

## **SOCCER IN THE MEDIA, PUBLIC MOOD, AND GOVERNMENT POPULARITY**

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### ABSTRACT

#### **Soccer in the Media, Public Mood and Government Popularity**

This paper examines the relationship between the media coverage of soccer and political popularity of certain parties during election campaigns which usually followed the world soccer games. The national team's success on the pitch is related to victory in the political match. This surprising link between the national success in sports and the success in an election for a party or a candidate is explained in the light of Public Mood Theory, founded by W. Rahn, who pointed out that emotions play an important role in political behaviour and national identity, which, in turn, is influenced by the media content, like sports coverage among others. The creation of national identity is mostly built on the national success in sports. Especially in Germany, where soccer is number one sport in media coverage. Sports matches produce winners and losers, thus strongly influencing Public Mood, which is relevant for the formation of political evaluations and judgments, in a democracy shaped by emotions. Sports can shape Public Mood only if they are reported in the media. The analysis of the relationship between interest in soccer and political popularity, presented in the paper, shows how the media coverage of soccer influenced the German political attitudes in 2002, to an extent that it might have been decisive for the election.

**Key words:** media coverage, public mood, media influence, soccer, sports coverage, political discourse, election campaign, national identity, media content, emotions

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The odds seemed against captain “Acker”<sup>1</sup> and his team – the opponent’s team was way in lead and time was running out quickly. At that time, there were few who thought that they could still turn the tide:

We still have 10 minutes left to win the match, which means we have to fight, fight and fight, and we cannot analyze the first half. That can be done later. [...] Now it’s time to dive from midfield to the left side, centre the ball, and score. It sounds simple, but that’s the way it is<sup>2</sup>. (Hammerstein & Nelles 2002, p. 26)

In fact, it eventually turned out that “‘Acker’ won after all. “[...] when it looked pretty bad for him, he thought of this name. Then, Gerhard Schroeder had them call him this way, and everything turned out fine” (Blome 2002). The ruling German chancellor and chairman of the Social Democratic Party had lived up to his reputation as a fighter and campaign-man once again. In his younger years the players of his soccer-team TuS Talle had called their forward player ‘Acker’, when Bonn and Berlin were still way ahead” (Sobolewski 2002). “They called me ‘Acker’ because I was always really into things, and I admit, I was a little proud indeed to be called by this nickname” (Schröder 1998).

Likewise Schroeder’s opponent, the candidate of the Christian Democratic Party, Edmund Stoiber, could be proud, too: His team was beaten by the party in power by just a narrow margin. He still missed his first goal though: “Now I want to become the manager of the national team, it’s in my interest that Germany moves ahead”<sup>3</sup>.

In the public discourse during the last national election campaign, one does not have to search long for soccer language. And that is not a new phenomenon: Four years earlier the language of the pitch was widely used by journalists and politicians during the campaign, like Zeh and Hagen (1999) have already demonstrated. They also found that success on the pitch can be closely related to victory in the political match. The day the former team manager Berti Vogts resigned from his job as the manager of the national soccer team, an all-time low in the daily polls (from FORSA) for the ruling Conservative Party and Chancellor Kohl could be observed. As it turned out, the amount of sports coverage significantly correlated with the voting intention right before the election – even when the politically relevant coverage was controlled for by a multivariate design. The despicable defeat in the World Championships of the German Team and the already mentioned

<sup>1</sup> The Nickname “Acker” could literally be translated from German into “slogger”, meaning someone who fights or toils hard.

<sup>2</sup> With this metaphor Franz Müntefering, the general secretary of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), was referring to the fact that a few weeks before the national elections the ruling coalition was clearly running behind in the polls. Then it looked very much like SPD and their smaller partner, the Green Party were going to be driven out of office by the opposing Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and their partner, the Liberal Party (FDP).

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Stoiber speaking to the parliamentary faction of the CDU, Erfurt February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2002. He used the expression “Nationaltrainer” which would normally refer to the manager of the national soccer team.

resignation of the team manager – a close friend of the Chancellor – were found to be mainly responsible for this finding.

Was the election of 1998 an exception to the rule, or is there a middle range law connecting the success of the national soccer team and the popularity of the government? Did the media coverage of soccer, then, influence German's political attitudes in 2002 to an extent that it might have decided the election? If so – how could this be explained? We will try to find answers to these questions.

### *1. Public Mood*

The link between the national success in sports and the success in an election for a party or a candidate consists in a diffuse general mood that affects wide parts of a community or a nation: Public Mood. Rahn (1999), the author of the concept, describes Public Mood as a diffuse affective state that people experience as a consequence of their membership of a national political community. The concept shows similarities to Easton's concept of diffuse support (1975) but, in contrast to Easton's concept, Public Mood is not necessarily long term and stable in nature. Rahn points out that Public Mood is, on the one hand, closely linked to social identity (i.e., mostly to national identity). On the other hand, she further points out that emotions do not only play an important role in information processing but also in (political) behavior. Social or national identity is constantly and subconsciously updated or influenced by common media content like advertising or sports coverage (Billig 1995).

