



Received: 23.10.2025

<http://dx.doi.org/10.16926/sit.2026.02.04>

Accepted: 24.02.2026

Radosław ZMUDZIŃSKI*

THE ROLE OF FOOTBALL IN THE POLITICS OF CONTEMPORARY STATES: A LITERATURE-BASED ANALYSIS

How to cite [jak cytować]: Zmudziński R., *The Role of Football in the Politics of Contemporary States: A Literature-Based Analysis*, "Sport i Turystyka. Środkowoeuropejskie Czasopismo Naukowe" 2026, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 85–108.

Miejsce i rola piłki nożnej w polityce współczesnych państw w świetle literatury przedmiotu

Streszczenie

W artykule przeanalizowano piłkę nożną z perspektywy zjawiska wykraczającego poza sportową rywalizację. Futbol, jako jedna z najpopularniejszych dyscyplin sportowych na świecie, stał się przestrzenią, w której ścierają się interesy państw, organizacji piłkarskich, piłkarzy oraz kibiców. Wykorzystywany jest nie tylko do budowania wizerunku państw i promowania idei politycznych, lecz także do wzmacniania tożsamości narodowej, legitymizowania władzy oraz odwracania uwagi społeczeństwa od kontrowersyjnych reform i problemów wewnętrznych. Szczególną rolę odgrywa jako narzędzie soft power, umożliwiające kształtowanie pozytywnego obrazu państwa na arenie międzynarodowej bez użycia środków przymusu. Może służyć jako środek komunikacji społecznej, wzmacniający więzi narodowe i mobilizujący obywateli, zwłaszcza w regionach dążących do niepodległości.

Analiza nie posiada sztywnych ram czasowych. Przykłady dobrano w taki sposób, aby uchwycić ewolucję zjawiska w różnych kontekstach społeczno-politycznych oraz kulturowych. Praca składa się z trzech części: zaangażowania organizacji, zawodników i kibiców w życie polityczne, piłki nożnej jako elementu siły państwa oraz jako szansy na uznanie międzynarodowe.

Celem pracy jest integracja rozproszonych wątków w literaturze przedmiotu oraz ukazanie mechanizmów, które łączą futbol i politykę. Artykuł wypełnia lukę badawczą, pokazując, jak trzy poziomy analizy dotychczas badane osobno, tj. organizacyjny, społeczny i państwowy, współdziałają ze sobą.

Słowa kluczowe: polityka, soft power, piłka nożna, uznanie międzynarodowe, organizacje sportowe.

* <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-4505-5993>; M A; the Faculty of Humanities, Koszalin University of Technology; email: zmudzinskiradek@gmail.com (corresponding author)

Abstract

The article examines football from the perspective of a phenomenon that goes beyond mere sporting competition. As one of the most popular sports disciplines in the world, football has become a space in which the interests of states, football organizations, players, and supporters intersect and often clash. It is used not only to build state image and promote political ideas, but also to strengthen national identity, legitimize political authority, and divert public attention from controversial reforms and internal challenges. Football plays a particularly significant role as an instrument of soft power, enabling states to shape a positive international image without resorting to coercive measures. It may also function as a means of social communication, reinforcing national bonds and mobilizing citizens, especially in regions striving for independence. The analysis does not adopt rigid temporal boundaries. The selected examples aim to capture the evolution of the phenomenon across diverse socio-political and cultural contexts. The study is structured into three parts: the involvement of organizations, players, and supporters in political life; football as an element of state power; and football as an opportunity for achieving international recognition. The aim of the article is to integrate dispersed strands within the existing literature and to identify the mechanisms linking football and politics. The study fills a research gap by demonstrating how three levels of analysis – organizational, societal, and state-level – interact, whereas they have previously been examined separately.

Keywords: politics, soft power, football, international recognition, sports organizations.

Introduction

Football – a team sport in which teams of eleven players each aim to score a goal against each other¹ – is one of the most popular sports disciplines in the world. It is proven by the results of Ipsos research conducted before the 2022 World Cup, showing that almost 40 percent of the world population regarded themselves as football supporters.²

For many years football has been more than just sports rivalry. It has become a political tool – a set of activities, as Marek Chmaj states, undertaken by a decision centre, aiming at achieving the intended goals with the help of appropriately chosen means.³ Football has evolved into the space where political, economic and ideological interests clash. It is, among others, an element of building state image, strengthening national identity and developing soft power, i.e. a country's ability to exert influence and secure allies through the appeal of its own culture, policies and values, rather than through military or economic pressure.⁴

¹ W. Lipoński, *Encyklopedia Sportów Świata*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Atena, Poznań 2001, pp. 367–371.

² *Pół świata zamierza oglądać mistrzostwa w piłce nożnej*, "Ipsos Global Advisor", 18.11.2022.

³ M. Chmaj, *Przyczynek do wyjaśnienia pojęcia: polityka*, "Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio K. Politologia", 1995/1996, vol. 23, pp. 197–206.

⁴ R. Łoś, *Soft power – definicja, źródła i sposób oddziaływania*, "Studia Polityczne", 2018, vol. 46, no 1, pp. 131–148.

The aim of the article is an analysis of the influence of football organisations, players and fan movements on national policy. It shows how football operates as a soft power tool. It also presents football as a means of social communication, often used to promote states, shape their image and as an element of maintaining or regaining national identity in the regions striving for political independence.

The article consists of three parts. The first one shows how football organisations and supporters engage in political life. The second one pertains to football as an element of state's power, whereas the third one attempts to answer the question whether football can be a path to international recognition.

Analysing football in a broader context, not only the sports one but as a cultural, social and political phenomenon, makes it possible to understand how it can serve political purposes and how it shapes national narratives. The topic takes on a special meaning in the context of contemporary events like the 2022 World Cup in Qatar or Russia's suspension from the FIFA following its invasion of Ukraine.

The research gap concerns an insufficient number of comprehensive studies combining three levels of analysis – organisational (FIFA, UEFA), social (football fans, players) and national (soft power, international politics). The current state of research indicates that football is widely recognised as a cultural, social and political phenomenon. Yet, the research focuses mainly on individual dimensions of the analysis: organisational, social or national. On the other hand, there are very few studies combining all the three levels into a comprehensive analysis, showing mechanisms thanks to which football serves as a political tool on a global scale.

The article was written on the basis of a master's thesis "Between sports and politics. A case study of football," which was defended in 2022 at Koszalin University of Technology and has not been published yet. The analysis does not have any fixed timeframe – the examples were selected to present the phenomenon holistically, which should make it possible to understand the evolution of the relationship between football and politics as a dynamic tool of influence that changes its functions and significance depending on the socio-political context.

Methods and research problems

The hypothesis of the research was that football as part of popular culture has become a tool for political influence. Due to its enormous popularity it lets states, organisations and social groups promote their own ideals, improve their international image, build national identity, have an impact on public opinion and ease political tensions. To test the hypothesis, the following research questions were formulated:

- How do football organisations such as the FIFA and the UEFA influence states' decisions?
- Which mechanisms let football serve as soft power in international politics?
- To what extent do fan movements and players' attitudes contribute to the politicisation of football?
- Can football foster the development of national identity?

To prepare this publication and check how football functions as a tool for politics, communication and identity, the following research methods were used: historical method, case study, content and discourse analysis. A comparative approach and source triangulation made it possible to integrate three levels of analysis – organisational, social and national one – into one coherent whole.

Results and discussion

The influence of organisations, footballers and football fans on politics

The institutionalisation of football at the international level created conditions for its permanent use as an instrument of state policy. The key moments were: the establishment of the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) in 1904, which facilitated the organisation of large-scale international competitions, and the opening of the 1930 World Cup. From that moment, football ceased to be merely a form of sports competition and became a vehicle for prestige, national identity and propaganda.

