
Separatisme *Catalan*: Symbolization of FC Barcelona, Nationalism and Political Identity

Made Bayu Permana Adhinata

Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Warmadewa, Denpasar, Bali-Indonesia

permanadhinata@gmail.com

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Abstract

The Catalans fight to gain their rights from Spanish Government through a political struggle. This is a long-standing struggle with long historical roots to face against pressure and domination and gave birth to the Catalans separatist movement. At first, this movement wanted a full independence separate from Spain and because Catalans experiencing a strong pressure, so the spirit of independence embedded within the people of Catalan itself. Not just through the form of political struggle, restrictions to the Catalan's Identity gave an impact to sport like football. FC Barcelona, the football club based in the capital city of Barcelona, Catalonia became a symbol of Catalans resistance and also the tools to expressing their hatred to the Spain. With this ways, the Catalans then gave birth to a view of their nationalism and their identity as a different entity from Spain. Their resistance to protect the Catalans identity can be seen in football activities. Although there is several difference point of view between the new vast autonomy and the full independence, their expressions in supporting Catalans rights still practiced in every FC Barcelona's match, especially in the duel counter Real Madrid. Despite of the influence of separatism, FC Barcelona transform as a means of unity where the images of separatism still take place on the competition. Political struggle and football becomes an instrument in voicing aspirations and symbolization of FC Barcelona is an embodiment from the spirit of nationalism and identity of the Catalans.

Keywords: FC Barcelona; identity; nationalism; political struggle; separatism

I. INTRODUCTION

Football is the most popular and famous type of sport in the world, not least in Spain. The country, whose nickname is the Matador team at this world soccer event, has two football clubs with high levels of competition and both of them have a very strong scent of revenge. Barcelona and Real Madrid are two Spanish La Liga clubs that have aura of fierce competition between the two and have been going on for a long time. The agenda of the fierce match of the two was called "El Clasico" which was a match to be matched with prestige and the second match was considered a gamble of self-esteem. If in Indonesia, fans of both clubs only see it as a competition between two big clubs and the most influential in La Liga, and then it is different with what happened in Spain

Barcelona and Real Madrid is one form of representation of two national political forces in Spanish society where Barcelona is an institution that represents the Catalan while Real Madrid is Castila. Through the very long historical roots of these two nations transformed into two powers of the Spanish football giants. Competition between the two began when there were movements to demand autonomy for the Catalonia region which was the definitive territory for the Catalan nation. The interesting thing that can be seen is when the match brought the two giants together on October 6, 2012, where after 17 minutes, the Camp Nou stadium at the club headquarters of FC Barcelona thundered with echoes and shouts of "Independencia" which meant independence. This yell means if you look at history where in 1714, the struggle of Catalonia for independence ended when it was defeated by the Kingdom of Castille. This event distracted the players on the field where the shouting was massive at the stadium which contained more than 95 thousand Barcelona supporters and the situation lasted for approximately 53 seconds and was witnessed by the international community where this was a unique protest method (Cophra, 2015).

FC Barcelona or Barca is located in the center of Catalonia and is one of the biggest football clubs ever to develop in the world. Barcelona is a club that is worshiped throughout the world because it has a long history and unique style of attacking football. For most Catalan nations, FC

Barcelona is more than just a football club and a club is a way of life where on the club's official website, there is a statement that reads "more than a club" or "FC Barcelona is more than a club" (FC Barcelona, 2015). FC Barcelona represents a sentiment towards Catalan nationalism in its efforts to protect and maintain the Catalan language and culture. For the Catalan nation, the regional spirit they possessed had succeeded in defeating the sentiments of the Spanish nationalists and the nation's firm support for FC Barcelona acted as a tool to describe the political expression of their Catalan identity.

From the brief explanation above, the Catalan people have nationalism and judge themselves against Spain as a whole. It is interesting to examine what happened in Spain and at the level of the country's football. Departing from this, the question that then arises is why the efforts of the Catalan nation's secession were carried out by forming a political identity and symbol of nationalism through FC Barcelona. This paper discusses the brief history of separatism, symbolizing it as a form of political identity, and Catalan nationalism.

II. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Separatism Of Catalan People

Separatism according to Dewi Fortuna Anwar in his book *Internal Violence Conflict: An Overview of History, Politics and Policy in the Asia Pacific*, states that separatism is closely related to the formation of a country where a number of separatist movements have long historical roots in which there is hatred towards central government and dominant ethnic or religious groups (Anwar, et al, 2004). Political separatism also often has a basis for nationalism in certain groups who want to separate themselves. The Catalan nation has a long history of conflict in which in the 11th century, the Catalonia region as the place of life of the Catalan nation was in the power of the Kingdom of Aragon until the 15th century where King Ferdinand of the Kingdom of Aragon married Queen Isabella of the Kingdom Castila and unite their territory. This status lasted until the 19th century where new movements and feelings emerged about Catalan identity which led to a campaign to gain political autonomy and even separatism (BBC, 2015).

Briefly, after the merger of the kingdom into the Kingdom of Spain, Catalonia's position became depressed where Catalan languages and institutions that existed before Spanish unification were banned and Barcelona as the capital of Catalonia was under the control of Madrid (Carrera, 2014). In the era of 1923-1930 there was a change in government in Spain which later overthrew the power of King Alfonso XIII where Catalonia joined the leftist Republican Party and then formed the Republic of Spain. The establishment of the Spanish Republic then directly abolished the state monarchy system and led to the formation of an autonomous government in Catalonia by the name Generalitat (Cataloniavotes, 2014). At this time, there was an attempt by the Catalan themselves to separate themselves but the leader of the Spanish Republic at that time gave full autonomy to the Catalan so that the efforts to free themselves could be muted.

The resistance movement then emerged from the right wing, which was a fascist group of former supporters of the overthrown king who called themselves a Nationalist group led by General Francisco Franco who later staged a coup against Republicans who were in power in Spain. This rebellion then led to a civil war in Spain. With assistance from Nazi Germany and Italian Fascists, a movement called the Nationalist Government Rebel Force carried out an armed rebellion which then succeeded in overthrowing the Republican government where in January 1939 Barcelona as the capital fell to Madrid in March of the same year. With the fall of the two cities, this ended the conflict. The new regime was formed under the control of General Franco who formed a dictatorial government and under this new government through military courts thousands of Spaniards were faced with capital punishment including Republican supporters. The Franco regime also banned the use of Catalan language, restricted the use of Catalan names for newborns, banned and tabulated trade unions, and broadly established a network of secret police to spy on Spanish citizens (History, 2015).

The life of the Catalan nation under the Dictator Franco's regime seemed to be back in time before the formation of the autonomous government of Catalonia. All acts of repression carried out by Franco to stem the Catalan nation gained its rights including the use of Catalan language and culture as an identity of the Catalan Nation. As explained earlier that the separatist movement can arise based on a long history and is followed by feelings of hatred towards the pressure or repression

carried out by the ruling regime against the Catalan nation. Franco came to power in Spain for 36 years from 1939 until his death in 1975. In 1947, Franco announced that after his power ended a king would be his successor and in 1969, Franco chose Prince Juan Carlos as his successor who was the grandson of King Alfonso XIII who was exiled due to the overthrow of Republicans.

In the early 1970s, exclamation for democracy and the self-rule among groups of workers and students increased, but the dictatorial regime of Franco showed no open attempts to make changes. Activists were executed and sentenced to death as happened in the case of anarchism carried out by a Catalan named Salvador Puig Antich in 1974. The dictatorial regime that ended with Franco's death in 1975 formed a period of democratic transition in which Catalan civil society groups moved to hear their voices. In 1977, massive demonstrations took place after Franco's death in which more than one million people moved through the streets of Barcelona and declared freedom, amnesty and the Statute of the new Autonomy. Before the new Spanish constitution was passed, Josep Terradellas, President of the elected Generalitat in exile and returned to Spain in October 1977 then reaffirmed the Generalitat and formed an interim government (Cataloniavotes, 2014).