From the individual point of view it is hard to draw the line between public and personal mood. Pride feels like pride, whether it is based on one's own achievements, or by the performance of an admired soccer team. But on the whole, only the collectively shared sentiment becomes relevant. In comparison, it can be assumed that those moods which are caused by private factors are randomly distributed so that negative and positive emotions of individual origin should be cancelled out in the aggregate.

Public Mood is relevant for the formation of political evaluations and judgments. Regardless of their origin, emotions influence even those objects to be evaluated that are by no means connected to the cause of those emotions. Two findings support this notion: The theory of congruence as well as the human tendency to process affect as information (Rahn 2000). Accordingly, public mood is based on the same cognitive processes that underlie personal emotions, partly it is even influenced by personal affective states.

Individuals tend to achieve equilibrium between their general judgment and their personal mood, mostly in social judgment situations. People in a good mood generally judge others (and themselves) in a significantly better way than do those in a bad mood, even if those to be judged are not responsible for their state of mood (Forgas 1995; Mayer, Gaschke, Braverman, & Evans 1992). Politicians can

gain from this mechanism when they are judged surrounded by positive Public Mood. The environment characterized by negative Public Mood, however, can trigger the opposite reaction and result in negative polls.

Some studies support the notion that a positive general mood affects judgments of politicians and parties stronger than a negative mood (i.e., positive and negative moods have different effects) (Rahn, Kroeger, & Kite 1996, p. 33). Whether individuals are in a positive or negative mood strongly influences their kinds of judgments. Individuals in a good mood tend to create judgments on a more superficial level, whereas people in a bad mood tend to process information about the object to be judged on a deeper level. The tendency to process emotions as information generally increases significantly when the way to gain information seems to require great effort (Forgas 1995, p. 60).

By relying on their feelings individuals take a cognitive shortcut to judgment formation. Thus, “happy” individuals tend to be content with judging politicians by their party affiliation whereas “sad” individuals also take issues the politicians address into consideration when judging politicians (Forgas 1995, p. 56). This behavior might be due to the fact that positive emotions signify success whereas negative emotions might be an indicative for failure.

Public Mood is characterized by incidents that move individuals without having to really affect everyone. This is best illustrated by the great flood disaster, hitting the German Federal state of Saxony in the summer 2002. Then, the mood all over Germany was characterized by solidarity that had not been observable since the German reunion.

Obviously, sports matches on an international basis may strongly influence Public Mood as they combine a feeling of national identity and a broad national interest. Moreover, they produce winners and losers. The creation of national identity is mostly built on national success in sports. For small countries, success is sometimes linked to a single individual or sports team. E.g., athlete Ben Johnsons and icehockey player Wayne Gretzky represent important role models and idols in Canada (Wong & Trumper 2002). The Olympic games in Atlanta in 1996 best illustrated how success in sports can trigger national emotions (Rahn & Hirshorn 1999, p. 390).

In Germany, soccer is definitely the number one sport – in spite of tennis-stars like Steffi Graf and Boris Becker, and racing-champion Michael Schumacher. Thus, the number one sport in the media is also soccer (Gerhards, Klingler, & Neuwöhner 2001, p. 157f). This is why the German population seemed more interested in the successor for the manager of the German soccer team than in the question who would soon lead the country as chancellor right before the national election of 1998 (Schulz, Zeh, & Quiring 2000, p. 430, fig. 433b). Furthermore, when Germany’s participation in the Soccer World Championship was in question, one third of the German population even foresaw a negative effect on the German economy in case Germany would not be part of the Soccer World Championship (Pfeil, Rosenbach, & Wulzinger 2001).

Sports or any other event, however, can only shape Public Mood if the media report on them. Only few people may be eyewitnesses, most will depend on the media for being able to observe nationally important sports events (cp. De Fleur/Ball-Rokeach (1987)). On the other hand, the media gain from events that attract the public's attention on a large scale. Therefore, mostly the private television channels in Germany are keen to present and mediatise events that can positively influence Public Mood. Thus, sports which normally would be of less interest to the public (e.g., boxing and ski jumping) are only aired during prime time if there is a big chance of German participants winning (preferably a world championship).

## 2. Data set and model of data analysis

An indicator for which events are witnessed by the audience of the media is measured by the German survey institute FORSA. Its daily survey includes an open question about "topics of interest that were covered by the media recently". FORSA collects this type of data in an omnibus-design-method and questions 500 representative individuals every day excluding Sundays and national holidays<sup>4</sup>. Since media usage and the interest in certain media content correlate on a highly significant basis (Schulz 1997, p. 124–142), answers to the question quoted above may be taken as an indicator for the intensity of the individual media content reception as it relates to a certain event. For one open question respondents could give up to ten events or topics as an answer. The coding of open answers included "Soccer" as a category. FORSA has provided these data sets since 1993.