The 1934 World Cup in Italy is considered as one of the earliest examples of deliberate use of football for political purposes. The regime of Benito Mussolini used it to legitimise fascist rule and build the country's international image.⁵ What is more, the establishment of the UEFA in 1954 and the development of European games strengthened the political dimension of football, making international sports federations independent actors in international relations.

With time, football organisations, especially international and continental ones – the FIFA and the UEFA, were becoming more and more important players on political stage. They choose the organiser of the World Cup and the European Cup – which is already a great source of prestige for a given country and helps to promote it – and they decide on the sale of broadcasting rights, the distribution of cash prizes for championship participants, and even the selection of the event's anthem and mascot.⁶ A given country also receives from the FIFA and

⁵ 1934: *faszizm, sędziowie i włoski marsz*, "TVP Sport", 16.01.2014, <https://sport.tvp.pl/13668299/1934-faszizm-sedziowie-i-wloski-marsz> [access on 19.01.2026].

⁶ A. Miazek, *MKOL i FIFA jako aktorzy stosunków międzynarodowych*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2019, p. 27.

the UEFA detailed guidelines concerning the organisation of the event, stadium construction and related infrastructure such as parking places and access to public transport.

The role of a host country is limited and, as Renata Włoch rightly noticed, consists in being the franchisee of the event. It is the host that covers the costs of sports facilities and related infrastructure, organising and running the competition, and the federations decide on income distribution. The host country sets a scene while international federations make profit.⁷

The FIFA member nations have ceded some of their competencies to the judicial power. State football federations cannot make any appeals to state courts and all the disputes shall be settled only by the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne.⁸ It derives from the fact that the judiciary system should be neutral and any forms of political pressure should be avoided. For this reason, the FIFA created the Players' Status Committee and the Dispute Resolution Chamber. For undermining judicial independence, the FIFA and the UEFA can impose sanctions on states and state federations,⁹ for example, for violating human rights. The exclusion of Yugoslav national team from the 1992 European Championship due to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is an example of that case.¹⁰

Neither is football free from the phenomena that distort the essence of sports competition. The professional literature and law enforcement reports present many instances that undermine the integrity of the competition and negatively impact the fans' perception of football.

In Polish reality, the corruption scandal came to light in the early 21st century. Its scale was enormous. It concerned referees, officials of the Polish Football Association, coaches and clubs' representatives.¹¹ Match results were bought by football officials who also had their say on the selection of referees and thereby contributed to the distortion of fair competition. The scale of corruption was so big that it covered not only top division but also lower league

⁷ R. Włoch, *Międzynarodowe federacje piłkarskie jako nowi aktorzy ładu globalnego*, "Stosunki Międzynarodowe", 2012, vol. 46, no 2, p. 22.

⁸ Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), *FIFA Statutes. September 2020 edition*, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/4b2bac74655c7c13/original/viz2gmyb5x0pd24qrhrx-pdf.pdf> [access on 8.11.2023].

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ *Rosja jak Jugosławia? Już kiedyś UEFA wykluczyła z turnieju reprezentację kraju-agresora*, "Sportowy24", 24.02.2022, <https://sportowy24.pl/rosja-jak-jugoslavia-juz-kiedys-uefa-wykluczyla-z-turnieju-reprezentacje-krajuagresora/ar/c2-16065527> [access on 8.11.2023].

¹¹ S. Jadcza, *Po dobroci, szantażem, na pewno nie na trzeźwo. Jak handlowano meczami polskiej ligi*, "Magazyn TVN24", 9.08.2023, <https://archiwum.tvn24.pl/magazyn-tvn24/254/tvn24.pl/magazyn-tvn24/po-dobroci-szantażem-na-pewno-nie-na-trzeźwo-jak-handlowano-meczami-polskiej-ligi%2C254%2C4423.html> [access on 19.01.2026].

matches.¹² It resulted in hundreds of criminal proceedings, relegations of football clubs and financial penalties.¹³ The scandal revealed the weakness of control mechanisms not only in football structures, but also at the highest government level as well as the authorities' long-standing tolerance of irregularities.

However, the phenomena observed in Poland are part of a broader, international context of corruption in football. Europol investigation called "Operation VETO" identified hundreds of people in Europe suspected of match-fixing, who were linked to international criminal groups.¹⁴ A crucial element of these corruptive practices – which was also mentioned by the Polish Ministry of Sports and Tourism in its report on corruption in the sports world, also referring to operation VETO – is the role of the betting market, which has become an attractive tool for organised crime.¹⁵

The professional literature on the subject matter of sports management emphasises that it is precisely the passivity or selective response of public and sports authorities that contributes to the perpetuation of corruption and match-fixing.¹⁶ Researchers point to the fact that weak mechanisms of state supervision over sports organisations, lack of transparency and insufficient cooperation between federations and law enforcement bodies create conditions that allow these problems to persist for a long period of time.¹⁷ Thus, corruption in sport is treated not as a collection of individual instances of misconduct but as a structural issue deriving from institutional and regulatory deficits, which public authorities tolerating irregularities or reacting only in crisis situations are partially responsible for.¹⁸

Political pressure is also imposed by football fans. Yet, it should be emphasised that their political engagement is not uniform in nature. The literature differentiates among at least three dimensions:¹⁹ symbolic-commemorative, pro-

¹² A. Świderska, "Wszystkie mecze nasze są", czyli jak wygląda korupcja w niższych ligach, "Głos Wielkopolski", 8.11.2014, <https://gloswielkopolski.pl/wszystkie-mecze-nasze-sa-czyli-jak-wyglada-korupcja-w-nizszych-ligach/ar/3638222> [access on 19.01.2026].

¹³ S. Jadcak, *Po dobroci, szantażem...*, op. cit.

¹⁴ *Raport Europolu: 380 ustawionych meczów!*, "TVP Sport", 4.02.2013, <https://sport.tvp.pl/9980720/raport-europolu-380-ustawionych-meczow> [access on 19.01.2026].

¹⁵ R. Włoch, *Korupcja w środowisku sportowym. Przegląd literatury przedmiotu, badań empirycznych oraz dokumentów*, The Ministry of Sports and Tourism, 2014. <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/9de2d6e9-dfb7-435f-86da-fc90410ff39d> [access on 19.01.2026].

¹⁶ W. Maennig, *Corruption in International Sports and Sport Management: Forms, Tendencies, Extent and Countermeasures*, European Sport Management Quarterly, 2005, vol. 5, no 2, pp. 198-200, 203-206.

¹⁷ S. Gorse, S. Chadwick, *The prevalence of corruption in international sport*, Birkbeck Sport Business Centre, University of London, 2010, pp. 14–16, <https://www.jogoremoto.pt/docs/extra/G3jsJk.pdf> [access on 19.01.2026].

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ R. Kossakowski, *Kibice piłkarscy. Studium socjologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk 2022, pp. 75–94.

test and instrumental. The first one pertains to maintaining historic narratives and the ones linked with national identity. It is manifested in match banners celebrating moments important for the whole nation. A good example is the annual commemoration of Warsaw Uprising prepared by Legia Warszawa football supporters, or Lechia Gdańsk staunch supporters' commemoration of martial law times in Poland. For example, in 2011 the inhabitants of Gdańsk commemorated the 30th anniversary of introducing martial law with the help of the banner reading, "Instead of cartoons on TV, there were beatings and a roundup in the street" and "Being portrayed as heroes today – they brutally made so many pass away."²⁰ Thus, a stadium becomes a space for the politics of memory.²¹

The second dimension is the protest one. It refers to the reaction of football fan environments to the decisions of public authorities. For instance, football fan groups took part in social protests following the Constitutional Tribunal's ruling on abortion in 2021. The CT stated that the provision allowing abortion in cases where there is a high probability of severe and irreversible foetal impairment, an incurable disease threatening its life is unconstitutional.²² In Łódź, a group consisting of 50 football fans was carrying a huge banner with an inscription, "Let women decide for themselves what to do with their bodies, and you brainless idiots don't go spraying all over the church." In this way, the fans tried to alleviate the situation, and to some extent show solidarity with those disagreeing with the ruling, as well as to show that, among other things, vandalising places of religious cult is wrong."²³

The dimension of an instrumental nature concerns situation in which patriotic or national values are explored to legitimise the activities of groups operating on the fringes of the law.²⁴

It is crucial in that case to differentiate between situations from the communist era and reality after 1989. At the times of socialism, a stadium constituted one of very few spaces of relatively free expression of dissent, which explains the presence of underground activists in football fan circles. It is worth recalling a situation that took place during the World Cup in Spain in 1982, when

²⁰ K. Gac, *Polityka stadionowa*, "Do Rzeczy", 3.08.2017, <https://dorzeczy.pl/kraj/37570/politykastadionowa.html> [access on 8.11.2023].

