

# National Anthem and Nationalism in Football

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**Abstract** – *The transformation of the nationalism can be traced through almost any social activity. Nationalism is also unique. It is frequently appear during international sport event, such as Olympics, World Cup, and Grand Slam Tennis Tournament. This case show that the important of us to think about relation between politics and national identity in the context of globalization, especially trough football game.*

*Today, in the international football events such as European Cup, World Cup and Asian Cup, football can demonstrates the enduring importance of the nation as a basis of social solidarity and mobilization as community. That is why football is not only just a game, but also representation of everything that associated to nation or state. This phenomena also dynamic to constant reformulation based on “what”, “who and with who” and “where”, all about these. Finally, Nationalism trough national anthem, national flag and any symbols of nation can turn and also transform into spirit in football game.*

**Keywords** – *national anthem, nationalism and football*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Football is the world’s most popular sport game for the number of participants and spectators. Despite some fractious international relationships, football continued to rise in popularity. It was made its official Olympic debut at London 1908. Football became a global tradition and stated togetherness[1]. Football is not only just a game[2]. It was also a competitive sport that was contested. It started with the qualification in each regional federation. It became a prestigious and favorite sport that competed in sport international championship like Olympic. Football was a real prestige of the nation’s existence in the Olympic. The existence of Indonesia as a nation state can be shown through participation in the championship football team between nations, through the Olympics. This is a form of soft diplomacy in the international order[3].

The World Cup is undoubtedly the sport’s global showcase and, as a result, every four years football talk tends to dominate conversations in the “global public sphere” and national settings alike. It’s obvious that the world’s fascination with the “beautiful game” transcends the game itself – football is just as much about culture and even politics as it is about trying to kick a ball into a net.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This article uses literature studies such as journal and book that discuss about relationship between football and nationalism. This is done to know and understand how nationalism and its symbols associated to the football game. Furthermore, the writer of this article also uses some news about controversial problem of national anthem singing and waving national flag in football game. It was happened between Indonesia and Israel in 1957.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

National football teams nowadays receive less enthusiastic support from their fans. Globalization and the rise of social networks in the world steadily demonstrate hegemony over sport. The power of sporting events lies in the fact that for fans, sport teams stand for something beyond the game itself. Within a national context, sport is directly tied to the geopolitical ideology of nationalism. The notion that national sport teams confront other political entities automatically implies that the nation would band together around the flag and also national anthem; for all the individual rewards and acclaim their positions entitle them to, these athletes are first and foremost seen as national icons[4].

### A. Case in Indonesia

World Cup is a prestigious soccer championship worldwide. When the World Cup was held, the attention of the people in the world was there, either directly coming to the stadium where the championship was held, or watching through mass media, television, radio and online media. Slowly people feel they have their country articulated through the national football team that is competing. J. Hoberman states that sport becomes a phenomenon of mass psychology that has links with nationalism. International sport events with universal values even clarify national characteristics as national flags are hoisted and national anthems are echoed. During the competition, every team will be the winner has an important meaning without reducing the value of sportsmanship. The world cup is no longer just physical activity of the sportsman, but relates to the mental mass of a community that Ben Anderson thinks is strongly imagined. Supporters express a form of nationalism that cannot be done in everyday life. That is why the world cup became a sports show awaited by all community groups at the global level [5].

During the World Cup held in the era of 1950-1965, Indonesia never participated in the World Cup finals. Indonesia has always stopped in qualifying and failed to qualify from Asian zone qualifiers. The existence of Indonesia to fight in the World Cup finals did not come true after being defeated by Israel because of political problems. The soccer and political strife between Indonesia and Israel does not happen only once. After the Israeli athlete banning event entered Indonesia, then the next problem occurs when the World Cup. This problem is similar to the case experienced by Indonesia and Taiwan in the Melbourne Olympic soccer qualification.

