Just Kicking It: Football and Nationalism in Spain during Francisco Franco's Regime

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This project explores the role football played during Francisco Franco's pursuit to unify Spain's regional nationalisms into one Spanish nationalism. Previous research defined Franco's Spanish nationalism tools, and this project applies those tools to football while examining the success of using nationalistic techniques to unite Spanish nationalism. Cultural Identity Theory helps inform this research by explaining the differences in cultural identity throughout the regions in Spain. The research process included using three newspaper sources from three regions in Spain (Castilla, Cataluña, and the Basque Country) and exploring the archives of each newspaper to download individual newspaper articles. For the analysis, this project applied Franco's Spanish nationalism techniques from previous literature to the newspaper articles to thematically organize and code the articles, identifying trends in football and Spanish nationalism. The analysis revealed Franco downplayed regional identity and culture in Spain in favor of a Spain with a collective national culture. Franco eliminated opposition to his regime by forcing Spanish ideas and values onto football, overpowering regional autonomy. Examining football's role during Franco's regime helps disclose how leaders around the world are using the relationship between football, other entities that are not inherently political, and nationalism as a tool to achieve political goals.

Keywords: Spain, nationalism, soccer, Franco, Identity

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On September 18, 2023, my preconceived notions about cultural pride were met with Catalan signage inside the Barcelona airport. I knew many people in Barcelona, Spain spoke Catalan, but until arriving there, I did not realize the significance Catalan identity held for the people living in Barcelona. I had to look no further than FC Barcelona, the local football team to see the collective pride the fans and team had for Cataluña, for, as I walked to an FC Barcelona game, I became completely surrounded by blue and garnet, chants of ¡Barça!, and the buzz of excitement. The supporters of FC Barcelona celebrated the Catalan flag and the Catalan language, chanting in Catalan throughout the match. There was a particular Catalan phrase displayed across the crowd that caught my attention: *Més que un Club* (more than a club). At this point, I realized FC Barcelona was not only a football team in Cataluña; FC Barcelona was also a symbol of Catalan identity and the history of Catalan culture.

Politically, Spain is one nation; culturally, Spain has a variety of traditions, languages, and flags. Spain consists of seventeen autonomous communities with distinct regional and national identities and symbols. Spain is a "nación de naciones" (nation of nations) due to the coexistence of multiple nationalities and regions (plurinationality) within the country of Spain (Juliá, 2019). While some autonomous communities had political and cultural legitimacy prior to 1978, the 1978 Spanish constitution officially gave the "right to autonomy of nationalities and regions," allowing all the autonomous communities to establish their own governments (Dankowski, 2019). In the Statutes of Autonomy, eight of the autonomous communities (Andalusia, Aragon, the Valencian Community, Galicia, the Balearic Islands, Cataluña, the Basque Country, and the Canary Islands) define themselves as either historical nationalities or nationalities, meaning the communities have a cultural nationality beyond the political Spanish nationality (Munárriz, 2019). The geographic, political, and national makeup fueled tensions over the true look of Spanish nationalism, leading to violent and psychological struggles between Spanish and regional nationalism. The differences in identity within Spain sparked internal divisions over national identity.

As the autonomous communities formed identities separate from a national Spanish identity, Spain began to splinter internally. When the number of supporters for regional identities increased, the number of dissenters also increased, creating a cultural battle between the supporters wanting to maintain regional autonomy and dissenters pushing for a national Spain. This cultural and political battle progressed into a violent conflict, namely the Spanish Civil War. As Payne (1964) explains, in 1936, two military generals, Emilio Mola and Francisco Franco, felt the sitting democratic government was not serving Spain's interests, so the two generals launched a campaign to overthrow Spain's government, starting the Spanish Civil War (Payne, 1964). The Spanish Civil War, at its roots, was the conflict between

supporters of the Republic (the government at the time) and the Nationalists (the group trying to overthrow the government) (Payne, 1964). During the Civil War, Francisco Franco emerged as the Nationalist leader, and when the Republic officially surrendered to the Nationalists in 1939, Francisco Franco became Spain's next leader (Holguin, 2015). The legacies of the Civil War led to divisions between the people and regions in support and in opposition to Franco's rule. The separation within Spain did not support Franco's idea of Spain; therefore, Franco had to formulate tools to unify Spain as one singular nation.

During his Regime, Franco emphasized a unified version of Spain. In Franco's eyes, the splintered nationalisms in Spain made the government weak, so he put the Spanish nation before individualism and regionalism. Franco's vision included eliminating separate regional identities, especially in the regions associated with the previous Spanish government. Beginning during the Spanish Civil War and continuing into his dictatorship, Franco targeted the Spanish regions in favor of the previous Spanish Republic and representative of regional autonomy, like Cataluña and the Basque Country, to expel "chaos" and keep "anti-Spain" forces from gaining legitimacy (U.S. Library of Congress, n.d.). Franco's Spain infused Catholicism and fascist ideology into the Spanish people's everyday activities, e.g., through education and propaganda posters (Pinto, 2004). To claim further control over the individual regions, Franco outlawed the crests and flags signifying regional identity and made Spanish the only official language (Muro & Quiroga, 2005). As Franco looked to create one Spanish identity, the different cultural sectors e.g., education, art, and sports became vessels Franco could use to achieve his goal. Meanwhile, the regions used these same sectors to resist Franco's Spain and collective Spanish nationalism.

Football clubs in Spain were examples of vehicles that expressed regional identity and nationalism. The tensions between Cataluña and the Basque Country and Franco's regime existed in club football,[1] and the rivalry between FC Barcelona (Cataluña) and Real Madrid (Castilla) best represents this conflict. The hostility between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid escalated during the Civil War, where Barcelona was a Republican stronghold in Cataluña until Franco's forces occupied and "liberated" Barcelona, and Madrid was the capital of Spain and Franco's forces ("What is the origin," 2023). As a result, FC Barcelona portrayed Republican and regional interests whereas Real Madrid represented Franco's government and Nationalist forces ("What is the origin," 2023). Throughout Franco's dictatorship, FC Barcelona was committed to Catalan culture and became a symbol of resistance, and Real Madrid represented Franco's Spanish interests and values ("Real Madrid vs Barcelona," 2024). The rivalry between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid allowed a physical manifestation of the conflict between Franco supporters and resisters that fell short of the open warfare of the Civil War. Football's

[1] For the duration of this paper, football will refer to the American sport of soccer.

representation of the political conflict in Spain gave Franco the ability to use football as a political tool during his regime.