With a sample size of 2,500 respondents per week, the survey allows for a broad, and, yet, distinct data analysis. The data set also includes some valuable indicators, though, for our analysis, we especially missed those relating to media usage. Also, there are neither indicative statements for Personal nor Public Mood included. However, with the vote intention and the chancellor preference included in the data set, there were two central judgments relevant for our analysis (see Table 1).

With a limited number of indicators in the FORSA-data set, it is not possible to operationalise all variables that have shown to be relevant in the theoretical discussion on the relationship between soccer media coverage and political popularity (see Figure 1). Firstly, the data are only capable of supplying indirect evidence of the effects of sports coverage. Thus, the intensity with which a topic is received should correlate in a significant linear way with the frequency of being covered in the media. The cause for effects of soccer reception on political popularity must be assumed to be the intensity of coverage in the media. Secondly, with the data

<sup>4</sup> We would like to thank FORSA-Institute for supplying us with their data. The sample is representative of the German speaking population in Germany, 14 years up, living in households with a telephone (Forsa 2003).

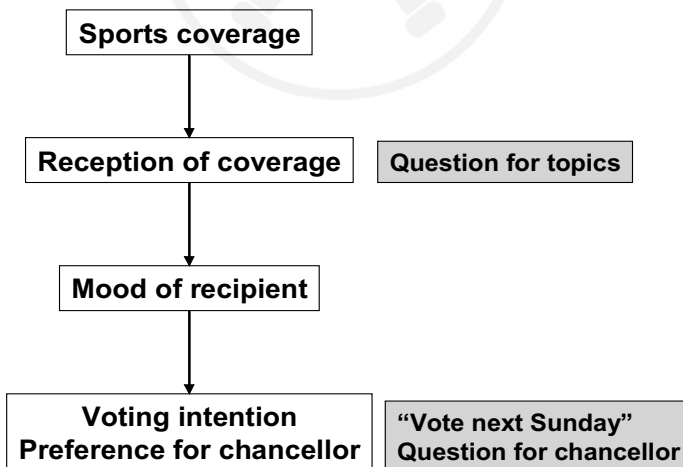
at hand it can not be shown that Public Mood was the causal link between sports reception and judgments of popularity. This may only be inferred from our theoretical discussion.

**Table 1. Relevant indicators (FORSA-data set)**

Indicator	Type of question	Frequency of question asked	Question
Reception of topics	Open	1993–2002 Mo-Fr except Oct. – Dec. 1998	Which are the three topics covered in the media (i.e., newspaper, radio, or television) that you were most interested in lately?
Chancellor preference	Closed	1993–2002 Mo-Fr	Who would be your first choice of the candidates if you were the one to appoint the chancellor: Gerhard Schroeder or Edmund Stoiber (i.e., the recent candidates)?
“Vote next Sunday“	Closed	1993–2002 Mo-Fr	Which party would you vote for if the national election took place next Sunday?

MEDIA NA ŚWIECIE

**Figure 1. Media effects model: Sports – Public Mood – Vote intention**



### *3. The relationship between the performance of the German soccer team (between 1993 and 2002) and political popularity*

Our analysis of the relationship between interest in soccer and political popularity shall start out with bivariate correlation analyses including all daily polling results from FORSA between 1993 and 2002. The salience of the topic ‘soccer’ was measured by the respondents’ interest in recently observed media coverage about soccer. The salience of soccer was correlated with the dichotomized preference of chancellor and voting intention on an aggregate level on a daily basis. To simplify the analyses, only voting intentions for the two major political parties and their candidates were included. Thus, there were four political variables in the correlation analysis<sup>5</sup>. This summed up to 10,100 correlation pairs<sup>6</sup>.

With a 0.05 significance level, every 20<sup>th</sup> correlation could be expected to be significant just by chance. This would have amounted to altogether 505 significant correlations. However, 673 significant correlations can be counted. It is additionally proven by the distribution of these over time that they are not to just based on chance: Figure 2 summarizes the results on a monthly basis. The line graph represents the amount of days per month (in percent) that showed at least one significant correlation between interest in soccer and political variables. The frequency of matches of the German national soccer team are represented in the bar diagram. They positively influence the effect of soccer reception on political judgments. For the World Soccer Championship (WM) in 1998 and 2002 as well as for the European Championship (EM) in 2000, at least 40 per cent of the observed days showed a significant correlation between soccer reception and political opinions.

However, not every single tournament leads to significant correlations. For the World Soccer Championship in the USA in 1994, as well as for the European Championship in England in 1996, no significant increase could be found. On the other hand, there are other times when there are correlations, although no soccer game took place. In 2000, a cocaine scandal concerning soccer coach Christoph Daum seemed to cause this phenomenon.