²¹ R. Kossakowski, *Kibice piłkarscy*, op. cit.

²² TK: *aborcja m.in. w przypadku nieodwracalnego upośledzenia płodu – niezgodna z konstytucją*, "Polskie Radio Koszalin", 22.10.2020, <https://prk24.pl/50450441/tk-aborcja-min-w-przypadku-nieodwracalnego-uposledzenia-plodu-niezgodna-z-konstytucja> [access on 8.11.2023].

²³ Post on Facebook ŁKS FANS.pl, 28 November 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/lksfanspl/photos/3653234364716356> [access on 8.11.2023].

²⁴ J. Dudała, *Fani-chuligani. Rzecz o polskich kibolach. Studium socjologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie "Żak", Warszawa 2004, pp. 201-225.

the Polish team took third place and won the silver medal. There was martial law in our country at that time, and in Barcelona at Camp Nou during the third-place match of our team led by the coach Antoni Piechniczek against France, there were "Solidarity" flags among the spectators. It was Polish football fans who displayed them. Fearing a negative public reaction, the Polish camera operator tried not to show this display, but to no avail.

Similar occurrences were also noted in the 80s, in the environment of Lech Gdańsk supporters, who, due to the specificity of the region and a strong presence of opposition groups, constituted one of the most politically active football fan groups in Poland. The stadium in Gdańsk served as the space for manifesting dissent towards the authorities, and the presence of underground activists derived both from the local political context and a massive nature of the sports event.²⁵

After the political transformation, the politicization of certain fan groups does not derive any more from the systemic limitations of citizens rights but is motivated by the desire to occupy a prominent space in the public sphere and compete for symbolic group capital. Above all, the fan movement has already taken on a protest-oriented character.²⁶ The modern fan movement in Poland is characterised by diversity of its activity forms and a clear difference in the motivation of individual groups. Apart from football fan groups focusing on match banners, developing club identity and charity activity, there are groups more confrontative in nature, for whom competing against other football fan groups is a crucial element of their activity.²⁷ In recent years, there has been a rise in the importance of social media that give football fans their own voice, promoting their own narrative, mobilising supporters and shaping the group's image off the field.

This phenomenon is also noticeable in other countries (or quazi-states) that are fighting for sovereignty. A good example can be an Israeli club, Beitar, whose most staunch supporters became infamous for their banners displaying threats, anti-Arab and racist slogans such as, for example, "Forever pure". One of the club owners tried to resist these practices by signing two football players, Chechen Muslims. However, this decision sparked outrage among the club's most loyal fans, who set fire to the club's headquarters. Finally, Beitar's owners backed down and the abovementioned players left the club.²⁸ In October 2023,

²⁵ R. Kossakowski, *From Communist Fan Clubs to Professional Hooligans: A History of Polish Fandom as a Social Process*, "Sociology of Sport Journal" 2017, vol. 34, pp. 281-292.

²⁶ R. Kossakowski, T. Szlendak, D. Antonowicz, *Polish ultras in the post-socialist transformation*, "Sport in Society", 2018, vol. 21, no 6, pp. 854-869.

²⁷ T. Sahaj, *Kibicowanie, religia i sport. Między sacrum i profanum, wiarą i rozumem*, "Ethos. Kwartalnik Instytutu Jana Pawła II KUL", 2024, vol. 37, no 4, pp. 179-207.

²⁸ F. Zieliński, *Koszulka Roberta Mazurka wywołała burzę w sieci. Wyjaśniamy dlaczego*, "Przegląd Sportowy", 15.11.2023, <https://przegladsportowy.onet.pl/ofsajd/koszulka-roberta-mazurka-wywolala-burze-w-sieci-wyjasniamy-dlaczego/0jsvv73> [access on 27.11.2023].

when the conflict between Israel and Palestine escalated, many cities were bombed and hospitals attacked, in social media the club kept publishing more posts on the military conflict than on football. There were entries commemorating the football fans who died in the war. They were accompanied with their photos.²⁹

Footballers also get politically engaged. They are not only celebrities and opinion leaders, but often role models for young people searching for figures to look up to. They also cause controversies. One of such examples is the behaviour of Ilkay Gündogan and Mesut Özil, multiple German national team players of Turkish origin. In 2016, in Germany, a heated debate erupted after they posted on social media a photo with the president of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The photo showed Özil presenting a T-shirt to the president, and a dedication in the post's description read, "For my president."³⁰ Many fans interpreted this gesture as open support for a politician who rejects the principles of democratic governance and fails to respect human rights. The national team coach at that time tried to make excuses for them, explaining that some footballers "have two hearts beating in their chests". He did not hesitate either to select them for the 2018 World Cup in Russia.³¹ The footballers were also defended by then-Chancellor Angela Merkel, who appealed to fans to keep their emotions on check. In one of radio programmes she said she believed that posting the photograph was not a well thought-over decision and the players did not want to disappoint their fans. She also added that she is pleased to see them play regularly for the national team.³²

Football as soft power

Due to its popularity, football is regarded as a national treasure in many countries. If we add to this international success, then the government of a given country might use it as a tool for propaganda, a show of strength, or a way to cover up the country's problems: from economic to diplomatic ones.

The Brazilians performed in all world cups taking place till 2022. They triumphed five times – in 1958, 1962, 1970, 1990 and 2002, and in the meantime

²⁹ Posts on the official fanpage of Beitar Jerusalem, *ירושלים, מועדון הכדורגל בית"ר ירושלים – F.C. Beitar Jerusalem*, 1.10-27.11.2023, <https://www.facebook.com/BeitarFcJerusalem> [access on 27.11.2023].

³⁰ M. Szumański, *Ozil i Gundogan krytykowani po publikacji zdjęcia z Erdoganem*, "Sport.pl", 15.05.2018, <https://www.sport.pl/pilka/7,65080,23400058,ozil-i-gundogan-krytykowani-po-publikacji-zdjecia-z-erdoganem.html> [access on 10.11.2023].

³¹ J. Kucharsky, *Koniec Özila, albo "spadaj do Anatolii, turecka świnio!"*, "Krytyka Polityczna", 2.08.2018, <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/swiat/ozil-erdogan-niemcy-futbolreprezentacja> [access on 10.11.2023].