This project aims to identify football's role during Franco's pursuit of a collective Spanish nationalism. Part of Franco's goal as a dictator was to unify Spain under one nationalism instead of many regional nationalisms. Since football was a popular national pastime with cultural significance beyond sports, it was one of the cultural sectors Franco used to eliminate other nationalisms and create a singular Spanish nationalism. The data for this project includes archived newspaper articles during the years of Franco's dictatorship from three different news sources – *ABC* (Madrid), *El Mundo Deportivo* (Barcelona), and *El Correo* (Bilbao). Using Franco's Spanish nationalism tools and the newspaper articles, this project assesses football's nationalistic role during Franco's regime. Football is often a way for people to express identity and enthusiasm, and politicians have taken advantage of the passion football elicits for decades. By understanding football as a vehicle of both regional and national identity, this research unveils football's application as a weapon and a tool for politicians.

Therefore, this paper argues Franco used football to repress regional cultures and identities during his pursuit of a unified Spanish nationalism. Football was a way for the regions to showcase autonomy, so Franco's goal as the Spanish dictator was to eliminate autonomy and individuality in Spain by applying Spanish nationalism techniques to football. The literature review discusses research questioning the success of harnessing football for political power as well as investigates the trends in Franco's Spanish nationalism. The research design section introduces the three newspaper sources to explore the regional perspectives of Spanish nationalism during football and establishes Franco's Spanish nationalism techniques as thematic codes. For the analysis section of the paper, I apply three Spanish nationalism codes and other functional codes to explore the trends of Spanish nationalism across Spanish football. Finally, the discussion compares this case study, looking at Franco's use of football for political goals, to the cases of political leaders from the previous literature and theorizes Spain's cultural divisions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Football and Politics

Scholars looking to explain football's implementation as a political tool investigated how football relates to nationalism. Scholars posit that football unites the people supporting a nation, club, or region. Thus, governments enter a cycle of putting time and resources into increasing football nationalism to increase governmental approval and accelerate nation building. Bowman (2015) argues national football constructs a regional and national identity, giving the government a tool to bring people together. Mason (1995) tests this theory by analyzing how Argentina incorporated football tournaments at the centenary festivities in 1910 and 1916 to increase collective national

pride. Kossakowski and Besta (2018) adds a club-level perspective to see how club football can be equally instrumental at promoting a shared local and national identity. While the researchers generally agree football can promote unity, the literature has yet to explore whether football nationalism can repress individual identity formation. This project fills the gap in existing research through examining individual communities and club football teams in Spain.

When exploring football's use as a political tool, many scholars emphasize that governments can fail to harness football for politics. Despite political leaders' intentions, scholars question whether football truly increases popular political support and stops political dissent. For instance, Herzog (2014) analyzed how the National Socialist regime believed football would provide a distraction from Adolf Hitler's dictatorship in Germany. Nonetheless, current developments in the literature are using European football associations' display of the Ukrainian flag to argue European football is bringing attention to political conflict rather than acting as a distraction (Kristianto et al., 2024). Furthermore, Alabarces (2023) analyzed "the myth of the smokescreen," supporting the idea that football is not a political distraction or a successful political tool. To comment on the debate, this project questions the extent to which leaders can successfully employ football for political goals. By incorporating how Franco's dictatorship in Spain intended to use football to increase Spanish nationalism, and assessing whether those methods succeeded, this case study evaluates the correlation between football and political goals in Spain.

Research on fascist governments in Europe explores how government ideologies change how governments employ football and sporting bodies as propaganda. For fascist governments, scholars analyze how leaders often employ football to bolster existing fascist ideology and ideations. Cronin (2023) studied the cases of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Spanish Francoism. The three cases explored how Germany, Italy, and Spain all looked to propagandize football through different methods: Germany hosted the Olympics, Italy used international sporting success, and Spain tried to control major football teams. Despite the fascist governments' attempts to harness football's political power, the investigation concluded a populations' willingness to participate in sporting activities and boycotts on fascist states' sporting teams limited the governments' success (Cronin, 2023). This project builds on the Spanish case study by researching Franco's impact on three major football teams in Spain. Furthermore, this project's Spanish case study expands on the idea of Franco controlling football teams to see how Franco managed Spanish football and if this command furthered his end goal.

Spanish Nationalism

Previous research on nationalism in Spain investigated why Franco needed, or believed he needed, to create a new idea of Spanish nationalism.

The researchers argue regional disunity in Spain splintered Spanish nationalism, giving Franco justification to form a new collective nationalism. Payne (1991) posits Spain's history as a colonial power, failure to create institutions, slow economic and social development, and lack of military ambitions limited Spanish nationalism. As a result, regional micronationalism, or cultural nationalism, grew in Cataluña and the Basque provinces before Spanish nationalism (Payne, 1991). Nevertheless, Ruiz (2009) argues this disunity in Spain's nationalism forced Franco to repress regional cultures to achieve a unified Spanish nationalism. While the previous research explores the reasoning behind why Franco tried to unify Spain, it fails to explore the cultural and political vehicles Franco used in pursuit of this goal. This project identifies and evaluates football as a vessel of culture for Franco to manipulate to achieve a Spanish nationalism reflective of a nation rather than regions.

Research on Franco's Spanish nationalism discusses the methods Franco utilized to create this unified Spanish nationalism. The Spanish nationalism research investigating Franco's methods generally concluded Franco forced the people in Spain to conform to Spanish values, regardless of regional identity. Hernández Burgos (2019) analyzed Franco's attempts to "*reespañolizar hasta el último rincón de la Patria*" (re-Spanishize the Fatherland to the last corner) (p. 695). For example, Franco's regime used rhetoric promoting *Hispanidad* (Spanishness) while framing leftists and people against Franco's government as "anti-Spain" (Payne, 1964, p. 419; Hernández Burgos, 2019). Meanwhile, Balcells and Villamil (2020) contend Franco's government implemented collective targeting, or targeting a specific group of people based on their physical or cultural attributes, to eliminate viewpoints Franco considered "anti-Spain." This project adds to the idea of Franco using anti-Spain framing and collective targeting as nationalistic techniques by identifying these specific techniques during football events. By applying Franco's Spanish nationalism tools to football, this project determines if Franco's Spanish nationalism tools and ideas translated beyond politics into cultural sectors.