The strong correlation that visually appears in Figure 2 is further demonstrated and explained in Figure 3 by a cross correlation graph<sup>7</sup>. One at lag zero, at which the values simultaneously measured are correlated, the correlation coefficient of

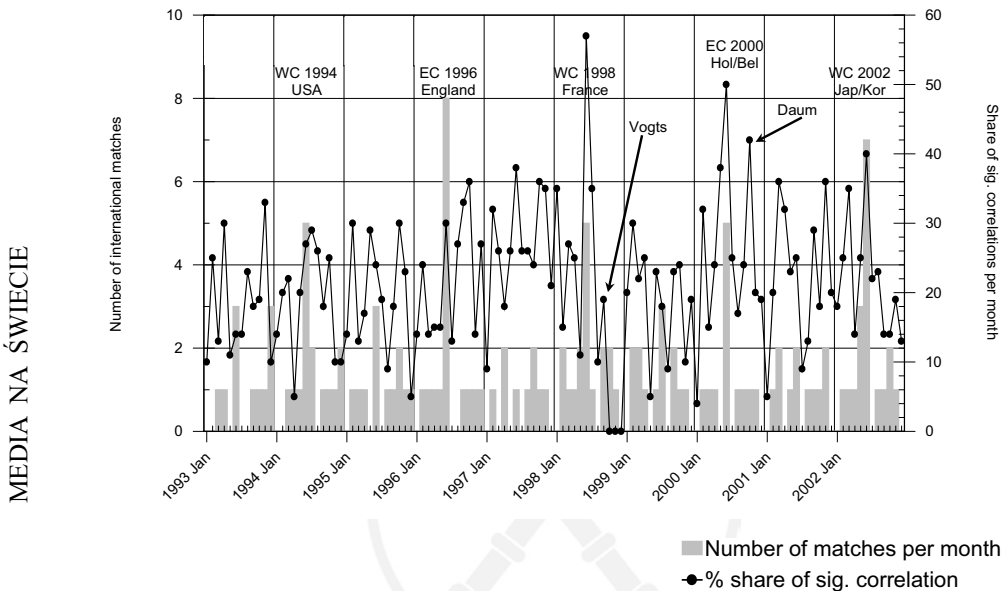
<sup>5</sup> Preferences for chancellor were only taken into consideration as far as they referred to the incumbent or his most popular challenger. Preferences for the chancellor referring to one of these two persons received the code “1”, so did voting intentions for the party of the chancellor or his most popular incumbent. Other candidates and parties received code “0”.

<sup>6</sup> This number results from four correlations (salience x chancellor, salience x challenger, salience x chancellors party, salience x challengers’ party) being calculated for each workday between 1993 and 2002 on which FORSA had asked the salience question.

<sup>7</sup> The cross correlation graph shows repeated persons correlations between two time series. With each repetition one of these series is lagged by one time interval. This series is called the lead series. Thus a positive lag indicates a correlation between a past (lagged) measurement of the lead series and the present measurement of the other series. Vice versa for a negative lag. Significant correlations

the monthly number of matches and the monthly number of significant correlations does exceed the statistical intervals of confidence<sup>8</sup>. The number of significant correlations does not correlate with the number of matches played in either in one of the previous four months or those played in the four months later.

**Figure 2. Number of matches of the German national soccer team and the correlations between reception of soccer media coverage and judgments about political popularity in the cause of time**



WC = FIFA Soccer Worldchampionships, EC = UEFA European Soccer Championships.

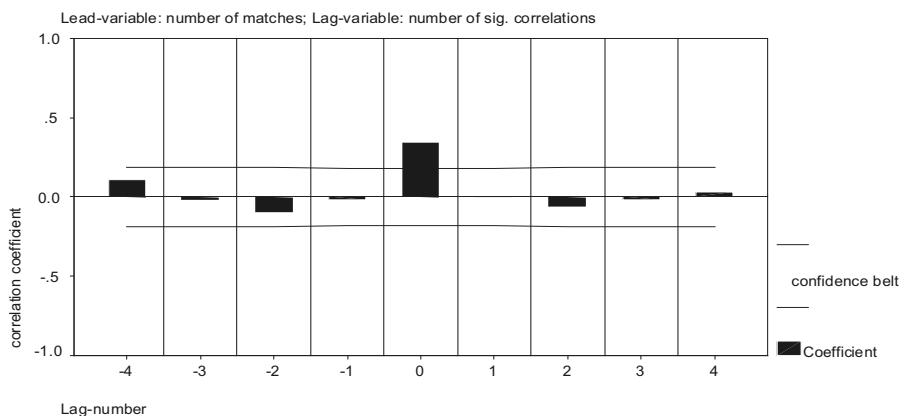
The influence of soccer games on political judgement is strongly related to the importance of the games. The majority of the population names soccer as the most interesting topic covered in the media while the World and European Championships take place. During the last soccer championship even 60 per cent of the population showed great and distinct interest. Within groups that usually show mild interest in sports, this effect was predominant. The percentage of women interested in sports increased from 20 to 40 per cent in the months while the European and World Soccer Championship took place.

at positive lags indicate that the lead series allows a significant prognosis of the lag series and vice versa (Scheufele 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Amounts to two standard errors.