³² *Reprezentanci Niemiec Gundogan i Ozil poparli Erdogana. Dali mu koszulkę "dla mojego prezydenta" i wybuchł skandal*, "Dziennik.pl", 15.05.2018, <https://sport.dziennik.pl/pilka-nozna/artykuly/574407,erdogan-prezydent-turcja-niemcy-ozil-gundogan-reprezentacja-niemiec-mundial-mistrzostwa-swiata-w-pilce-noznej-loew.html> [access on 10.11.2023].

they kept winning other medals, though it was not considered a success. Almost throughout the whole 20th century, football was regarded in the “Country of Coffee” as an element integrating its citizens, as year after year it became increasingly popular among people living in poor neighbourhoods as well as among wealthy citizens.³³ It is worth noting that the best players such as Pele, Ronaldo, Ronaldinho or Rivaldo came from poor families. The “Canarinhos” successes at the world cups also helped to ease public discontent. Football became Brazil’s bridge to a better world.³⁴ That is why there were many investments in this sport, huge stadiums holding even a hundred thousand spectators, and visited by twice as many, such as Maracana in Rio de Janeiro were built.³⁵ Due to a great number of people playing football, more and more professional players, numerous successes of the national team and high attendance at stadiums, Brazil’s internal, economic and political problems took a back seat.³⁶

It was different in China where football is not played at such a high level. For years, that league failed to produce any exceptional players and few outstanding coaches worked there. It changed in 2013, when Xi Jinping became the leader of the People’s Republic of China. The politician, who is a football fan,³⁷ noticed that this one of the most popular sports disciplines could help promote China and serve as an important factor in building its strength. Xi Jinping decided on introducing many reforms so that till 2050 Chinese football could become a global power. According to the plan, the signing of high-profile players for large sums of money and the offering of lucrative contracts were expected to result in a significant leap in both on-field performance and marketing appeal. For example, a Brazilian player, Hulk, was bought from London’s Chelsea for 55 million euro. Another team, Guangzhou Evergrande, signed his compatriot Paulinho from London’s Tottenham for a similar sum of money.³⁸ What is more, outstanding coaches went to China. Among others, these were an Italian, Marcello Lippi, who led the Italian national team to the World Cup title in Germany in 2006, and Luiz Felipe Scolari, a Brazilian who lead Brazil to the World Cup title in 2002 in Korea and Japan.

³³ Z. Melosik, *Piłka nożna, mulatyzm i tożsamość narodowa w Brazylii*, “Studia Edukacyjne”, 2016, no 38, pp. 253–263.

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ M. Bobakowski, *200 tys. kibiców na meczu piłkarskim. Oto spotkania z największą liczbą widzów*, “WP Sportowe Fakty”, 7.11.2015, <https://sportowefakty.wp.pl/pilkanozna/558431/200-tys-kibicow-na-meczu-pilkarskim-oto-spotkania-z-najwieksza-liczbawidzow/8> [access on 10.11.2023].

³⁶ Z. Melosik, *Piłka nożna, mulatyzm*, op. cit.

³⁷ *Piłka nożna i chiński duch patriotyzmu*, “Rzeczpospolita”, 18.05.2018, <https://www.rp.pl/plus-minus/art1950071-pilka-nozna-i-chinski-duch-patriotyzmu> [access on 10.11.2023].

³⁸ *Chinese Super League transferrekorde*, “Transfermarkt”, <https://www.transfermarkt.de/chinese-super-league/transferrekorde/wettbewerb/CSL> [access on 10.11.2023].

Such spectacular transfers also led to the purchase of broadcasting rights by the biggest world TV channels – in Poland it was “Polsat”, and meanwhile Chinese entrepreneurs were interested in purchasing European clubs. This would allow them to establish the so-called affiliate clubs in their home country, draft contracts in such a way as to transfer a well-known player from his home club, for example, in England – to a club in China on loan. Entrepreneurs allocated approximately \$ 2.5 billion solely to the purchase of shares in European clubs, with the aim of promoting Xi Jinping’s vision of establishing China as a football powerhouse.³⁹ The leader of the People’s Republic of China also decided on spending large sums on building modern sports infrastructure, not only stadiums, but also football academies, of which nearly 50 000 were established in China.⁴⁰

However, Xi Jinping’s plan failed to produce results, and the quality of the domestic league did not improve. That is why the leader decided to change the football policy in China. To promote local players, improve the quality of training and prevent spending huge sums of money on foreign players’ salaries, a salary cap was introduced. A Chinese player could earn \$ 1.5 million annually, and a foreign one \$ 3.35 million a year.⁴¹ The chairman of the Chinese Football Association, Xu Yuana Chena, justified this decision by arguing that “too much money had been squandered by the clubs” and “football was not run in a sustainable manner” and would collapse unless “appropriate measures were taken in timely manner.”⁴² In China, the influence of billionaires in club management was also curtailed. A company’s name could not figure in a club’s name. For instance, Guangzhou Evergrande became Guangzhou FC. However, this policy had an even worse effect. The league’s standing and level have plummeted, making it seem unlikely that Chinese football will join the world’s elite anytime soon. It results mainly from all these big and fast changes. Instead of being Chinese soft power, football has become its weakness.

On the other hand, when Poland and Ukraine were chosen in 2007 to organise the European World Cup, it was the driving force behind the national sport which was dealing at that time with legal changes, lack of funds and deteriorating infrastructure. The Polish government regarded the EURO 2012 as a strategic project, and already the same year a task force was established to monitor the construction of infrastructure necessary for hosting the championships. Politicians from across the political spectrum supported the project, seeing it as an

³⁹ M. Szatkowski, *Rynek transferowy w Chinach – ujęcie prawne i polityczno-społeczne*, “Gdańskie Studia Azji Wschodniej”, 2018, no 14, pp. 87–95.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ *Nowe przepisy w Chinach. Koniec wielkich transferów?*, “Przegląd Sportowy”, 27.12.2019, <https://przegladsportowy.onet.pl/pilka-nozna/pilka-nozna-koniec-z-wielkimi-transferami-dochin/9b7r45s> [access on 12.11.2023].

⁴² Ibidem.

opportunity for the country's development.⁴³ The EURO 2012 was the biggest sports event in the former Eastern Block countries since the time of the 1980 Summer Olympic Games in Moscow and the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo four years later.⁴⁴ Co-hosting the championships was viewed by politicians as a success and confirming Poland's status on the international stage as a mature and trustworthy nation capable of rising to the challenge, as well as the correctness of the chosen path of systemic transformation. The EURO was also regarded as the next goal, following its joining the NATO and the EU, requiring consensus across party lines.⁴⁵ For this reason, the "Act of September 7, 2007, on the Preparation of the Final Tournament of the UEFA EURO 2012 European Football Championship" was enacted.

During the preparations for the European football championships, sports infrastructure was developed. Not only was the National Stadium in Warsaw built, but also similar objects were erected in Gdańsk, Wrocław, and the one in Poznań was thoroughly modernised (four Polish arenas for the EURO 2012). What is more, there were renovation plans for the Silesian Stadium in Chorzów, and some objects like e.g. the ones in Cracow were expanded. Each of the four stadiums complied with the highest European norms, but above all, they became a symbol of modernity in Polish sport.⁴⁶

The organisation of the European football championships also sped up many investments such as, among others, the renovation of airports in Warsaw, Gdańsk, Wrocław and Poznań, or the construction of new highways and express roads. The railway was also expanding. Central Warsaw and Central Gdańsk railway stations were renovated.⁴⁷ Infrastructure projects were accelerated by three to five years, and sports ones by as much as five to ten years.⁴⁸ The Department of Sports prepared also a report showing that hosting the championships will have not only economic but also social benefits. It was estimated that from 2008 to 2020, Gross Domestic Product (GDP—one of the most important indicators used to measure the size of the economy) will increase by 21.3 billion zlotys. What is more, the number of tourists would annually increase by 766 thousand of people. Poland's image on the international stage has also im-

⁴³ W. Woźniak, *Euro 2012 i Kraków 2022. Polskie elity polityczne wobec wielkich imprez sportowych*, "Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej", 2015, vol. 11, no 2, pp. 60–83.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ *Efekt Polski – Sukces Euro 2012 powyżej oczekiwań*, The Ministry of Sports and Tourism, 20.11.2012, <https://www.msit.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/5622,Efekt-Polski-Sukces-Euro-2012-powyzej-oczekiwan.html> [access on 15.08.2025].