Since the restoration of democracy in Spain and the self-rule restriction on Catalonia from the previous regime, the main political parties in Catalan have always tried to support all efforts to consolidate democracy to modernize the Spanish state both socially and economically including achievements in the European Union and the Euro currency. In 2004, when democracy in Spain appeared to be fully consolidated and Spain was included as one of the best EU member states in socio-economic success, nearly 90% of the main parties in the Catalan parliament proposed reforms to the Statute of Autonomy as part of consolidating self-rule for Catalan and provide a suitable place for Catalonia in the country of Spain. At least the appropriate answers from major parties in the Spanish parliament on this proposal are the main reason why many Catalan people are asking for new agreements.

Symbolization Of Fc Barcelona

Apart from political struggles, the Catalan people also made efforts to separate themselves by using sports instruments as part of their struggle. FC Barcelona is one of them, the Catalan pride football club commoditized as a form of their resistance to the pressure made, and a form of resistance to Madrid. Every event of a football match that presents FC Barcelona's counter-Real Madrid duel with a political atmosphere of separatism is very robust when the Catalan people always call for reform of their freedom and autonomy.

In the previous discussion when Franco's dictatorial regime ruled various repressive actions were carried out including suppressing local culture and language from all the different regions in Spain. During this time all aspects of society in Catalonia were banned and Catalan cultural activities were forced to be under Franco's policy. Catalan people try to erase the policies made by Franco while still maintaining their identities from behavior, language, music to cuisine and others. In this silent war, football and FC Barcelona seemed to be a big bridge between the Catalan people and their aspirations for independence. This is because all aspects that show Catalan identity are oppressed by the dictatorial regime of Franco and the Catalan people support the Barcelona club and regard it as a flag or symbol of the Catalan nation and FC Barcelona regarded as the Catalan voice, honor and pride.

Under the Franco regime, sport was part of the country's way of suppressing separatism by using the football team to create frustration with the movement. Franco considered a way to nourish sports competition and competition would be able to prevent Catalan nationalists from fighting his regime. FC Barcelona was renamed very Castilian, namely Club de Fútbol de Barcelona or abbreviated as C.F Barcelona and the Catalan flag was removed from the club's logo. After these changes, then Barca's designation from FC Barcelona was allowed to follow and continue the match in the Spanish La Liga soccer competition. However, the way it did seemed to backfire for Franco himself because it later effectively strengthened the emotional feelings of Catalan nationalists and formed a point of symbolization and shipyard for Catalan nationalists (Benjamin, 2010). Barca later became a kind of anti-Franco association and had a large influence in the region.

The degree of hostility intensified when Real Madrid became the golden boy team of Franco and Real Madrid often associated with the right wing in the central government. During Franco's reign, in the match against Real Madrid there was always a strong emotional feeling from the fans and Barca loyal players because there were facts that indicated the game did not run fairly. As

happened in 1943, the match between the two was won by Madrid with a very striking score of 11-1, although this victory was not purely a victory from a fair game. Before the match began, security chief Franco spoke with Barcelona players in the dressing room and reminded the players that Barca was allowed to play in the competition because of the kindness of the Franco regime (Ball, 2003). Intimidation and manipulation showed how much was at stake for football especially in the duel between Barca and Madrid and the victory by Madrid also showed Franco's dominance of Catalonia.

While Real Madrid as a representation of Castila's mastery and a central government that supports united Spain, in Catalonia itself there is a club called Real Club Deportivo Espanyol which is a city rival and a local derby for Barca. The similarity of Real's name that was pinned to the name of the club both Madrid and Espanyol represented loyalty to the Kingdom of Spain or support for united Spain. Espanyol was then seen as an insult to the Catalan where the history of the formation of the club was part of the reaction to Barcelona. With the rise of Catalan nationalism, Espanyol was called an enemy in the blanket and the presence of a centralized Spanish government in Catalonia. Catalan nationalists also call Espanyol getting support from Franco in every match. The hostilities of the two clubs also formed a social, cultural and political conception namely Catalanism against anti-Catalanism and anti-Spanishization against Spanishization (Spaaij, 2006). FC Barcelona is a symbol of a depressed nation while Real Madrid and Espanyol are perceived to represent a centralized Spanish government and Franco's right-wing military in Spain.