Researchers further analyzed how Franco's Spanish nationalism repressed regional identities and cultures. While some of the Spanish nationalism techniques put promoting Spain at the forefront, other Spanish nationalism techniques combined furthering Spanish identity with eliminating individualism. Balcells and Villamil (2020) analyzed how Franco policed languages by banning minority languages and pushing Spanish as the only language in the nation. Hernández Burgos (2019) adds to the conversation by examining how Franco's regime created new symbols to reflect Spain and Spanish nationalism while prohibiting regional symbols. This project adds to the analysis of using nationalistic tools to repress identity by examining how Franco's language policies manifested into the world of football. Understanding these trends helps ascertain the success of Franco using political means to interfere with inherently cultural vessels.

Similar to past research, this project explores how politics and football interacted during Francisco Franco's dictatorship in Spain. Previous research defined Franco's Spanish nationalism and illustrated the general use of football as a tool for politics in Latin America and Europe. However, existing research has failed to assess how individual, regional, and national identities tie into football's political application. This research project analyzes Franco's definition of the Spanish state, Spanish nationalism, and the role of football. This case study examines the relationship between football, nationalism, and regional identity in Spain, aiming to apply Franco's tools of Spanish nationalism to football and analyze football's role in promoting a national Spanish identity. Analyzing football's role in Franco's Spain will provide a tool to measure how political leaders politicize football. Therefore, researchers can recognize and analyze instances where football and nationalism are employed as a political distraction.

RESEARCH DESIGN

For this project, I relied on secondary raw data in the form of Spanish newspaper articles to assess football's role in Francisco Franco's Spain. The Spanish newspaper articles came from three regional newspapers: *El Mundo Deportivo* (Barcelona, Cataluña), *ABC* (Madrid, Castilla), and *El Correo* (Bilbao, Basque Country). The newspaper articles provided daily sports news on key football events in Spain during the years 1938, 1941, 1943, and 1953 (see Table 1). One of the pros of using regional newspapers was gaining three viewpoints on football from three autonomous communities (Cataluña, Castilla, and the Basque Country) with their own football teams and cultural identities, allowing a comparison between the regions. However, some cons of using newspapers were the Spanish government's censorship of the press, meaning the data could present biases toward Franco's government, and a more secondary analysis looking at the responses of the regions and not specifics regarding Franco's policies or statements. Since the media sources were from daily newspapers, I looked at how Franco's regime incorporated football to achieve the goal of a singular Spanish identity throughout the individual years and across the four years. Moreover, the newspapers from Barcelona, Madrid, and Bilbao mitigated reporting bias by measuring football's part in nationalism from multiple regional perspectives.

1938 - Name Change: Fútbol Club Barcelona (FC Barcelona) became Club de Fútbol Barcelona (CF Barcelona).
1941 - Name Change: Athletic Club de Bilbao became Atlético Bilbao; Franco established an administrative body (Delegación Nacional de Deportes) to oversee and make policies for Spanish sports teams at all levels.
1943 - El Clásico: Real Madrid beat CF Barcelona 11-1.
1953 - Player Transfer: Real Madrid and Barcelona fought for Alfredo di Stefano, an Argentinian player.

Table 1: Key Years and the Corresponding Football Events

I used the digital archives (hemerotecas) from *El Mundo Deportivo*, *ABC*, and *El Correo* to collect the newspaper articles. The archives are a separate part of the newspapers' websites that incorporate historical newspaper articles. The archives offered a way to search and download Spanish newspaper articles in pdf form from the newspapers' websites. To collect the newspaper articles, I first typed "hemeroteca" along with the corresponding newspaper (i.e. *El Mundo Deportivo*, *ABC*, and *El Correo*) into the Google search bar. Next, one newspaper at a time, starting with *El Mundo Deportivo*, I used the hemerotecas' advanced search bar to type in the same general key words ("Fútbol" and "Deportes"), and I set the timeframe to between January 1 and December 31 for 1938, 1941, 1943, and 1953. These key words generated hundreds of articles, so to limit the data, I conducted a second key word search using the football events as guides (see Table 2), and I limited 1943's data collection time frame to between June 1 and June 31 since the El Clásico match between Real Madrid and Barcelona took place mid-June. Two rounds of key word searches during the collection process ensured I did not miss outlier data about football and nationalism. At the same time, this collection method guaranteed the data would discuss the specific football events.

1938 - First Search: "Fútbol" and "Deportes" Second Search: "Club de Fútbol"
1941 - First Search: "Fútbol" and "Deportes" Second Search: "Delegación Nacional de Deportes"
1943 - First Search: "Fútbol" and "Deportes" Second Search: "Real Madrid" and "Barcelona"
1953 - First Search: "Fútbol" and "Deportes" Second Search: "Alfredo di Stefano"

Table 2: Key Word Search Terms

To finish collecting the data from the newspaper archives, I filtered and discarded articles from the key word search that did not relate to football. I limited the collection to a maximum of twelve articles per news source per

year. To determine the specific articles to download, I first skimmed the titles of the articles from the newspaper sources, starting with *El Mundo Deportivo*, for football news relating to the key events for the years 1938, 1941, 1943, and 1953. I kept the articles if the titles mentioned the key football events, focused on Madrid, Barcelona, and/or Bilbao, and were legible, for the key word search generated many results with faded ink that reported on youth football teams or other sports with similar team names. After discarding newspaper articles without relation to the Spanish football events or regions, I downloaded the remaining the articles, ranging from six to twelve per newspaper source, as pdfs, and I organized the articles into folders, keeping the articles separated by newspaper publication and year. Cleaning up the search results before the analysis section streamlined my ability to organize the data for analysis. Furthermore, this discarding method confirmed the remaining articles included information pertaining to football during Franco's regime for analysis.