**Figure 3. Cross tabs of numbers of matches of the national soccer team and the number of significant correlations between the salience of soccer media coverage and judgements of political popularity (1993 until 2002, measured monthly)**



Correlations between salience of soccer and political judgement can take positive or negative values. But, as our theoretical discourse suggested, the vast majority of effects we measured were positive (Table 2). This was found for the era of chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU/CSU) and the era of his successor Gerhard Schroeder (SPD). Also, in both eras it was true for the government and the opposition. Looking at the choice of chancellor, in both eras the governing party profited more from the effects than the opposition. However, with the voting intention the SPD could profit from the effects even more when they represented the opposition.

Summing up, the first part of the results, the topic ‘soccer’ covered in the media regularly has an influence on Germans’ judgement statements about candidates and parties up for election. This influence mainly results from the attention drawn by (most important) games of the national soccer team. No matter what was to be judged, positive effects were found far more often than negative.

The assumption this could only reflected the good overall performance of the national soccer team<sup>9</sup>, does neither take the great demands of German soccer fans and journalists into account, nor the unexpected elimination of the team by ‘underdogs’ at the championships in the USA and in France. Mostly, it does not account for the elimination from the preliminary round in the Netherlands/Belgium.

<sup>9</sup> The German national soccer team between 1993–2002 won 83 times, it lost in 22 matches and tied in 28. The scoring statistics are quite positive too: The Germans scored 288 goals, and had to take 132.

**Table 2. Number of significant relationships<sup>1</sup> between the salience of soccer in the media<sup>2</sup> and the preference for chancellor and the voting intention (1-1-1993 until 12-31-2002).**

	Era Kohl (1.1.1993 – 9.29.1998)		Era Schröder (9.30.1998 – 12.31.2002)	
	Positive Correlation	Negative Correlation	Positive Correlation	Negative Correlation
Preference for candidate CDU/ CSU	85	12	37	18
Voting intention CDU/CSU	73	8	57	9
Preference for candidate SPD	72	13	92	6
Voting intention SPD	110	9	69	4
Sum	340	41	255	37

(1) Person's on a daily basis of 500 respondents, two-sided Test. (2) number of answers saying "soccer" to the question of which issue from recent media coverage was the most interesting.

To find more distinct explanations for the relationships found in the analysis it was very worthwhile to look at the situation of the World Soccer Game as it relates to time. On the one hand, this was important because in this time span, most of the significant correlations between political popularity and success in soccer were found. On the other hand, since 1990, world soccer games have always taken place right before the national election which seems, thus, of great relevance to the analysis.

The time span analyzed includes the end of the 'Bundesliga' (i.e., with the start of the preparation for the tournament until the national election). The significant cross tab correlations between the number of soccer games of the German national team and the number of significant correlations between the reception of soccer in the media and judgements of popularity are demonstrated in Table 3. The lead-variable represents the number of national soccer games. For all years the national soccer game took place, the notion was supported that the popularity of the two biggest political parties (i.e., SPD, CDU), along with their candidates, were influenced by the national soccer games. For the CDU, there were both negative and positive effects, the SPD was exclusively influenced positively during the elections years of 1994 and 2002.

However, significant correlations were only found in two instances in the same week a game took place. In most cases (i.e., in 6 cases), soccer as a topic in the media only correlated significantly with a delay of two or three weeks after the games. This is a clear indication that soccer games do not immediately influence political judgement statements. The fact that they are debated afterwards should

at least have a catalytic effect in the (mostly media-) discourse that offers many relationships between soccer and politics (see above; Fußball beflügelt Politik, 2002).

In two occasions, soccer media coverage already had an impact on political judgement statements two weeks before the game. In both cases these effects were positive in nature and they occurred in 1994. One could expect the great anticipation of many soccer fans to be responsible for this effect, but the media could also have a great effect when they cover the games way before the kick-off.

**Table 3. Effects of matches of the German national soccer team on preference for chancellor and on voting intention in times of Soccer World-Campionships and national election (Cross correlations <sup>1</sup> on a weekly basis)**

Lag-Variable (number of significant correlations) <sup>3</sup>	Lead-Variable (number of matches) <sup>2</sup> Lead in months:								
	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
5.1. – 9.29. 1994									
Positive Effect on preference for CDU/CSU cand.	-.20	.04	.06	<b>.50</b>	.38	.22	.34	.18	.13
Negative Effect on preference for CDU/CSU cand.	.20	.20	.21	.22	<b>.60</b>	-.16	-.17	-.18	-.17
Positive Effect on preference for SPD-candidate	.20	.21	<b>.59</b>	.43	<b>.45</b>	.25	-.12	-.07	.21
5.1. – 9.29. 1998									
Positive Effect on preference for CDU/CSU cand.	-.11	-.13	.09	.10	-.09	<b>.51</b>	.30	-.10	<b>.53</b>
Negative Effect on voting intention for CDU/CSU	-.39	-.06	.04	.32	.42	.39	<b>.58</b>	.18	-.07
5.1. – 9.29. 2002									
Positive Effect on preference for CDU/CSU cand.	-.29	.10	-.15	.26	.38	<b>.50</b>	.18	.15	.11
Negative Effect on voting intention for CDU/CSU	-.17	-.16	-.17	-.18	.15	.14	<b>.47</b>	.13	.47