Nasionalism And Identity Politics Of Catalan

Wayne Norman (2006) says that nationalism is a process of various sentiments or identities, a form of political rhetoric, ideology, principals and instruments of principal and various kinds of socio-political movements (Norman, 2006). Meanwhile, according to Benedict Anderson (1991), a nation is an imagined community or a sovereign and limited imaginary community because each member in that community does not know the majority of their peers even though the nation has clear boundaries related to their position which is different from other nations. Communities are not formed naturally but real because people create them and become a source of value for them. Thus, nations only exist because these groups and communities choose to distinguish themselves from others through the unification of shared beliefs, practices and struggles (Anderson, 1991).

Catalan was originally not an imagined community but constantly renewed their historical production even nationalist movements built or renewed their identity icons through certain codes in each historical context and related to their political projects including injecting them into football through FC Barcelona. The Catalan nation had a political struggle with the central government because of the strong desire of the Catalan people to distinguish them from Spain culturally and when the autonomy statute was held, there were Catalan people who had a desire to gain full independence from Spain. Historically, the repression of the Spanish state against Catalonia has been going on for a long time where this is the character of Catalan nationalism.

According to Manuel Castells (2010) identity politics is the participation of social actors in a social life that is determined by culture and gives influence to other actors in a social institution. The process of forming identity has a source of meaning where to become an identity requires internal dialogue between actors and through social interaction and building a collective identity. The social construction of identity always has a context of power relations called, Resistance identity, which is a process of forming identity by social actors who are in a depressed position and experiencing stigmatization from the domination of other parties so as to build a resistance and the appearance of different identities from which dominates in order to maintain the survival of institutions in these societies (Castells, 2010).

In the Catalan case, identity politics formed by Castells's explanation above can be said to be a resistant identity in which the Catalan nation was in a position depressed by the dominance of the central government when Franco came to power trying to Castilize all areas in Spain including pressure in football. When nationalism against the state occurs, there are two facts that are the focus of the conflict, namely between state nationalism and minority nationalism. The structure of political competition in national minorities is a crucial factor in determining minority reactions to the state which might be based on uncooperative actions, separatism and violence into cooperative action, flexibility and participation in government coalitions. The nationalist movement may stop to demand full independence because they see a balance between unfavorable costs and benefits. In other words they may see more inclusive by asking for more autonomy, not full independence or when looking

exclusively, the purpose of separatism is a full independence from the state (Hargreaves, 2000).

The demand for a new statute of autonomy that was always echoed by the Catalan people was approved by the Catalan parliament in 2006 which identified Catalan as a nation and had great rights to the economy, judicial and linguistic within its territory (Strubell, 2011). But in 2010, the Spanish Constitutional Court rejected the statute because it was not in accordance with the constitution. The constitutional court then eliminated 15 chapters in the statute thereby increasing Catalonia's public disappointment. In 2011 a poll was held to see how much the public wanted for independence. As much as 21 percent of the total population following the informal poll expressed their desire for independence (Tremlett, 2011). This indicates that there is a great sentiment towards Catalan nationalism, but not all Catalan publics support full independence from Spain even though the Catalan nation is united through language and culture, but the political unit in it varies.

III. CONCLUSION

The Catalan nation's political struggles in obtaining its rights have been going on for a long time and with long historical roots facing pressure from Spanish domination has given birth to a separatist movement. In the beginning, this movement wanted complete independence separate from the Spanish state but because of the intense pressure made this spirit embedded in the Catalan people. Not only in the form of political struggle, restrictions on Catalan identity also affected football where FC Barcelona became a symbol and territory in expressing their hatred towards Spain.

Through these ways, the Catalan people gave birth to a view of nationalism and their identity as different entities in Spain. Their resistance in protecting identity is reflected in Catalan football activities. Although there are differences in views on the broader new autonomy and the desire for full independence, their expression in supporting the rights of the Catalan people remains practiced in every Barcelona match, especially in the counter-Real Madrid duel. Apart from the influence of different separatism, FC Barcelona is a unifying tool where separatist images are still ongoing and presented in the fight. Political struggle was carried out and football became another instrument in voicing these aspirations and the symbolization of FC Barcelona was an embodiment of the spirit of nationalism and the identity of the Catalan nation.

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