

Analysis of the Sectarianism and Nationalism Ideologies Expressed Through Sports Media Texts

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Abstract: This article will analyse the content of Humza Youssef's tweet and the report through CDA and shed light on the Sectarianism ideology behind it. The article will also analyse the individual media coverage of the Hong Kong team for the 2022 World Table Tennis Team Championships and the nationalist ideology implied behind this Hong Kong media coverage through CDA.

Keywords: Sports Media; Sectarianism; Nationalism

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to analyse the Sectarianism and Nationalism ideologies behind two media reports. The first of these media reports features a tweet by former Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Justice Humza Youssef in response to a video of Rangers footballers foul-mouthed at the Pope during the 2021 championship celebrations. The tweet caused an outcry and backlash from Rangers fans.

1. The Context of Sectarianism in Scottish Football and Analysis of Humza Yousaf's Tweet

Historically, ethno-religious cultural milieus have been present in football, and therefore the historical legacy and temporary context of sectarianism must be acknowledged and placed within a rights framework when analysing relevant sports media coverage (Kelly, 2010). In the 1980s and 1990s, the term 'Sectarianism' was generally absent from educational, media, cultural and political discourse, and it also appeared to be an undisclosed, unmentioned and unacknowledged topic in public life. However, as the use of the term has grown exponentially, it is now a dominant discursive concept. "Sectarianism" has been used primarily to express and construct a designated community identity, often in relation to the relationship between Catholics and Protestants in Scotland (Bradley, 2014). The huge dearth of critical scholarly work on the subject of sectarianism has led to the contemporary Scottish media being at the forefront of constructing this concept, which in turn has made it the dominant discursive term covering negative references to ethno-religious events and identities (Deuchar & Holligan, 2010). This essay, therefore, seeks to illuminate the sectarian ideology behind it through an analysis of the news stories relating to Rangers.

Rangers are not only the established club in Scotland, but also the most trophy-winning club within Scottish football and one of the most supported and successful footballing institutions in the world. Due to its particular social, cultural, religious and political significance, Rangers FC is somewhat comparable to, and even surpasses, some of the world's most famous clubs (Bradley, 2013). One of the most notable and most criticised aspects of the Rangers was their refusal to sign Catholics. During a visit to Canada in 1967, the then vice-chairman of Rangers, Matt Taylor, said that refusing to sign Catholics was "part of our tradition" (Bradley, 2014). This 'tradition' indirectly led to a series of riots by Rangers fans, such as the 1972 riots in Barcelona after winning the European Cup of Champions and the 1976 riots in Birmingham. A week after the Birmingham riots, the club's then-general manager, Willie Waddell, publicly used the term 'Sectarianism' and declared that the club was 'determined to end Rangers' image as a sectarian club' (Brand & Gallagher, 1990). It can therefore be demonstrated that Rangers' anti-racial-Irish-Catholic bias existed to a large extent before the word sectarianism evolved in such a pronounced way (Bradley, 2014). Although Rangers signed Maurice Johnston, a Catholic, as a footballer for the club in 1989 and broke a century-long history and tradition of Rangers only signing Protestants (usually Scottish) and thus discriminating against Catholics (usually Irish or Irish living in Scotland), former Rangers player Ralph Bland, in criticism of his

former club, he still denounced its management as '100% Protestant' (Murray, 2000).

Meanwhile, Humza Youssef's response to this backlash was equally significant, and when asked if he regretted posting the controversial tweet about Rangers, he responded with a firm "NO". This was partly due to the fact that as society developed, the proportion of minority Catholics in Scotland increased, leading to a more pronounced Protestant hegemony that had previously existed in Scottish society (Devine & Mitchison, 2004). And as a result of the growing concern about 'Sectarianism' among all sectors of Scottish society, the Scottish government held two official 'Sectarian Summits' in 2005 and 2006 and introduced legislation to criminalise ethno-religious prejudice and discrimination (Kelly, 2010). Therefore, as Richardson (2019) argues that one of the key principles of critical discourse analysis is that the use of language is determined by social structures and power relations, Yusuf's response is in line with his role as Minister of Justice and expresses a stance against sectarian ideology in the sporting world. And by highlighting his previous work with Rangers in promoting diversity and inclusion and using the word 'endorsement' to express support for Rangers' diversity and inclusion campaign at Ibrox in 2019, it further underlines his stance against sectarianism and the recognition that the issue is complex and needs to be a nuanced approach to address it. However, it must be considered that these comments were made by Yusuf in response to Rangers fans' criticism of his previous tweet. This comment could therefore be seen as a defence of his actions and an attempt to portray himself as a fair and impartial justice minister. So although Yusuf expressed his approval of Rangers' diversity and inclusion campaign, this does not necessarily absolve him of any potential bias against the club or its supporters.

Finally, returning to the news report itself, the text uses the word 'sour' to describe the impact of Yusuf's tweets on relations with some Rangers fans, which indirectly suggests that the writer is portraying Yusuf as the cause of tensions between him and some of the club's supporters. And the use of the words 'controversial' and 'backlash' creates a negative image in the reader's mind of Youssef who as a Scottish Justice Minister does not have the interests of Scottish fans at heart. And the overall focus of the article is on Rangers' opposition to his comments, with no mention of whether this stands against sectarianism by Youssef has received a positive reaction or support from other fans or the public, which can create a distorted understanding of the issue by the general public. It can therefore be argued that the author of the news text implicitly expresses his sectarian ideology through these terms. This partly confirms Bruce's (2004) argument that some sections of the Scottish press have a sectarian - or non-Irish Catholic hegemonic - worldview, but are unaware (or in denial) of their own sectarianism.

2. Analysing the Anti-State Nationalism behind individual reports in the Hong Kong Media

In the mid-19th century, the Opium Wars between China and Britain over the opium trade resulted in the defeat of the Chinese Qing government and the signing of the Treaty of Nanking, which ceded Hong Kong to Britain. It was not until the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed in 1984 and Hong Kong was handed back to the People's Republic of China in 1997 that Hong Kong ended its more than 150 years of colonial rule (Lau, 1993). During this 150-year period, Britain developed Hong Kong into a major trading and financial centre with a highly developed economy and a distinctive cultural identity and a capitalist economic system (Ku, 2004). Although mainland China promised Hong Kong to remain capitalist for 50 years when it took over the territory in 1997, many Hong Kong people were resistant to and fearful of the socialist system in mainland China (Shen, 2003). Anti-state nationalism is one form of nationalism that opposes the current state or government. It is typically characterised by a rejection of the state's political and social systems and a desire to replace them with new systems that reflect their nationalist ideology (Carr, 2020; Seo, 2009). Anti-state nationalist ideology can be expressed in many forms, such as violent rebellion, the press, peaceful political movements, etc. The next part of this section will use the CDA to analyse the Hong Kong media sports report and reveal the anti-state nationalist ideology behind its manifestations.

3. Conclusion

In summary, this essay uses CDA theoretical methods to analyse Yusuf's tweeted report and the Hong Kong media's personal interview with Wu Yong Lin, using methods such as semiotics and the relevant historical context of the two reports to illuminate the ideologies of sectarianism and anti-state nationalism behind the two reports. In the first one, Yusuf, as Justice Minister, represents the anti-sectarian position of the Scottish government, while the author of the news report uses vocabulary to implicitly express support for the existence of sectarianism in Scottish football. In the second press, both the interviewee and the author of the media text show an

anti-state nationalist ideology towards China.

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