Positive Effect on preference for SPD candidate	-.01	.23	.21	.19	.38	<b>.67</b>	.27	.26	.28
Negative Effect on voting intention for SPD	.11	.13	.38	.26	.35	<b>.66</b>	.09	.08	.10

(1) Coefficients printed in bold exceed twice the standard error. (2) Numbers of games of the German national soccer team per week. (3) Numbers of days (Mo–Fr) when the preference to vote for the chancellor significantly correlated with the interest of the latest media soccer coverage (among 500 respondents).

Furthermore, there were interesting distinctions depending on the specific course of the game, the preparations for it, and the specific voting situation. In 1994, the German national soccer team pitifully started the preparations when they lost a ‘test game’ against the Republic of Ireland (0:2) in Hannover. However, they won the following ‘test games’ against Austria (1:5) and Canada (0:2). The German soccer team successfully managed the games within their group. In the “Achtelfinale”, the German team won against Belgium (3:2), but already in the quarter finals they lost against the rather weak team Bulgaria (2:1). The ups and downs are represented by the cross correlations in that year.

The games and their coverage in the media had both positive and negative effects on the popularity of chancellor (and candidate) Kohl. These differences are probably due to various effects of the games, part of them might be due to different types of reception and interpretation of the games in various sections of the population (e.g., among voters for or against Kohl). While the overall rather bad performance of the German national soccer team could be held responsible that the opposition’s candidate Rudolf Scharping only gained from the effects whereas the current chancellor was also effected negatively, the effects of the World Soccer Championship in 1994 were rather slim in general (i.e., they did not influence the voting intention).

In 1998, the results turned out differently whereas the preparation started out the same: the first ‘test game’ showed similar results against the rather weak Finnish team (0:0), whereas Germany won at least the two remaining ‘test games’ (Columbia 3:1; Luxemburg 7:0). Within its group, Germany successfully went to the first place, winning against the USA and Iran. Against Yugoslavia, the tie as the result was sufficient. Germany, again, makes it to the quarter finals after winning against Mexico. Their minimal aim to reach the semi-finals could not be reached though: after miserable performance, Germany loses against Croatia (0:3).

Although many voters in 1998 were influenced by the games so they judged Helmut Kohl as a chancellor candidate better than they might have, a negative effect simultaneously influenced the Union: with soccer media coverage the voters changed their voting intention and decided against the CDU. The analysis already

showed that the resignation of the national soccer trainer and his friendship with the chancellor played a role.

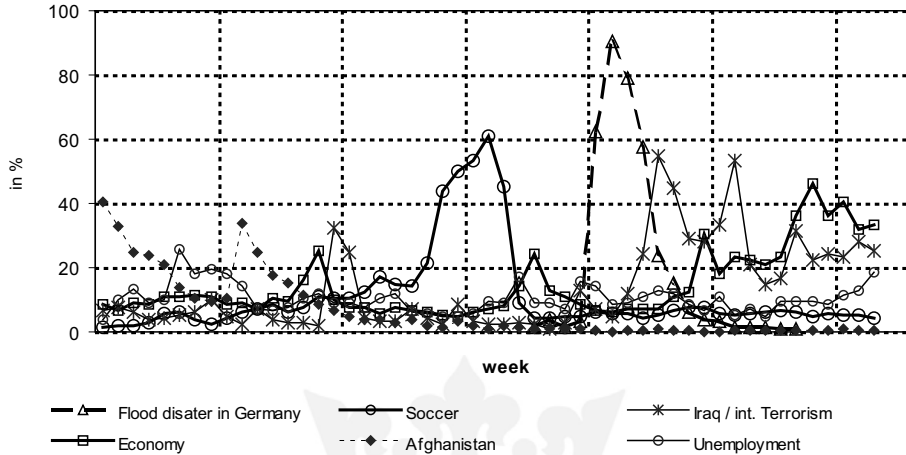
The German national soccer team also showed rather bad performance during their preparation in 2002 in Japan and South Korea, when, in the same year, the latest national German election took place. After winning against Kuwait (7:0), Germany lost against Wales (0:1). However, from then on Germany seemed to succeed when Austria lost in the last preparation game (6:2), which was reflected by gaining votes for the SPD in the polls. Alexander Schwabe, a journalist for the German magazine 'Spiegel', explained how the Union's lead would equal out if Germany made it to the semi-finals (Schwabe, 2002). In fact, Germany was in the final, but lost against Brasil (2:0).

