thorough understanding of the region and its history, there is ample reason to cast suspicion on Kapuscinki's sensationalized account.

In hindsight, the Soccer War of 1969 illustrates a momentary clash between two nations attempting to redefine themselves within a newly fractionalized system. Indeed, a true consensus of the underpinnings for this war remains an elusive endeavor. However, as this analysis elucidates, a combination of these authors' studies reveals a complex narrative that should be incorporated into a single body of work. Furthermore, I believe that a comparative study that relates this border dispute to the confrontations between other nation-states would reveal a fascinating interplay between nationalism, border identity, and confrontation. After all, in many ways the border disputes between Mexico and the United States reflect a situation where immigrant reform emerges as a means of creating a nationalistic sentiment. Consider, for instance, the contradictory nature between the United Fruit Company's appeal to Salvadoran labor and the Agrarian Reform Law of 1962, which dispossessed Salvadorans from their land. The same contradiction existed in the United States with the dynamic between the Bracero Program and Operation Wetback. In this example, the United States government, due to pressure from agricultural companies, simultaneously encouraged immigrants to fulfill a labor shortage and then threatened them through the implementation of deportation laws.

On a final note, these authors unilaterally suggest that the nationalistic sentiment that emerged during the 1969 Soccer War, subsequently receded following the war's demise.

In turn, they view this as a sign that the conception of a reunited Central America remains a possibility. As Thomas Anderson concludes:

Eventually, Central Americans are going to have to sit down around a conference table and try to glue this commercial union back together again. The war of 1969 has unfortunately made this task much more difficult than it was originally.⁴⁶

Interestingly, Anderson's prophetic conclusion is now becoming a reality. On December 14, 2004 the Associated Press released an article discussing the possibility of a multilateral agreement between the countries of Central America, which would reintroduce free trade to this region. According to the article:

Determined to operate as a regional bloc, leaders from Mexico to Panama will work out the plan Wednesday when they meet in the Salvadoran capital, San Salvador. Border controls have already been simplified between Guatemala and El Salvador and officials will be discussing how to add Honduras and Nicaragua.⁴⁷

Again, it seems that El Salvador is leading the way towards a reunited Central America. Depending on the outcomes of this plan, the 1969 Soccer War could very well become an obscure event in the history of a newly consolidated regional nation. If this turns out to be the case, situating this war within the current geopolitical context would be an interesting

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End Notes:

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- ¹ T. Anderson, *The War of the Dispossessed*, 46, (University of Nebraska Press, 1981.)
 - ² William Durham, *Scarcity and Survival in Central America: Ecological Origins of the Soccer War*, (Stanford University Press, 1979).
 - ³ Mary Jeanne Reid Martz, *The Central American Soccer War: Historical Patterns and Internal Dynamics of OAS Settlement Procedures*, (Ohio University, 1978).
 - ⁴ Ryszard Kapuściński, *The Soccer War*, trans. William Brand, (Vintage Books, 1986).
 - ⁵ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (Verso, 1983).
 - ⁶ T. Wilson and H. Donnan, "Nation, State and Identity at international Borders," in *Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers*, eds., T. Wilson and H. Donnan, (Cambridge University Press, 1998).
 - ⁷ B. Anderson, 5.
 - ⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.
 - ⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.
 - ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.
 - ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 64.
 - ¹² *Ibid.*, 10.
 - ¹³ R. Rosaldo and W. Flores, "Identity, Conflict, and Evolving Latino Communities: Cultural Citizenship in San Jose, California," in *Latino Cultural Citizenship*, eds., Flores, William V. and Rina Benmayor, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977).
 - ¹⁴ Rosaldo and Flores, 93.
 - ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.
 - ¹⁶ Wilson and Donnan, 10.
 - ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.
 - ¹⁸ "Honduran-Salvadoran War Seems to Be Abating," in *New York Times*, July 16, 1969.
 - ¹⁹ Durham, 171.
 - ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.
 - ²¹ *Ibid.*
 - ²² *Ibid.*, 36.
 - ²³ Durham quotes the Law for the Extinction of Communal Lands, Feb. 26, 1881 on page 42.
 - ²⁴ Durham, 6.
 - ²⁵ T. Malthus quoted in W. Durham, p. 5.
 - ²⁶ Durham, 172.
 - ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.
 - ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.
 - ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 124.
 - ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.
 - ³¹ *Ibid.*, 172.
 - ³² La Catorce refers to 14 families who have controlled the land in El Salvador since the beginning of the twentieth century.
 - ³³ T. Anderson, 79.
 - ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.
 - ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.
 - ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁷ Ibid., 80.

³⁸ Ibid., 81.

³⁹ Ibid., 92.

⁴⁰ Martz, 77.

⁴¹ Ibid., 75.

⁴² T. Anderson, 167.

⁴³ Kapu_ci_ski, 171.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 170.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 180.

⁴⁶ T. Anderson, 175.

⁴⁷ Associated Press, “Central America Wants to Open Border,” December 14, 2004.