⁴⁷ Ł. Malinowski, M. Tomanek, G. Pawlak, *Wpływ organizacji Mistrzostw Europy w Piłce Nożnej UEFA EURO 2012 na rozwój infrastruktury drogowej w Polsce*, "Journal of Health Sciences", 2014, vol. 4, no 10, pp. 46–56.

⁴⁸ *Efekt Polski – Sukces Euro 2012*, op. cit.

proved. As for social benefits, society united around the event, and thousands of volunteers were engaged in its organisation. What is more, it boosted national pride and improved trust in public institutions.⁴⁹ It is estimated that Poland spent as much as 84 billion zlotys on organising this event alone.⁵⁰

The organisation of the European Football Championships also led to the creation of the programme “My pitch – Orlik 2012”. The programme was initiated in 2008 on the initiative of the government and local authorities. Till 2012, more than 2600 sports fields with changing rooms and lighting had been built. The aim of the project was to ensure access to sports infrastructure for children and teenagers, and first and foremost, to promote an active and healthy lifestyle. Although the programme officially ended in 2012, these sports fields still operate, especially in small places, as centres of physical activity.⁵¹ In the following years the need for renovations arose as many of these facilities began to show signs of wear and tear. In 2022, the programme was re-activated. 181 investments were financed, and in 2025, the next edition was announced, which allowed not only for changing the playing area and lighting, renovating the changing rooms, but also building new facilities such as skateparks, running tracks, playgrounds and tennis courts.⁵² Once the EURO 2012 was over, no strategy for the development of sports infrastructure was developed. There was no special policy for the use of the new sports infrastructure, but priorities changed. Instead of big events, the emphasis was put on recreational sports, education in schools and local initiatives. The importance of programmes promoting physical activity increased. Many stadiums and sports facilities are owned by local authorities that often struggle to maintain them.

Another example of using football as soft power is the case of Qatar. This state organised the 2022 championships that the Polish national team also took part in. It is in Qatar that some of the most expensive stadiums in history were erected,⁵³ and “Stadium 974”, where the Polish team played, was built with the use of recyclable materials. The number “974” refers to the number of transport containers used to construct the facility. That is also the area code for Qatar.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁰ A. Kamińska, *Ile zyskamy na Euro*, “Rzeczpospolita”, 14.06.2012, <https://www.rp.pl/finanse/art6109741-ile-zyskamy-na-euro> [access on 15.08.2025].

⁵¹ *100 lat Polsko. Program Moje Boisko – Orlik 2012*, “Przegląd Sportowy”, 12.08.2018, <https://przegladSPORTOWY.onet.pl/pilka-nozna/100-lat-polsko-program-moje-boisko-orlik-2012/6nm0xpg> [access on 15.08.2025].

⁵² *Program modernizacji kompleksów sportowych Moje Boisko – Orlik 2012 – Edycja 2025*, The Ministry of Sports and Tourism, 15.08.2025, <https://www.gov.pl/web/sport/program-modernizacji-kompleksow-sportowych-moje-boisko--orlik-2012--edycja-2025> [access on 15.08.2025].

⁵³ *Stadiony Mistrzostw Świata 2022 (Katar)*, “Stadiony.net”, <http://stadiony.net/turnieje/mundial/2022> [access on 12.11.2023].

⁵⁴ T. Sobura, *Katar 2022: Kontenerowy stadion już gotowy*, “Stadiony.net”, 22.11.2021, http://stadiony.net/aktualnosci/2021/11/katar_2022_kontenerowy_stadion_juz_gotowy [access on 12.11.2023].

In its structure, the stadium resembled a building made of LEGO bricks.⁵⁵ Although it was dismantled after the World Cup, before the event the state government boasted about the project knowing that Qatar national team would not achieve much success.⁵⁶ The government believed there would be numerous publications on the subject, especially in the media, which actually happened.

Football also played a crucial role in Russia's politics. This country organised the 2018 world championship. The Polish team led by Stanisław Czerczesow advanced to the quarterfinals of the tournament, and the national media hailed it as a huge success. What is more, the very Vladimir Putin⁵⁷ kept track of the players' progress. The organisation of the championships was positively evaluated, during the event the country was visited by three million fans, and its stadiums were nearly 98% full for almost every match.⁵⁸ Cezary Korycki stated that Russia with Vladimir Putin was the biggest winner of these championships (the title was given to France, which beat Croatia 4:1). "Amid the football frenzy, news broke that the European Union had extended its sanctions against Russia for another six months due to Russia's instigation of the first war in Ukraine in 2014. The news was overshadowed in the media by photos of fans from all over the world having a great time in the streets of Russian cities and by the Sbornaya's outstanding performance," he wrote.⁵⁹ Korycki also drew our attention to the fact that the World Cup had diverted media attention away from issues that matter to citizens. The increase in the retirement age and the VAT rate were announced on the opening day of the World Cup, and the Russian pro-government media did not publish any reports on the subject.⁶⁰ It also overshadowed to some extent the ongoing war in Ukraine (Russia's first invasion of Ukraine).

After the World Cup, the importance of Russian football in the world became to diminish. Journalists began reporting on how hackers had posted documents online – such as those from the account of a former football official, Sergei Kapkov – which allegedly showed that Russia had "bought" the World Cup.⁶¹ In

⁵⁵ Ibidem.

⁵⁶ S. Czernek, *Jedyny taki stadion w historii MŚ. Tu Polska zagra z Meksykiem*, "Sport.pl", 18.11.2022, <https://www.sport.pl/mundial/7,154361,29155317,jedyny-taki-stadion-w-historii-ms-to-tu-polska-zagra-z-meksykiem.html> [access on 12.11.2023].

⁵⁷ C. Korycki, *Hat-trick Władimira Putina. Znamy najlepszego zawodnika mundialu*, "Tygodnik TVP", 13.07.2018, <https://tygodnik.tvp.pl/38050334/hattrick-wladimira-putina-znamynajlepszego-zawodnika-mundialu> [access on 13.11.2023].

⁵⁸ Ibidem.

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

⁶⁰ Ibidem.

⁶¹ P. Wilkiewicz, *Rosja kupiła sobie mundial? Hakerzy ujawnili skalę korupcji działaczy FIFA! Najdroższy jest Beckenbauer*, "Sport.pl", 31.10.2019, <https://www.sport.pl/pilka/7,64946,25366558,rosja-kupila-sobie-mundial-hakerzy-ujawnilikorupcyjne-dossier.html> [access on 13.11.2023].

2022, after Russia's second invasion of Ukraine, the FIFA suspended Russia's membership in the organisation, but it gradually began to backtrack on that decision, "bringing the youth teams back into the fold" (the senior team remains suspended).

Football and fighting for independence

Football is also becoming a vehicle of collective identity, a means of manifesting national distinctiveness and the form of a symbolic struggle for international recognition.

Although it was not a direct political tool, football played a crucial role at the time difficult for Poland such as the Partitions as it shaped national awareness, laying the groundwork for the restoration of independence in 1918. The development of football on the Polish land was uneven and to a large extent dependent on the specificity of particular partitions. In the Austrian partition, especially in Galicia, relative political autonomy let sports clubs such as Cracovia, Wisła Kraków or Pogoń Lwów operate legally.⁶² They were not only the centres of sports competition, but also an area for cultivating the Polish language, national traditions and local community. In the Prussian and Russian partitions, Poles' sports activity was limited by the occupants and football matches often took on the character of symbolic national rivalries, serving as a form of passive resistance against Germanisation and Russification.⁶³

Thus, it was a form of indirect struggle for social space for Polish citizens and developing the sense of national community, which can be interpreted as a kind of attempt to prepare society for the restoration of statehood. It is proven by the fact that Cracovia, Wisła and other clubs joined the Austrian Football Association, gaining the right to participate in international FIFA games.⁶⁴ It is also worth noting that during WWI, despite hard circumstances, efforts were made to preserve sports traditions. In 1915, Cracovia organised a "war football season" with the participation of four civil and military teams, and the proceeds from the matches were donated to charity, including the Red Cross, which served as an example of solidarity through sports.⁶⁵

⁶² 105 lat temu rozpoczęto rozgrywki piłkarskich mistrzostw Polski, "Dzieje.pl", 18.04.2025, <https://dzieje.pl/wiadomosci/105-lat-temu-rozpoczeto-rozgrywki-pilkarskich-mistrzostw-polski> [access on 27.01.2026].