It was not possible to systematically analyze the emotions of the viewers provoked by victory or failure. It is also not certain which failure was worse: losing against Bulgaria in 1994 or losing against Croatia in 1998. One thing, though, seems to be sure: Losing or winning against opponents said to be much weaker are evaluated differently than losing against great soccer nations. This is made clear by the positive reaction of the Germans when Germany lost against Brasil in the finals.

Also, expectations were low for the German team during the World Soccer Championship in 2002, thus, the reaction was even more positive when the performance went better than expected. Gerhard Schroeder and his party clearly gained from this euphoria. This is demonstrated by the strong effects in Table 3. Edmund Stoiber, the leader of the opposition, also gained from the effects. He attempted to compensate Acker/Schröder's advantage of the soccer image with great but faked enormous interest in the German team. The number of those, however, intending to vote for the Union, declined with the course of the World Soccer Championship in 2002.

#### *4. How the reception of soccer in the media determined the result of the 2002 national election*

To end with we will take a closer look at the factors influencing the most recent elections. The topic soccer as it occurred in the media in the election year 2002 is presented in Figure 4. Soccer was one of the topics mostly covered in the media, even among many parts of the population. However, soccer only plays such a big role during the World Soccer Championship. In the last two months right before the election, soccer is only named by six per cent of the respondents. The great flood in Eastern Germany and the possibility of a war in Iraq in the near future, connected with the debate about international terrorism, are of far bigger concern to the public than soccer. Only three other topics are named quite frequently during the entire year until Election Day (i.e., the occupation of Afghanistan, the overall economic situation in general, and the situation of the job market in particular).

**Figure 4. Interest in topics covered in the media (2002)**

Forsa: Percentage of respondents that gave answers to the following question: Which are the three topics covered in the newspaper, the radio, or television these days that you are most interested in? (approximately 500 respondents per day, Mo–Fr).

Regression analyses demonstrate how much the perceived presence of various topics in the media influenced the political judgement statements of the population. The analyses are measured on a monthly aggregated basis. To control for autoregressive effects, both the number of ‘topics mentioned’ and the lags of the dependent variables were included (i.e., the average score of the preference for chancellor or the voting intention from the day before). The topics mentioned by the respondents were included in the stepwise selection analysis from one day and the day before.

These models account for the notion that media effects show an immediate impact (Zeh & Hagen 1999). In the case of the FORSA-interviews that lasted until the late evening, an immediate media effect could have taken place the same day. The results suggest that the preference for Gerhard Schroeder as a chancellor can increase significantly with the reception of soccer in the media. This effect was controlled for against the reception effects of the remaining important topics. Altogether, the three topics: terrorism/Iraq, the flood, and soccer, account for half of the variance of Schroeder’s popularity. Stoiber’s popularity, on the other hand, was not significantly influenced by the topic soccer in the course of the year. CDU/CSU’s candidate Edmund Stoiber gained the most from the war being mentioned in the media and the occupation of Afghanistan that occurred later on. Overall, the factors influencing the preference for Schroeder were more prominent. With the flood and the discussion about the Iraq war, the model offers explanations that are not new or surprising. Furthermore, these explanations were already identi-

fied as the most important ones in the public discourse that took place during the campaign. On the other hand, the finding that the soccer media coverage had such a great impact on the popularity of the old and new chancellor is very surprising.

**Table 4. Regressions of choice of chancellor on the media coverage of certain topics (1-2-2002 until 09-20-2002, daily, Mo–Fr)**

Independent:	Measured:	SPD	CDU/CSU	Balance <sup>1</sup>
Pref. f. Chancellor	day before	.38	.22	.23
Issue Soccer	same day	.13		.20
Issue Flood	day before	.20		.28
Issue Iraq/int. Terrorism	same day	.32	-.16	.36
Issue Afghanistan	day before		.36	
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)		.48	.30	.42

Each column contains regression values. The coefficients are standardized and all values are significant on the 0.05 significance level.(1) The preference of chancellor: (-1) = Stoiber; (0) = others; (1) = Schroeder. The balance represents the sum of these values.

In the case of the voting intention, the same three topics have the strongest and the most significant impact on the balance. Once again, soccer seems an influential topic. This is not obvious in both graphs explaining the popularity of the candidates separately, but it is apparent in the overall graph. The graph demonstrating the intention to vote for the SPD could include the numbers of those mentioning 'soccer' as a topic within a week and the week before. These values could be included with a marginal significance level of 12 per cent and a positive beta-value (.09). Furthermore, in contrast to mentioning the choice of chancellor by the respondents, economic topics were found relevant for the voting intention. This result was not surprising and it positively influenced the Union within the entire year.

The results concerning the topic 'soccer' are distinct but, luckily, they seem to be short term in nature. Extending the time period to be analyzed to a week, the partial influence of mentioning soccer on the choice of chancellor, or on the intention to vote cannot be found within the 0.5 significance level. It is not until the 20 per cent significance level of the week and the week before that the answers can be included in the regressions concerning the voting intention. The coefficient would equal .10. To reliably judge the duration of the influence of the topic soccer on the popularity judgement statements, a more sophisticated time-series-analysis would have been necessary that could not be investigated in the scope of this paper<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Other findings, on the contrary, do support the notion that candidate-preference and voting intention are, in fact, random walks. Random walks are characterized by their infinite memory.

