

Exceptionalism

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The World Cup. Does anything need to be said?

Yes. England did amazingly well. Top 4. Ahead in the semi-final. And now there appears to be a national crisis about our failure to win.

Why mention that? Because this is English exceptionalism writ large. That is the absurd belief, based on the legacy of empire and colonialism, that England is best in the world, with a right to win. How dare anyone deny us the right to do so?

Because that belief is unfounded, of course. But so much of the English narrative, and too much of our neoliberal politics, is based on this assumption, as is the arrogance of the English attitude to Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

That is why the World Cup matters, in political-economic terms. We should learn from it. We might overcome the fear that so obviously burdens the national football team if we did.