⁶³ *Rozgrywki piłkarskie w Galicji do roku 1914 (lata 1912–1914)*, "Rocznik Piłkarski", <https://rocznikpilkarski.pl/historia-sportu/rozgrywki-pilkarskie-w-galicji-do-roku-1914-lata-1912-1914> [access on 27.01.2026].

⁶⁴ *Historia Małopolskiego Związku Piłki Nożnej*, Małopolski Związek Piłki Nożnej, <https://malopolskizpn.pl/historia> [access on 27.01.2026].

⁶⁵ T. Sahaj, *Aktywność stadionowa kibicowskich grup "ultras" jako przejaw specyficznej komunikacji społecznej*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo", 2012, no 3, pp. 27-49.

Examples of how football functions in the absence of a sovereign state can also be found in the modern era. Football can serve a purpose going far beyond the realm of sports. In particular historical and cultural contexts it becomes a vehicle of collective identity, a way of manifesting national distinctiveness and a form of symbolic struggle for international recognition. The same applies to the organisation of world championships for unrecognised countries, which are political entities that despite lack of recognition are de facto independent states, i.e. they have their governments, citizens, national symbols and, theoretically, borders.⁶⁶ These are, for example, the Basque Country, Abkhazia, and Transnistria. Some of them see football as an opportunity to gain recognition of their independence and are trying to break out of international isolation.

Abkhazia is a good example. In 2016, it organised the world cup for unrecognised countries. The event was frequented by the following quazi-states: Lapland, Northern Cyprus, the Székely Land, Raetia or Somaliland. Its course was identical to the FIFA world cup – the opening ceremony in a freshly-renovated stadium and stands packed to capacity. Nearly eight thousand people came to the stadium, even though it could only hold 4,500.⁶⁷

Tomasz Grzywaczewski, who witnessed the world cup of quazi-states reported that “the welcome ceremony for participants and spectators was held with great fanfare: flags were raised, choirs sang, and there were fireworks displays, all culminating in a two-hour presentation of the history of Abkhazia and its mythology.”⁶⁸ The ceremony featured, among others, the speech of Raul Khadzimba, President of Abkhazia, who referred to politics,⁶⁹ “We are the witnesses of a spectacular event – Abkhazia is hosting the 2016 World Cup as organised by ConIFA (an international organisation representing football teams from all over the world that are not affiliated with FIFA – ed.). We are very happy to welcome the World Cup participants representing 12 nations, united by common values and mutual sympathy. Our soul is our nation that has built the independent Abkhazian state. We are a vibrant and distinct part of the great family of nations. No one will succeed in cutting us off from international contacts.”⁷⁰

As Beslat TV noticed, the world championships for unrecognised countries are “a taste of international football for those who, for many reasons, cannot

⁶⁶ M. Sobczyński, *Państwa i terytoria zależne. Ujęcie geograficzno-polityczne*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2006, p. 241.

⁶⁷ Ibidem.

⁶⁸ The archives of Radosław Zmudziński (henceforth called ARZ) An interview with Tomasz Grzywaczewski on the 2016 Championships of Unrecognised States in Abkhazia, March 2021.

⁶⁹ Ibidem.

⁷⁰ *Separatyści strzelają celnie. Na własnych MŚ w piłce nożnej*, “Belsat TV”, 9.06.2016, <https://naviny.belsat.eu/pl/news/separatysci-strzelaja-celnie-na-wlasnych-ms-wpilce-noznej> [access on 17.11.2023].

count on participating in it,” and above all these are political reasons.⁷¹ It is worth emphasising that at the very beginning, there was no euphoria in Abkhazia over the event. Although there were banners promoting the event, the residents tried to keep their spirits in check, as evidenced by an excerpt from one of Tomasz Grzywaczewski’s conversations with an Abkhazian woman.⁷²

Tomasz Grzywaczewski, “You can be proud of organising such championships.”

The woman, “Is Poland taking part in them? No. As a real country, it competes in a real championship, and Abkhazia has to play with some Somaliland or West Armenia. It is humiliating.”

It changed when Abkhazia started to win matches, also the final one and as a result became the world champion of unrecognised states. Spectators marched through the capital of Abkhazia, Sukhumi, singing, with faces painted with national symbols. Grzywaczewski also pointed to the fact that the Abkhazians had not played football since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the locals had to learn all over again how to cheer. There were even cheers in Russian, because they faced a major crisis of national identity due to intense Russification.⁷³

The 2016 World Cup of unrecognised countries was undoubtedly an attempt to restore national identity for the Abkhazians, which is illustrated by cheering for their team and the euphoria following its triumph at the World Cup of unrecognised states. It could also have been a flashpoint for a national uprising. It did not happen, yet the event was the proof that football, for a short time, can unite a nation and become a struggle for independence or an attempt to call for help.

Football is a form of showing national identity in the Basque Country located at the border of Spain and France, on the Bay of Biscay. The Basques are an ethnic group with very strong nationalist and liberationists aspirations, as evidenced by the appearance of the separatist group ETA at the Spanish-French border, whose actions and pressure at the end of the 1960s on General Franco ruling Spain at that time contributed to his initial approval of the display of national symbols, and by the late 1970s, the Basques were granted autonomy.

The Spanish club Athletic Bilbao is a phenomenon in the Basque Country and around the world. Its history dates back to the end of 1890s. It was established in 1898 and 14 years later, the “cantera” rule was introduced and it remains in effect to this day.⁷⁴ The rule assumes that only Basques or people of Basque origins can play in the club. For example, one parent of a given player has to be Basque. The rule in question drew considerable criticism. The club was accused

⁷¹ Ibidem.

⁷² ARZ, *Rozmowa z Tomaszem Grzywaczewskim...*, op. cit.

⁷³ Ibidem.

⁷⁴ *Kraj Basków – gdzie futbol wygrał z terrorem*, “Polskie Radio”, 31.05.2011, <https://polskieradio24.pl/43/265/Artykul/378493,Kraj-Baskow-gdzie-futbol-wygral-z-terrorem> [access on 20.11.2023].

of xenophobia and nationalism, and for many years the officials answered that supporting local footballers has nothing to do with xenophobia.

The symbols of the Basque Country can be also spotted on Athletic Bilbao outfits. An everyday T-shirt features red and white horizontal stripes and the trim is black. For many years, the T-shirt front did not bear any sponsor's logo, yet due to financial reasons, it finally appeared. What is worth noting is the fact that these are sponsors from the Basque Country, e.g. since 2008, it has been a Basque company, Petronor, and since 2014 – Kutxabank.⁷⁵

In 2023, when the conflict between Palestine and Israel escalated, following Hamas's attack on Israel, the importance of football for the Palestinians, as Dawid Szymczak wrote, "went far beyond sport and is proof of Palestine's existence."⁷⁶ The Palestinian national team is affiliated with the FIFA, in recent years it qualified for the Asian championships, and once the number of world cup participants grew from 32 to 48, the chances for "a ticket to the world cup" increased considerably (it has not qualified for the 2026 event).⁷⁷ Susan Shalabi, Vice President of the Palestinian Football Association, cited by Dawid Szymczak, emphasised that it is thanks to football that Palestinian children can take pride in their identity, and the rest of the world can recall that there is a state like Palestine, which, incidentally, enjoys a status in the world of soccer that it has failed to achieve in the political sphere for decades.⁷⁸

Recapitulation

Football serves as an important political tool both in the local and international dimension. Football organisations such as the FIFA or UEFA have an impact on how various states operate, taking over some of their competencies, e. g. in the area of sports jurisdiction, and deciding whether to grant or revoke the right to organise tournaments. As a result, countries are often reduced to the role of implementing these organisations' decisions, while most financial proceeds, e.g. coming from the sale of media rights and tickets benefit supranational bodies.