Using the newspaper articles, I analyzed the divide between Franco's idea of a unified Spain and the identity of autonomous cultures during the four football events. To measure football's role in Franco's regime, I explored the newspaper articles for Spanish nationalistic themes as well as other common themes, including identity, regional pride, and ideology. The first analysis step was to combine the newspapers from the different publications and sort them by date (1938, 1941, 1943, and 1953). Next, I applied Franco's Spanish nationalism techniques from Hernández Burgos (2021), Payne (1964), and Balcells and Villamil (2020) as the first round of codes for the Spanish newspaper articles (see Table 3), starting with the 1938 articles. Finally, I conducted a secondary round of coding, also in Spanish, with Table 3 identifying the additional thematic codes that measured football's role in Francoist Spain. Analyzing the football events chronologically uncovered thematic developments in both Franco's idea of Spanish nationalism and the autonomous communities' sense of identity. Additionally, keeping the newspapers in Spanish allowed me to analyze word choice and tone in addition to nationalistic themes. Therefore, the codes revealed how Franco's use of football evolved during his pursuit of a collective Spanish nationalism.

Spanish Nationalism Codes	Supplemental Codes
Language Policing - During Franco's regime, Franco pushed for Spanish to be the only official language despite many regions having their own official language(s). As a result, autonomous communities had to change everyday language and organizations' names to fit the Spanish version.	**Government Intervention –** This was the main code for the Alfredo di Stefano transfer, signifying governmental policies or actions and the results of these policies.
"Anti-Spain" Framing - Part of Franco's push for a unified Spain included labeling the Spanish people in support of individual cultures as "anti-Spain."	**Regional Pride –** This code came from the newspapers mentioning regional celebrations, languages, or activities.
Collective Targeting - Similar to "anti-Spain" framing, collective targeting includes repressing the cultures not aligned with Franco's politics through propaganda or force.	**Team Pride –** This was the code when there were expressions of team mottos, colors, or a biased newspaper reporting tone favoring one team.

Table 3: Thematic Codes: Definitions and Explanation

ANALYSIS

Language Policing

Franco's language policies progressed as his power as a dictator grew. During the Spanish Civil War, Franco did not hold total power over the Spanish government, so his initial policies did not target all autonomous regions. Language policies expanded to all of Spain after 1939 as Franco stepped into the role of a fascist dictator. Starting in 1938, Franco's team implemented the Press Law of 1938 to censor freedom of expression, including expressions of regional nationalism, such as crests, flags, and languages (Gunther et al., 2000). Additionally, Franco's forces occupied Cataluña in 1938 to squash the pro-Republic resistance, so the Press Law coupled with Franco's forces in Cataluña led to FC Barcelona's[2] official name change in 1938 (Burns, 1998). From 1941 until the end of the dictatorship in 1975, Franco decreed Spanish as the official language of Spain and prohibited regional languages and dialects across Spain (Claesson, 2022). As a result of these policies, football organizations had to change their names to fit Franco's idea of one singular Spanish language and identity. Football organizations could no longer represent regional autonomy using regional languages or symbols.

Given that Franco's military occupied Cataluña in 1938, he mainly focused on policing the language of governmental and football organizations

[2] This paper will use FC Barcelona's official Catalan name unless explicitly stating the name change.

in Cataluña. The Catalan fight against Franco's Nationalist forces in the Civil War led to Franco implementing policies that policed language to limit how the Catalans could display resistance. The Catalan government's original Catalan name was the Generalitat de Cataluña, but in *ABC* and *El Mundo Deportivo*, the government's name became the Generalidad de Cataluña to reflect the Castilian-Spanish version of the name. Furthermore, even before Franco occupied Cataluña, *El Mundo Deportivo, ABC,* and *El Correo* all failed to call Barcelona's football team by the formal Catalan name, Fútbol Club (FC) Barcelona. While Catalan culture and language previously endured violence from the Nationalist forces during the Civil War, the language policing signified a loss for Catalan resistance and a win for Franco's Spanish ideals. This initial 1938 policing forced the Catalan people to change how they expressed regional identity since language and football were parts of Catalan culture.

Though Franco directed much of the 1938 language policing toward Catalan identity, Spanish organizations were also victims of Franco's language policing. Franco did not discriminate language policing by region, for as Franco was coming to power, he was also making sure Spanish institutions reflected Francoist Spain. Spain's national football tournament was the *Copa del Presidente de la República* (the President of the Second Republic's Cup) before 1938; however, once Franco came into power in Spain, the tournament's official name became the *Copa del Generalisimo* (the General's Cup) to reflect Franco's military rank ("Dos versiones sobre la posibilidad," 1938). If the newspapers were referencing any previous national tournament games, the newspapers would only refer to the tournament as *La Copa* (the Cup) to avoid using a name that did not reflect Franco's government. Even though Franco's language policies went beyond regional football, the name change to reflecting Franco's regime demanded teams representing regional pride accept Franco as Spain's central figure. All teams playing for the national title, even the teams against Franco's government, would have to compete to represent Franco and Franco's Spanish nationalism rather than regional nationalism. Therefore, policing the Spanish national tournament's name still demanded the regions conform to Franco's idea of Spain.

In 1941, Franco's language policing of football teams shifted to become more overt since Franco prohibited all non-Spanish languages. Until 1941, regional football teams could use their regional dialect for club names. However, during and after 1941, football teams changed the club names to comply with Franco's decree promoting the Spanish language as Spain's only language. For example, Athletic Bilbao,[3] the Basque version of the name, exclusively became Atlético de Bilbao or Atlético Bilbao in *El Mundo Deportivo*, *ABC*, and *El Correo*. *El Correo* relayed a direct statement from

[3] For the duration of this paper, I will use Athletic Bilbao's Basque name unless discussing the language change.

Athletic Club Bilbao detailing how the name would change to comply with national orders:

> In compliance with the Spanish Football Federation's orders, [and] in agreement with the provisions of the National Sports Council, the Board of Directors of the Athletic Club has agreed to replace this name [Athletic] with Atlético, effective February 1, 1941. ("Athletic Club," 1941)

The more straightforward language policing toward Athletic Bilbao in 1941 reflected Franco's increasing persistence to promote Spanish identity. Through Athletic Bilbao's name change, Franco managed the Basque Country's pride and resistance to the Spanish government. By overseeing football as an instrument of regional pride, Franco could ensure football in the Basque Country reflected the Spanish language and Spanish nationalism.