The political situation of a country can also affect the development and relationship of sports. This is the background of the game between the Indonesian national football team when going to play against Israel. Political problems usually arise as one way to strengthen the relationships between nations of the world, and to alleviate the heating of political tensions throughout the world in the era of cold war over the world. Opinion emerged from the government stating that “we do not have diplomatic relations with Israel and we are running a good neighbor policy.” It can be interpreted that what has been decided by the government will bring big implications in the match that will be held. That is, PSSI on behalf of the country and nation to introduce the name of Indonesia through its players in the finals of the world cup will also be stalled due to this complicated political situation [6].

According to Joemarsono, secretary of PSSI, Israel has the right to decide and choose the venue for one match. They do not want to change their position that the first match will be held in Tel Aviv. Thus, Indonesia must immediately decide where the second match will be held. Whether, it will be held in Jakarta or in a neutral venue like in Singapore. Finally R. Maladi as chairman of PSSI gets the news that some representatives of the Arab countries who have been positive did not agree to hold this game. PSSI itself has even received a threat that 14 Arab countries will not be willing to hold a football match against Indonesia forever if Indonesia chooses to keep organizing matches with Israel. This is what makes the PSSI board members feel pessimistic with the match between Indonesia against Israel which according to FIFA must be implemented must no later than 15 September 1957 [7].

Before the match between Indonesia and Israel was held, Indonesia had the same experience and problems facing Taiwan in the 1956 Olympic qualification. Despite having no diplomatic relations, the government at that time gave the game permission on condition that the match should be played without a national anthem and without a flag country respectively. Regarding the policy of “good neighbor policy”, this problem puts Indonesia as Taiwan's position, while Israel is in the position of Indonesia with their recommendation to compete under the FIFA banner without the national anthem and flag-raising. Israel used this opportunity to beat Indonesia with its own ideas when it was formerly Indonesia against Taiwan. Indonesia in the World Cup qualifier against Israel has a strong position because Indonesia has beaten PRC in qualifying. Indonesia only needs to beat Israel and then qualify for the World Cup

finals. Finally, Indonesia decided not to compete and considered that the support of Arab countries in the UN is more important than football against Israel and did not give permission to compete because it does not have diplomatic relations. Finally, Israel qualified for the 1958 world cup.

At this time, singing the national anthem remains an important thing for Indonesian football. We can see in football matches, both in domestic competitions and when the Indonesian national team plays against other countries. Indonesian Under-16 national team when competing in Sidoarjo 2018 can explain the phenomenon. Supriyadi, Rendy (footballers of Indonesia) and Indonesian national team supporters seemed to rediscover their country while singing the national anthem, Indonesia Raya.



Picture 1. Indonesian U-16 Footballer and Supporter of Indonesia singing Indonesia Raya (national anthem) before match.

### B. Case in World Cup 2014

World Cup 2014 held in Brazil. This world's greatest football party takes the attention of people all over the world. Football fans around the world are welcoming the World Cup with joy. For railroad workers and labor activists, the World Cup in Brazil was greeted with protests and demonstrations against the Brazilian government that is considered to be spending money on football rather than prioritizing infrastructure development, education and the welfare of its people. Many people criticized Brazil's World Cup, especially in preparation. The absurdity of the preparations, perhaps represented by the incident of the national anthem of the two countries was not sung during the first group stage match between France and Honduras (16/06/2014).

The national anthem in a football match between countries becomes an obligation to be sung and heard before the kick-off of the match begins. Actually, players from both teams and referees in the game are ready to sing and listen to

the national anthem. However, after waiting a while, the referee sensed an oddity and immediately asked the two teams to shake hands and kick off as a sign of the start of the game. This embarrassing incident did not immediately get a response from FIFA and the organizing committee. The next day, FIFA issued an official statement that this incident was only a technical problem because the sound system was not working properly and would evaluate that cause.

This incident resulted in deep disappointment for both teams and also fans who have flooded the stadium as well as fans who watched on television. Not playing it and singing a national anthem in a football match between countries cannot be considered an ordinary incident because it is related to the articulation of nationalism.

