


Chapter 4

The Nexus between Football, Media, and Political Elites: Exploring Interactions, Influence, and Implications

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ABSTRACT

The paper will analyze the intricate connection of game, broadcasting, and elites in the political system. The underlying nucleus of this paper is for investigating the interaction, impact and implications of the link between these three fields, which would ultimately explain how each of the spheres affects and is affected by the other. This paper aims at examining complexities associated with the connection between football, media coverage as well as political elites will help in exploring social, cultural, and political issues related to this convergence. Titled, “The Nexus between Football, Media and Political Elites - Exploring Interactions, Influence and Implications”, this paper will aim to unleash the underlying narrative between football, politics and elites.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 - The Intersection of Football, Media and Politics

In the past decades, governments have used football to endorse nationalism and signify diplomatic power. For example, the 1978 FIFA World Cup held in Argentina was used by the military junta in power to mobilize people's love for their country and create a stimulus for them to turn a blind eye to the junta's human rights atrocities (Bellos, 2002). In the same way, the Soviet Union as well as its Eastern Bloc companions, utilized sport, football included, as a show because of their political and ideological dominance during the cold war (Riordan, 1991). The examples are of that kind to understand football as an extension of political activities.

However, the role of the media in this intersection is equally important. An analysis of the football agendas, football broadcasts and football commentary shows that media coverage does not only mirror the existing political discourses but also performs the discourses. Thus, the depiction of football and its related elements such as matches, players, or tournaments can shape the attitude of the public and national identity. For instance, the screenings of football games that aired the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil directly influenced the revelations of social problems and political grievances, which led to protests against government spending on the event (Zirin, 2014). This example shows how football-related media coverage can give a voice to political opposition and call for a collective action.

However, the effects that football has had on international relations are also undeniable. It is very common that diplomatic tensions are reflected in football relations and sometimes even alliances coincide. This was the match in the 1998 FIFA World Cup when the US played against Iran, this game was dubbed the 'Mother of all Games', and the match's-political tension indeed called for the match to deserve the name (Foer, 2004). Football diplomacy, therefore, acts as a platform through which political sentiments and discussions are articulated.

Many football clubs and leagues are among the biggest sports brands in the world, which are engaged in various political processes both on a national and international level. The ownership of football clubs by wealthy individuals from politically connected families or nations like the case of QSI and the acquisition of Paris Saint-Germain is a clear indication of how financial power and political power are linked in football (Murray, 2018).

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