Even with the language policies prohibiting languages other than Spanish and censoring the press, the newspapers resisted FC Barcelona's name change. The newspapers did not conform to the 1938 official language change when discussing Barcelona's football team. *El Mundo Deportivo* and *El Correo* wrote the Barcelona football team's name as "El Barcelona" or *los azulgrana* (referring to Barcelona's team colors of red and blue) through 1941. *Los azulgrana* represents the pride behind Barcelona's team, translating to Barça (the Catalan abbreviation of FC Barcelona) and Fútbol Club Barcelona (Barcelona's Catalan name) ("Los azulgrana obtuvieron," 1941). Even though Barcelona's team resisted a name change, the newspapers still failed to accept the Catalan version of the name. As a result, FC Barcelona had a limited ability to be a vehicle of regional pride and were less likely to be a strong symbol of Catalan nationalism.

Nevertheless, by the year 1943, Franco's emphasis on the Spanish version of names and language policing reached all football teams in Spain. FC Barcelona could no longer resist Franco's policies requiring Castilian-Spanish names. In 1943, *El Mundo Deportivo* and *El Correo* used "C. de F. Barcelona" and "Club de Fútbol Barcelona" when referencing Barcelona's football team. In *ABC*, Barcelona's football team was officially Barcelona C.F. in all articles, and all the football teams in Spain had a Castilian-Spanish prefix or suffix: C.F. (Club de Fútbol), Deportivo(a), or Atlético ("El Barcelona y El Atlético," 1943). Table 4 provides a summary of the language policies and FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao's name changes. FC Barcelona was the final team to switch to the Castilian-Spanish name, so from 1943 and beyond, Franco's Spanish nationalism ideals controlled the language of Spanish football. This control eliminated regional football clubs' ability to use language as a symbol of regional nationalism, lessening their overall impact as cultural symbols. Once Franco established control over football in Spain using language, he could start implementing more Spanish nationalism techniques to further oppress regional culture.

Original Name	Spanish Name	Year of Official Name Change	Reason for Official Name Change	Year Newspapers Reflected Name Change
Fútbol Club (FC) Barcelona	Club de Fútbol (CF) Barcelona	1938	Press Law of 1938; Spanish Nationalist forces occupied Cataluña.	1943
Athletic Bilbao	Atlético Bilbao or Atlético de Bilbao	1941	Franco prohibited regional languages in football club names.	1941

Table 4: Summary of Language Policing

Anti-Spain Framing

As Franco rose to power, he used red symbolism in football to separate Spanish identity from regional identity. Applying red symbolism to football teams and players became a way to distinguish the people for and against Francoist Spain. Since most of the red symbolism was in the autonomous regions, Franco often targeted the autonomy of those regions. The people opposed to Franco's regime were *rojoseparatistas* (red separatists), referring to the separatist movements in many of the autonomous regions, and the newspapers described these *rojoseparatistas* as engaged in politics, including the use of football propaganda, against the "New Spain" ("El deporte antes y después," 1938). Furthermore, since Franco considered football in the autonomous regions to be *rojo* (red), he believed a new Spanish football to complement the "New Spain" would add order and "construct a new passion for a national identity in Spain" ("El deporte antes y después," 1938). For example, after Franco's "liberation" of Bilbao, a red city, Bilbao's football would reflect the "the One, Great, and Free Spain" ("Un gran partido en San Mamés," 1938; "El deporte antes y después," 1938). In this 1938 period, Franco was formulating how to achieve a singular national identity, so using words like "liberation" and framing the football teams as *rojo* was a way to reject the autonomous identities in Spain. The contrasting negative and positive connotations of the words *rojo* and liberation reflected Franco's physical, symbolic, and cultural dominance over the autonomous regions, indicating Franco's "New Spain" held superiority even at its inception in 1938.

As the Spanish government framed the people against Franco's government as anti-Spain, Cataluña and the Basque Country's abilities to make football decisions without considering the Spanish government's opposition to regional autonomy decreased. The football clubs could no longer function independently of the Spanish government. The Director of Athletic Bilbao had to make sure *El Correo*'s readers knew the Basque government's deploy-

ment of an anti-Franco team was accidental and not for propaganda or politics ("El Athletic, en la época roja," 1938). With Franco's emphasis on regions against Spain, *El Mundo Deportivo* suggested the Catalan Football League began struggling to advance and continue the Catalan football tournament in 1938, and the tournament never appeared in the newspapers after 1938 ("Sólo hubo ayer Europa-Español," 1938). Since Bilbao and Cataluña could not continue football operations without government interference, the autonomous regions had little autonomy or individuality under Franco. Franco's control over Bilbao and Cataluña meant the autonomous regions had to write, act, and speak with Franco's government and Spanish values in mind. While autonomous regions and cultures did not disappear, this loss of autonomy signifies a more unified Spain.

As Franco's dictatorship progressed, he took a more direct approach to framing FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao as anti-Spain. Since the cities of Barcelona and Bilbao were against Franco's Spanish government, Franco did not shy away from using the newspapers to blatantly frame FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao as villains. Even with historical success in the national tournament, to become favorites for the 1943 Copa del Generalisimo, FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao had to "overcome everyone and everything," referring to Franco and the Spanish government's attempts to limit team and regional pride ("Barcelona y Atlético de Bilbao," 1943). Part of this challenge for FC Barcelona came from Franco framing Barcelona's football team as "the enemy" and "the rival" ("Pasado y futuro de las semifinales," 1943). Additionally, after Madrid defeated Barcelona to move on to the 1943 Copa del Generalisimo finals, an article in *ABC* suggested Barcelona's citizens were violent towards Spain ("El Aplastante Triunfo," 1943). By framing FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao as Spain's enemies, Franco shifted support away from the autonomous regions, reducing the spread of symbols and expressions of regional identity. By limiting the expansion of FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao as cultural symbols, people in other regions across Spain would be less inclined to support the Barcelona and Bilbao football teams and more likely to support a team representing Spanish values.