Hans Kohn, states that nationalism is an ideology that places the highest allegiance of individuals and a community to the nation and state. Nationalism is increasingly important in shaping the identity of life, both collective and private. Awareness of nationalism in a nation can be built together to achieve, maintain and perpetuate the identity, integrity and prosperity of the nation. Loyalty and awareness of nationalism will manifest in a symbol of the state.

The symbol is a national anthem, a national symbol, a national flag and a memorial of historical events for the nation and country concerned as an effort to maintain the spirit of nationalism, the love of the homeland. Symbols as a representation of nationalism will be able to turn into a prestige that is to gain achievement that has benefits as an inspiration and pride for citizens and nations in sports championships such as football matches.

The captain of the French national team, Hugo Lloris expressed his disappointment over this embarrassing incident. The French players are very sad because they cannot sing *Le Marseillaise*. It affects the inner mood of the player and the entire team. The national anthem according to Lloris is something very important. In the Brazil World Cup 2014, the French football team plays represent the French country itself and not to represent some groups only. Every match between nations and countries, both in the championship competition and trial match should be preceded by the national anthem. Lloris's expression of disappointment seems to represent the multicultural and plural reality of French society.

The national anthem of *Le Marseillaise* is a unifying tool of nations from across Africa, Asia, especially the Middle East and Europe, which identifies itself as part of a nation that inhabits the whole of the French homeland. Plurality in France and the multicultural distinction have been successfully united on the basis of a common vision and a goal to live together (*l'desir d'etre ensemble*) as Ernest Renan says.



Picture 2. The French players singing *Le Marseillaise* before match

The Honduran team also felt the same. There was disappointment from the Honduran national team delivered by midfielder Roger Espinoza. Psychologically, the national anthem is an additional motivation for the team to compete. Moreover, many Honduran players at this World Cup are the first time to participate. Honduras feels less appreciated in its participation. In the end, Honduras suffered a three-goal defeat from France.

Thousands of supporters of both teams who crowded the Beira-Rio Stadium, Porto Alegre and who were in front of the television screen also felt disappointment. A sporting championship is a powerful tool to restore the relationship between society, nation and state that is constantly reduced due to the nation-state's self-sufficiency.



Picture 3. Neymar cried after singing the national anthem of Brazil

The modern state as Ben Anderson puts it in the "Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism" suggests that in the unity of a "imagined community" it takes the adhesive of intercommunity relationships in one cultural and also a political [8]. In line with this, it is necessary also the cultural and political unity, the determination of language is the unifying way of an idea, the educational system and mass media serve as a source of information into an important cultural tool to spread the sense of modern nationalism an "imagined community".

Every country produces an official history, celebrating heroes aimed at strengthening the love of the homeland and

a country. Such ideological and aesthetic relationships can be available with the development of popular culture – although it is not absolute and not the only way. Sports events, especially football games have become the most important contributors to the process of nationalism.

Also, let's take a look at some of the Brazilian World Cup participants' phrases that became their official slogans. Argentina wore the slogan "Not just the team, we are the country" and the players waved banners reading "The Malvinas Islands belonged to Argentina" during a friendly football match against Slovenia at the Ciudad de La Plata stadium in Buenos Aires. Colombia chose the slogan "Here the journey of the nation, not just the team", Germany "One nation, one team, one dream", Greek "Hero playing like Greece", Iran "Persian's Triumph", Honduras "We are country, one nation, five star in heart", French "Impossible is not a French".

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The cultural and political unity of society towards the nation and state can eventually be rebuilt through soccer championship competitions between countries. The footballers, supporters and all members of the nation, who are "imagined communities" strongly in the mind, as Ben

Anderson says, feel like reinventing the nation-state in support of the national football team. The national anthem of the country that was played and sung at the beginning of the football game finally can grow nationalism through football, especially in the international football event.

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