For governments football constitutes a form of soft power, facilitating the promotion of the country's image on the international stage and stimulating its economic growth via investments into sports and related infrastructure. It can

⁷⁵ Ibidem.

⁷⁶ D. Szymczak, *Pojechał grać dla Palestyny. Skończył w izraelskiej katowni. "Stracił wzrok, słuch, pamięć"*, "Sport.pl", 22.11.2023, <https://www.sport.pl/pilka/7,64946,30425430,przyjechala-obejrzec-zmasakrowane-cialo-syna-po-ataku-izraela.html> [access on 27.11.2023].

⁷⁷ Ibidem.

⁷⁸ Ibidem.

be used instrumentally as a tool for diverting public attention from domestic problems and political tensions. In case of Russia, the organisation of the 2018 World Cup helped legitimise the government and introduce additional taxes, and in Brazil football was a bridge to a better world, improving the country's image as a football powerhouse.

Football fans also become the actors of political life as they are used for achieving image-related goals. Their activity might favour polarisation like in case of Poland following the Constitutional Tribunal's ruling on abortion. For unrecognised states and those struggling for their sovereignty, football is a space for building community, and in some cases it could be a catalyst for national liberation movements.

In conclusion, football should be perceived not only as a sports discipline, but also as an instrument of political, social and cultural influence, reflecting power relations and the processes of identity formation on a global scale.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The author declared no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of the article *The Role of Football in the Politics of Contemporary States: A Literature-Based Analysis*.

FUNDING

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of the article *The Role of Football in the Politics of Contemporary States: A Literature-Based Analysis*.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Radosław Zmudziński: conceptualization, methodology, resources, validation, visualization, writing – review and editing

Bibliography

A. Sources

I. Online sources

105 lat temu rozpoczęto rozgrywki piłkarskich mistrzostw Polski, "Dzieje.pl", <https://dzieje.pl/wiadomosci/105-lat-temu-rozpozczeto-rozgrywki-pil-karskich-mistrzostw-polski> [access on 27.01.2026].

1934: faszyzm, sędziowie i włoski marsz, "TVP Sport", <https://sport.tvp.pl/13668299/1934-faszyzm-sedziowie-i-wloski-marsz> [access on 19.01.2026].

- Bobakowski M., *200 tys. kibiców na meczu piłkarskim. Oto spotkania z największą liczbą widzów*, "WP Sportowe Fakty", <https://sportowefakty.wp.pl/pilka-nozna/558431/200-tys-kibicow-na-meczu-pilkarskim-oto-spotkania-z-najwieksza-liczba-widzow/8> [access on 7.11.2025].
- Beitar Jerusalem F.C., Posts on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/BeitarFcJerusalem> [access on 27.11.2023].
- Chinese Super League transferrekorde, "Transfermarkt", <https://www.transfermarkt.de/chinese-super-league/transferrekorde/wettbewerb/CSL> [access on 7.11.2025].
- Czernek S., *Jedyny taki stadion w historii MŚ. Tu Polska zagra z Meksykiem*, "Sport.pl", <https://www.sport.pl/mundial/7,154361,29155317,jedyny-taki-stadion-w-historii-ms-to-tu-polska-zagra-z-meksykiem.html> [access on 18.11.2022].
- Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), *FIFA Statutes. September 2020 edition*, <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/4b2bac74655c7c13/original/viz2gmyb5x0pd24qrhx-pdf.pdf> [access on 8.11.2023].
- Gac K., *Polityka stadionowa*, "Do Rzeczy", <https://dorzeczy.pl/kraj/37570/politykastadionowa.html> [access on 3.08.2017].
- Jadczak S., *Po dobroci, szantażem, na pewno nie na trzeźwo. Jak handlowano meczami polskiej ligi*, "Magazyn TVN24", <https://archiwum.tvn24.pl/magazyn-tvn24/254/tvn24.pl/magazyn-tvn24/po-dobroci-szantażem-na-pewno-nie-na-trzezwo-jak-handlowano-meczami-polskiej-ligi%2C254%2C4423.html> [access on 19.01.2026].
- Gorse S., Chadwick S., *The prevalence of corruption in international sport*, Birkbeck Sport Business Centre, University of London, 2010, s. 14–16, <https://www.jogoremoto.pt/docs/extra/G3jsJk.pdf> [access on 19.01.2026].
- Historia Małopolskiego Związku Piłki Nożnej, "Małopolski Związek Piłki Nożnej", <https://malopolskizpn.pl/historia> [access on 27.01.2026].
- Kamińska A., *Ile zyskamy na Euro*, "Rzeczpospolita", <https://www.rp.pl/finanse/art6109741-ile-zyskamy-na-euro> [access on 14.06.2012].
- Korycki C., *Hat-trick Władimira Putina. Znamy najlepszego zawodnika mundialu*, "Tygodnik TVP", <https://tygodnik.tvp.pl/38050334/hattrick-wladimira-putina-znamynajlepszego-zawodnika-mundialu> [access on 13.07.2018].
- Kraj Basków – gdzie futbol wygrał z terrorem, "Polskie Radio", <https://polskieradio24.pl/43/265/Artykul/378493,Kraj-Baskow-gdzie-futbol-wygral-z-terrorem> [access on 31.05.2011].
- Kucharsky J., *Koniec Özila, albo "spadaj do Anatolii, turecka świnió!"*, "Krytyka Polityczna", <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/swiat/ozil-erdogan-niemcy-futbol-reprezentacja> [access on 2.08.2018].

- ŁKS FANS.pl, A Facebook post following the ruling on the Constitutional Tribunal on abortion, <https://www.facebook.com/lksfanspl/photos/3653234364716356> [access on 28.10.2020].
- The Ministry of Sports and Tourism, *Efekt Polski – Sukces Euro 2012 powyżej oczekiwań*, <https://www.msit.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/5622,Efekt-Polski-Sukces-Euro-2012-powyzej-oczekiwan.html> [access on 20.11.2012].
- The Ministry of Sports, *Program modernizacji kompleksów sportowych Moje Boisko – Orlik 2012 – Edycja 2025*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/sport/program-modernizacji-kompleksow-sportowych-moje-boisko--orlik-2012--edycja-2025> [access on 15.08.2025].
- Nowe przepisy w Chinach. Koniec wielkich transferów?, „Przegląd Sportowy”, <https://przegladsportowy.onet.pl/pilka-nozna/pilka-nozna-koniec-z-wielkimi-transferami-dochin/9b7r45s> [access on 27.12.2019].
- Pół świata zamierza oglądać mistrzostwa w piłce nożnej, „Ipsos Global Advisor”, <https://www.ipsos.com/pl-pl/pol-swiatea-zamierza-ogladac-mistrzostwa-w-pilce-noznej> [access on 27.01.2026].
- Raport Europolu: 380 ustawionych meczów!, „TVP Sport”, <https://sport.tvp.pl/9980720/raport-europolu-380-ustawionych-meczow> [access on 19.01.2026].
- Reprezentanci Niemiec Gundogan i Ozil poparli Erdogana. Dali mu koszulkę „dla mojego prezydenta” i wybuchł skandal, „Dziennik.pl”, <https://sport.dziennik.pl/pilka-nozna/artykuly/574407,erdogan-prezydent-turcja-niemcy-ozil-gundogan-reprezentacja-niemiec-mundial-mistrzostwa-swiatea-w-pilce-noznej-loew.html> [access on 15.05.2018].
- Rosja jak Jugosławia? Już kiedyś UEFA wykluczyła z turnieju reprezentację kraju-agresora, „Sportowy24”, <https://sportowy24.pl/rosja-jak-jugoslawia-juz-kiedys-uefa-wykluczyla-z-turnieju-reprezentacje-krajuagresora/ar/c2-16065527> [access on 24.02.2022].
- Rozgrywki piłkarskie w Galicji do roku 1914 (lata 1912–1914), „Rocznik Piłkarski”, <https://rocznikpilkarski.pl/historia-sportu/rozgrywki-pilkarskie-w-galicji-do-roku-1914-lata-1912-1914> [access on 27.01.2026].
- Separatysty strzelają celnie. Na własnych MŚ w piłce nożnej, „Belsat TV”, <https://naviny.belsat.eu/pl/news/separatysty-strzelaja-celnie-na-wlasnych-ms-wpilce-noznej> [access on 9.06.2016].
- Sobura T., Katar 2022: Kontenerowy stadion już gotowy, „Stadiony.net”, http://stadiony.net/aktualnosci/2021/11/katar_2022_kontenerowy_stadion_juz_gotowy [access on 22.11.2021].
- Stadiony Mistrzostw Świata 2022 (Katar), „Stadiony.net”, <http://stadiony.net/turnieje/mundial/2022> [access on 12.11.2023].