Even with anti-Spain framing and Franco's prohibition of regional languages and symbols, he was unable to outlaw celebrations promoting regional pride. After winning the 1943 Copa del Generalisimo, Athletic Bilbao held rallies and parades to celebrate the victory. Athletic's win was a source of pride for Bilbao and the Basque Country, and the people of Bilbao also expressed Spanish national pride since they considered the win to be a service to Spain and Franco ("Apoteósico recibimiento al Atlético," 1943). Franco even came to Bilbao to celebrate with Athletic Bilbao, and there were screams of "Long live Atlético," "Long Live Bilbao," "Franco, Franco, Franco," and "Long Live Spain" ("Apoteósico recibimiento al Atlético," 1943). Even though the win was a source of pride for Athletic Bilbao's football team and the Basque Country, Bilbao could not commemorate the win without

also honoring Franco's Spain. Bilbao's celebration of regional and team culture was in addition to honoring Spanish culture, so even in a regional football celebration, Franco's government was able to promote Spain.

Collective Targeting

While the Spanish government often looked to collectively target the football teams in the autonomous regions, referring to Franco's campaign to repress regional cultures using propaganda and/or physical or psychological force, the newspapers did not show evidence of Franco's collective targeting during the Spanish Civil War in 1938. Rather, Franco focused externally on football and did not express any sentiments towards regional autonomy. The articles from *ABC* in 1938 that reported on sports focused on general festivals and celebrations. The only sports *ABC* reported on were international football events, such as sports in the Soviet Union ("Acontecimientos deportivos en la Union Sovietica," 1938). Additionally, *ABC*'s only mention of Cataluña in 1938 came from an article where Cataluña expressed love and support to Madrid during the war ("Madrileños, Cataluña os ama," 1938). Even though Madrid, the capital of Spain and home of the Spanish government, was not reporting on football or expressly targeting the autonomous regions, as symbols of regional resistance, Franco's policies were still pressuring the football teams to conform to Spanish values. Madrid was often a battleground during the Spanish Civil War, so *ABC*'s lack of reporting was likely due to the Spanish Civil War preoccupying Franco's Nationalist forces and the citizens in Madrid rather than an absence of collective targeting.

When Franco created the Spanish National Sports Delegation in 1941, the organization served to centralize Spanish football and, by extension, start a collective targeting campaign. As part of the campaign, Franco's government ensured football teams reflected Spain as a nation. *ABC*'s newspaper reporting indicated that the multiplicity of Spain's sports damaged society, so the National Sports Delegation would eliminate interference from the organizations or football clubs against Franco's policies ("Propositos, orientacion, y finalidad," 1941). During this time, Barcelona's football team started to have economic shortcomings and poor performances that did not measure up to the "prestigious colors" Barcelona represented ("Un brillante primer tiempo," 1941). In Bilbao, all members on the board of directors for Athletic Bilbao's football club stepped down from running the club ("La Directiva del Atlético," 1941). In Franco's quest to unite the regions under Spanish nationalism, Franco had to make sure the institutions representing regional pride could not fully function. Since Franco created the National Sports Delegation to consolidate sports policies, FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao could not pursue sporting decisions without the Spanish government's knowledge or guidance. These football policies pressured regional autonomy, leading to FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao's inability to maintain the same football success as in the past.

As Franco worked to repress football operations in the autonomous communities, football also became a way to celebrate Franco's government. Namely, Spanish football was a way to support and indirectly serve Franco's government. *ABC* agreed with Franco's implementation of the National Sports Delegation and believed there should not be doubts about the good faith of the organization because it was serving *la Patra* (the Fatherland) ("Propositos, Orientacion, y Finalidad," 1941). Additionally, the symbols of Franco's regime became a part of Spanish football, with Figure 1 illustrating a team initiating a fascist salute before a game ("Comentando el juego," 1941). As the newspapers began emphasizing Spanish football as a reflection of Franco's government, football became a propaganda machine. With this idea of using football as a manner to serve and symbolize Francoist Spain, football transformed into a uniform entity without expressions of creativity or individuality.

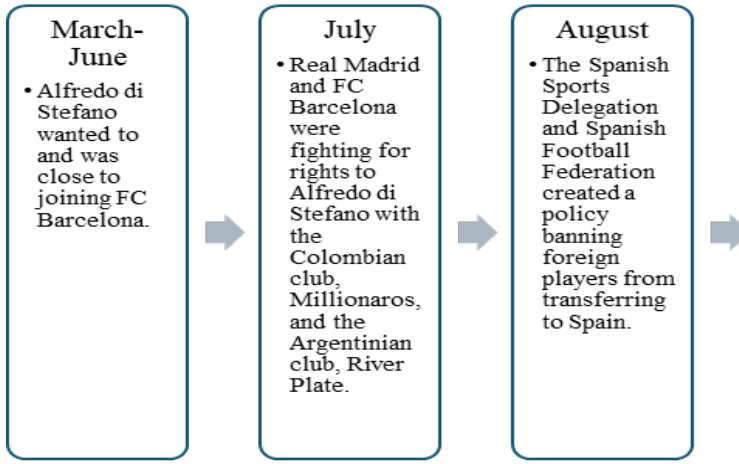


Figure 1

Repressing the autonomous communities also came from Franco's emphasis on Spanish superiority during the 1943 Copa del Generalisimo semifinal between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid. With Spanish superiority, FC Barcelona's team pride decreased, reducing the team's ability to respond to Franco's targeting. After the first leg of the Copa del Generalisimo semifinals, a spokesperson for Barcelona spoke on how the Spanish government censored the teams, saying "Let them shout all they want, neither they nor we will be able to do bad things because whoever even tries will be shot down with a lead hand" ("Madrid y Barcelona presentarán," 1943). During the match, Barcelona's football team came onto the field subdued and were playing with caution, and they eventually "collapsed" and "let" Real Ma-

drid score eleven goals ("El Madrid derroto al Barcelona," 1943). After the second leg of the Copa del Generalisimo, *El Mundo Deportivo* reported on how the Madrid players played with "supremacy" and "hostility," demoralizing Barcelona's team ("Atlético de Bilbao y Real Madrid," 1943). The battle and fighting language indicating Real Madrid's supremacy suggested the game between Real Madrid and FC Barcelona was akin to war, so when Real Madrid humiliated FC Barcelona, the win was not only for Real Madrid but also for Spain. In the moment of Real Madrid's win, Spain and Spanish culture had defeated Cataluña and Catalan identity; therefore, Franco's idea of Spanish domination over the autonomous regions came to fruition.