**Table 5. Regressions of voting decision on the reception of various topics covered in the media (1-2-2002 until 09-20-2002, weekdays, Mo-Fr)**

Independent:	Measured:	SPD	Union	Balance
Voting intentions	day before	.35		
Issue Soccer	same day			.18
Issue Flood	day before	.27		.36
Issue Iraq/int. Terrorism	same day		.29	.50
Issue Iraq/int. Terrorism	day before	.30		
Issue economy	same day			-.14
Issue economy	day before		-.15	
Issue labor market	day before		.17	
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)		.46	.10	.36

Each column contains regression values. The coefficients are standardized and all values are significant on the 0.05 significance level. (1) The voting intention: (-1) = CDU; (0) = others; (1) = SPD. The balance represents the sum of these values.

**Table 6. Regression of the choice of chancellor and the voting intention on the attention paid to various topics covered in the media (1-2-2002 until 09-20-2002, weekly)**

Independent:	Measured:	Preference for chancellor Balance <sup>1</sup>	Voting intention Balance <sup>2</sup>
Preference for chancellor	week before	.46	
Voting intention	week before		.36
Issue Flood	week before	.25	.34
Issue Iraq/int. Terrorism	same week		.28
Issue Iraq/int. Terrorism	week before	.21	
Issue Afghanistan	week before	-.23	
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)		.73	.65

Each column contains regression values. The coefficients are standardized and all values are significant on the 0.05 significance level. (1) The choice of chancellor: (-1) = Stoiber; (0) = others; (1) = Schroeder. The balance represents the sum of these values. (2) The intention to vote: (-1) = CDU; (0) = others; (1) = SPD. The balance represents the sum of these values.



## 5. Discussion

The broad empirical analysis this paper was based on, clearly showed that soccer covered in the media regularly and significantly influenced judgement statements about the most important political candidates and parties in the last ten years in Germany. To our knowledge, there has been no further study in Germany or elsewhere that investigated the success in sports and its relation to political popularity.

The effects supported in this paper mostly originated from matches of the German national soccer team, mostly in international tournaments. Victories in those games could often be useful for the party in power and the opposition, failures could sometimes harm. Soccer could influence the popularity of persons (i.e., the leading candidates) more than it influenced the intention to vote for a certain party.

These effects do not seem to be very long-lasting. A more detailed times-series-analysis has yet to be conducted. It is not out of the question that national soccer games can determine the results of an election, if both incidents are close enough to each other. The popularity of the government is directly influenced by the performance of the national soccer team at important games.

The impact of soccer on voting results is based on strong results, and the 'Public Mood Theory' offers coherent explanations for the relationship between soccer and politics. The general Public Mood provides the logical link between the two items. Soccer, however, is not the only element of Public Mood in a democracy influenced by emotions. Future communications research should explore this concept much further as mass-media are most influential in shaping the mood of the public.

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## STRESZCZENIE

### **Piłka nożna w mediach, nastroje społeczne a popularność rządu**

Autorzy artykułu pokazują związek między medialnymi relacjami z meczów piłki nożnej a popularnością partii politycznych w trakcie kampanii wyborczej, która zwykle następowała tuż po światowych rozgrywkach piłkarskich. Sukces reprezentacji narodowej związany jest ze zwycięstwem w politycznym meczu. Tę zdumiewającą zależność między sukcesami na boisku a zwycięstwem danego kandydata czy partii w wyborach tłumaczy teoria nastrojów społecznych W. Rahn, która zwróciła uwagę na ważną rolę, jaką w zachowaniach politycznych i kształtowaniu narodowej tożsamości odgrywają emocje, na które wpływ mają przekazy medialne, m.in. relacje sportowe. Narodowy sukces w rozgrywkach sportowych przyczynia się do wzmacniania narodowej tożsamości. Szczególnie w Niemczech, gdzie mecze piłki nożnej są najważniejszymi meczami relacjonowanymi w mediach. W dużym stopniu modelują nastroje społeczne, które z kolei wpływają na polityczne decyzje i sądy, w demokracji kształtowanej przez emocje. Trzeba jednak pamiętać, że sportowe rozgrywki mogą kształtować nastroje społeczne tylko wtedy, kiedy relacjonowane są w mediach. Zaprezentowana w artykule analiza związków między zainteresowaniem piłką nożną a wzrostem popularności partii politycznych

pokazuje, że medialne relacje z meczów wpłynęły na niemieckie nastroje polityczne do tego stopnia, że mogły zadecydować o wyniku wyborów w 2002 roku.

**Słowa kluczowe:** relacje medialne, nastroje społeczne, oddziaływanie mediów, piłka nożna, relacje sportowe, dyskurs polityczny, kampania wyborcza, tożsamość narodowa, przekazy medialne, emocje