- Sto lat Polsko. Program Moje Boisko – Orlik 2012*, “Przegląd Sportowy”, <https://przegladsportowy.onet.pl/pilka-nozna/100-lat-polsko-program-moje-boisko-orlik-2012/6nm0xpg> [access on 12.08.2018].
- Szumański M., *Ozil i Gundogan krytykowani po publikacji zdjęcia z Erdoganem*, “Sport.pl”, <https://www.sport.pl/pilka/7,65080,23400058,ozil-i-gundogan-krytykowani-po-publikacji-zdjecia-z-erdoganem.html> [access on 15.05.2018].
- Szymczak D., *Pojechał grać dla Palestyny. Skończył w izraelskiej katowni. “Stracił wzrok, słuch, pamięć”*, „Sport.pl”, <https://www.sport.pl/pilka/7,64946,30425430,przyjechała-obejrzec-zmasakrowane-cialo-syna-po-ataku-izraela.html> [access on 22.11.2023].
- Świdarska A., *“Wszystkie mecze nasze są”, czyli jak wygląda korupcja w niższych ligach*, “Głos Wielkopolski”, <https://gloswielkopolski.pl/wszystkie-mecze-nasze-sa-czyli-jak-wyglada-korupcja-w-nizszych-ligach/ar/3638222> [access on 19.01.2026].
- TK: *aborcja m.in. w przypadku nieodwracalnego upośledzenia płodu – niezgodna z konstytucją*, “Polskie Radio Koszalin”, <https://prk24.pl/50450441/tk-aborcja-min-w-przypadku-nieodwracalnego-uposledzenia-plodu-niezgodna-z-konstytucja> [access on 22.10.2020].
- UEFA, *Football Union of Russia* <https://www.uefa.com/insideuefa/national-associations/rus> [access on 8.11.2023].
- Wilkowicz P., *Rosja kupiła sobie mundial? Hakerzy ujawnili skalę korupcji działaczy FIFA! Najdroższy jest Beckenbauer*, “Sport.pl”, <https://www.sport.pl/pilka/7,64946,25366558,rosja-kupila-sobie-mundial-hakerzy-ujawnilikorupcyjne-dossier.html> [access on 31.10.2019].
- Włoch R., *Korupcja w środowisku sportowym. Przegląd literatury przedmiotu, badań empirycznych oraz dokumentów*, The Ministry of Sports and Tourism, 2014, <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/9de2d6e9-dfb7-435f-86da-fc90410ff39d> [access on 19.01.2026].
- Zieliński F., *Koszulka Roberta Mazurka wywołała burzę w sieci. Wyjaśniamy dlaczego*, “Przegląd Sportowy”, <https://przegladsportowy.onet.pl/ofsajd/koszulka-roberta-mazurka-wywolala-burze-w-sieci-wyjasniamy-dlaczego/Ojsv73> [access on 15.11.2023].

II. Reports

The archives of Radosław Zmudziński, An interview with Tomasz Grzywaczewski on the 2016 Championships of Unrecognised States in Abkhazia, March 2021.

B. Literature

- Chmaj M., *Przyczynek do wyjaśnienia pojęcia: polityka*, "Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio K. Politologia", 1995/1996, vol. 23, pp. 197–206.
- Dudała J., *Fani-chuligani. Rzecz o polskich kibolach. Studium socjologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie "Żak", Warszawa 2004.
- Kossakowski R., *From Communist Fan Clubs to Professional Hooligans: A History of Polish Fandom as a Social Process*, "Sociology of Sport Journal" 2017, vol. 34, pp. 281–292, <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.2017-0019>.
- Kossakowski R., *Kibice piłkarscy. Studium socjologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk 2022.
- Kossakowski R., Szlendak T., Antonowicz D., *Polish ultras in the post-socialist transformation*, "Sport in Society" 2018, vol. 21, no 6, pp. 854–869, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2017.1300387>.
- Lipoński W., *Encyklopedia Sportów Świata*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Atena, Poznań 2001.
- Łoś R., *Soft power – definicja, źródła i sposób oddziaływania*, "Studia Polityczne", 2018, vol. 46, no 1, pp. 131–148, <https://doi.org/10.35757/STP.2018.46.1.06>.
- Malinowski Ł., Tomanek M., Pawlak G., *Wpływ organizacji Mistrzostw Europy w Piłkę Nożną UEFA EURO 2012 na rozwój infrastruktury drogowej w Polsce*, "Journal of Health Sciences", 2014, no 10, pp. 46–56.
- Maennig W., *Corruption in International Sports and Sport Management: Forms, Tendencies, Extent and Countermeasures*, "European Sport Management Quarterly" 2005, pp. 198–200, 203–206, <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184740500188821>.
- Melosik Z., *Piłka nożna, mulatyzm i tożsamość narodowa w Brazylii*, "Studia Edukacyjne" 2016, no 38, pp. 253–263.
- Miażek A., *MKOL i FIFA jako aktorzy stosunków międzynarodowych*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2019.
- Sahaj T., *Aktywność stadionowa kibicowskich grup "ultras" jako przejaw specyficznej komunikacji społecznej*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 2012, no 3, pp. 27–49, <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10276-012-0022-4>.
- Sahaj T., *Kibicowanie, religia i sport. Między sacrum i profanum, wiarą i rozumem*, "Ethos. Kwartalnik Instytutu Jana Pawła II KUL" 2024, vol. 37, no 4, pp. 179–207, <https://doi.org/10.12887/37-2024-4-148-11>.
- Sobczyński M., *Państwa i terytoria zależne. Ujęcie geograficzno-polityczne*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2006.
- Szatkowski M., *Rynek transferowy w Chinach – ujęcie prawne i polityczno-społeczne*, "Gdańskie Studia Azji Wschodniej" 2018, no 14, pp. 87–95, <https://doi.org/10.4467/23538724GS.18.021.10171>.

Włoch R., *Międzynarodowe federacje piłkarskie jako nowi aktorzy ładu globalnego*, "Studia Międzynarodowe", 2012, no 1, pp. 9–32.

Woźniak W., *Euro 2012 i Kraków 2022. Polskie elity polityczne wobec wielkich imprez sportowych*, "Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej" 2015, no 2, pp. 60–83, <https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8069.11.2.04>.