Alfredo di Stefano's Transfer

As one of the most skilled and expensive players in the world in 1953, Alfredo di Stefano's transfer to Spain presented a battle between Real Madrid and FC Barcelona and the two Latin American teams with rights to di Stefano. While trying to secure Alfredo di Stefano's transfer, Real Madrid and FC Barcelona used different, but official, channels, leading to a stand-off between the two clubs. Real Madrid hoped to secure the transfer of di Stefano from the Colombian club he was playing for at the time (Millionaros); however, due to FIFA's provisions with the Colombian football organization, di Stefano belonged to his home club (River Plate) in Argentina ("La situación de di Stefano," 1953). FC Barcelona secured di Stefano's transfer from River Plate to Barcelona, but the Millionaros team had already released him to Real Madrid ("La situación de di Stefano," 1953). While FC Barcelona and Real Madrid had been football rivals, the two organizations were now fighting organizationally, tactically, and economically to secure a player transfer. Even though both FC Barcelona and Real Madrid's organizations had to function according to Franco's sporting policies, this transfer tested Franco's ability to use government intervention as a way to regulate football in Cataluña and encourage Spanish football in Madrid.

As the transfer saga began, Franco used government channels to guarantee di Stefano would not play in Barcelona. The National Sports Delegation and Spanish Football Federation implemented policies on foreign player transfers, making it nearly impossible for FC Barcelona to complete the transfer. FC Barcelona and their board of directors were having trouble securing Alfredo di Stefano's transfer in July of 1953, allowing Real Madrid to intervene and pursue di Stefano ("di Stefano, Samitier," 1953). When di Stefano was in Barcelona and FC Barcelona was close to securing the transfer, the Spanish National Sports Delegation stepped in and suspended the hiring of foreign football players, ensuring FC Barcelona would not be able to sign Alfredo di Stefano legally ("La 'Hoja del Lunes,'" 1953; "di Stefano no puede jugar," 1953). Even though di Stefano wanted to play in Barcelona and Barcelona made the deal before the Spanish Football Federation and National Sports Delegation ruled against signing foreign players, FC Barcelona had

to transfer di Stefano's rights as a player to a different club ("Mas sobre di Stefano," 1953; "El 'Caso' di Stefano," 1953). The timing of this government intervention suggested FC Barcelona posed a threat to Franco and the Spanish sporting organizations. It was only as FC Barcelona was about to secure di Stefano's transfer when the Spanish Sports Delegation and the Spanish Football Federation established a policy prohibiting foreign players. Successfully securing Alfredo di Stefano's transfer would have given FC Barcelona a new weapon to elicit team pride, so the government intervention was a way to preserve Spain's power over football in Barcelona.

Franco's sporting policies during Alfredo di Stefano's transfer made sure di Stefano and any future international players would not play for anti-Spain teams. While the policies prohibited foreign player transfers, they also created workarounds to allow foreign players to transfer to teams representing Franco's Spanish values. In the National Sports Delegation's decision on foreign players, the resolution mentioned creating a formula to bring players that support Spanish teams ("La 'Hoja del Lunes,'" 1953). The Delegation would decide whether the players coming to Spain had values aligned with Francoist Spain before authorizing any transfer ("La 'Hoja del Lunes,'" 1953). As Real Madrid was pursuing di Stefano, *ABC* referred to Real Madrid as *el club español de fútbol* (the Spanish football club), indicating a transfer to Barcelona would be against Spain ("Segun un noticia de Bogota," 1953). At this point of government intervention, Franco was no longer trying to hide his disdain for the autonomous regions. Anti-Spain versus pro-Spain ideology framed the policy discussions among the Spanish sporting organizations; thus, Franco's football policies via the Spanish sporting organizations were emphasizing Franco's Spanish values as correct and legitimate to promote a Spanish nationalism void of regional differentiation.

In the end, FC Barcelona's inability to secure Alfredo di Stefano's transfer came from within the organization. Mixed opinions on the di Stefano transfer fractured trust within FC Barcelona's organization, so the personnel for FC Barcelona could not come to an agreement on di Stefano's transfer. During the transfer, the National Sports Delegation granted an exception to FC Barcelona and Real Madrid to continue negotiations for di Stefano ("El porqué de la dimisión," 1953; "di Stefano firmara hoy," 1953). FC Barcelona came to an agreement with Real Madrid to share di Stefano, with him playing the first and third seasons in Madrid and the second and fourth seasons in Barcelona ("di Stefano firmara hoy," 1953). However, as seen in Figure 2, dissent in Barcelona forced the club's director to resign, giving Madrid sole rights to di Stefano ("di Stefano, siempre con el Madrid," 1953). Even though FC Barcelona's failure to secure di Stefano came from the directors, Franco's government intervention made sure FC Barcelona would not gain any power as a symbol of regional identity from the di Stefano transfer. Even during the agreement, Real Madrid and the Spanish government would not allow FC Barcelona to get sole rights to di Stefano because that would have given FC

Barcelona an advantage over Real Madrid, and this advantage to FC Barcelona would have supplied the Catalans a new wave of team pride and regional identity, diminishing Franco's Spanish superiority.

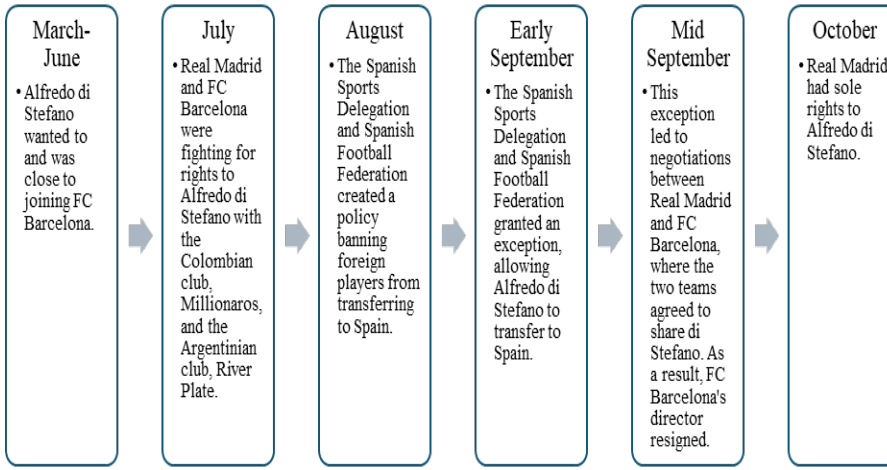


Figure 2: Full Timeline Detailing Alfredo di Stefano's 1953 Transfer

DISCUSSION

Football and Spanish Nationalism

Spain's plurinationality meant football was not always an indicator of national pride, as many of the previous researchers suggested. Looking at the club and local football teams in Spain extended nationalistic ideas to club football teams representing regional pride. Mason (1995) looked at how football promotes and increases collective national pride during national football events. My research's evaluation of FC Barcelona, Real Madrid, and Athletic Bilbao led to the discovery of regional football teams being vehicles of regional nationalism, aligning more with Bowman (2015) and Kossakowski and Besta's (2018) idea of football also promoting local and regional identities. Teams like FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao were symbols of regional pride, so Franco used the club football teams to eliminate the autonomy of the Spanish regions in favor of a nation-centered identity. While national pride was often the focus of previous research, a perspective of regional nationalism in Spain helped uncover divisions in national identity. These divisions increased the difficulty for Franco to pursue a collective nationalism, so when nationalism and regional cultures were not mutually exclusive, repressing autonomy through football became the primary manner to promote a national identity.

While researchers like Cronin (2023) believed football was an unsuccessful political tool, this research was more aligned with the idea of using

football as a steppingstone for political success. To add to the debate on success, my research found Franco's policies targeting football were somewhat successful for him to unify Spanish nationalism. Franco applied language changes and anti-Spain frames to FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao, diminishing the clubs' abilities to act independently of the Spanish government. Furthermore, during the 1943 Copa del Generalisimo, the fanbases for FC Barcelona, Real Madrid, and Athletic Bilbao conformed to Franco's policies while also celebrating their teams throughout the tournament. Meanwhile, Cronin (2023) believed the Spanish population was not invested enough for football to be a successful political tool. Since Franco's application of Spanish nationalism techniques to the football teams and supporters in Spain rejects Cronin's (2023) view of Franco's regime as an unsuccessful example, research debating the success of using football for political purposes should reevaluate the meaning of success to include a more immediate and larger scale timeframe. While Franco was able to successfully apply the Spanish nationalism techniques and successfully repress autonomous culture through football, he did not fully eliminate regional culture, indicating short-term but not long-term success.

Even though Franco was able to successfully implement policies related to Spanish nationalism, this research did not support the idea of football as a political distraction. Political leaders often tried to divert attention away from governmental decisions and human rights abuses, but Franco used football to impose government ideals and values. Alabarces (2023) found Latin American political leaders' use of football often revolved around the goal of distracting citizens from human rights abuses or controversial government actions, such as in the case of Argentina hosting the World Cup during the Dirty War. Franco's policies and actions, however, contradict Alabarces (2023) and Herzog (2014) because Franco applied anti-Spain framing to push pro-Spain ideologies. Instead of using football as a distraction, Franco put himself and the Spanish government as the central figures of Spanish football by renaming the national tournament to reflect his military title and using the National Sports Delegation and Spanish Football Federation to negotiate the Alfredo di Stefano transfer. Using football and sporting events for political purposes does not have to solely revolve around societal blindness to government abuses as the previous research suggested. In many ways, Franco's use of football as part of his main political goal of unifying Spain brought more attention to the Spanish government rather than less.

Cultural Identity Theory

Viewing Franco's Spanish nationalism techniques through the lens of Cultural Identity Theory (CIT) explains why Franco believed he could influence Spanish identity and culture. Due to Spain's autonomous communities, Spain consisted of many different cultural identities for Franco to manage. Under Hall's (2021) explanation of CIT, individuals' actions come from the

surrounding language and traditions, and this research shows football as a manner to express regional language and culture. Cultural identity evolves as societal, situational, and historical contexts change (Hall, 2021). As a result, Franco could apply language policing to change FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao's names to formulate a pro-Spain cultural identity. CIT's idea of ever-changing cultural identities means every leader and every historical occurrence affects cultural identity creation. However, even when culture is malleable, historical roots can lead to a persisting cultural identity, with the enduring expression of regional nationalism through football during Franco's regime as an example. Even though Franco was slightly successful at implementing policies to try and change cultural identity, this research rejects a permanent change in cultural identity.

Along with regional and cultural differences within Spain, CIT understands cultural sectors, like football, as vehicles of identity. Through the application of regional traditions, symbols, and languages, football developed cultural identities within Spain. Football as an expression of regional pride explains Franco's need to impose Spanish nationalist policies onto the sport. When applying CIT to football, the organic builders of culture manifested into a physical expression of cultural pride, for FC Barcelona, Real Madrid, and Athletic Bilbao all originally showcased the regional language, flag, and symbols through their crests and spoken chants. However, cultural identities differ depending on time, so football changed to align with the fascist regime, allowing Franco to control how Spain's cultural identities evolved (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao showed some resistance to language policies and anti-Spain framing even with Franco's policies pushing a Spanish cultural identity. Even though symbols of identity changed, they never truly disappeared because CIT's organic builders of identity like language and traditions indicate Franco was not able to issue a top-down policy forever erasing regional cultural identity. Franco could change his idea of a perfect Spanish culture, but CIT understands all cultural identities to coexist. Therefore, Franco could only temporarily change football's physical manifestation of culture.

CONCLUSION

The various nationalisms in Spain led Franco to use football as a repressive tool to suppress regional identities and achieve a unified national identity in Spain. Spain's autonomous regions held cultural and political power separate from Spain's national government, and football was a manner for the regions to express cultural identity. Franco's goal, therefore, was to eliminate opposition within the regions, so he applied nationalistic tools to football teams in the autonomous regions to eliminate regional expressions of identity and to emphasize a "New Spain." For example, Franco policed the language of both FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao to eliminate regional languages and promote the Spanish language. Furthermore, Franco accused FC

Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao of being against Spain as a way to shift support for regional teams to support for the nation. Franco also used government intervention to directly influence the functions of FC Barcelona to favor a Spanish team supportive of the Spanish government, like Real Madrid. Taking Franco's manipulation of club football teams in Spain as an example, governments can and often will use cultural sectors to disguise repression as unity. Football, while not inherently political, often represents historical rivalries between nations and clubs, making it a unique political tool to improve public opinion and bring supporters together against a common adversary.

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