

**We are the Champions! Does it Matter
for Government?**
*A Study of Impact of Sport Wins and Losses
on Governmental Popularity
In Latin America and East Europe*

**Alexander Sherstobitov, Boris Sokolov,
Anton Verevkin, Kirill Neverov**

LCSR Conference. HSE, Moscow.
November 6-10, 2012

Already long ago, from when we sold our vote to no man, the People have abdicated our duties; for the People who once upon a time handed out military command, high civil office, legions — everything, now restrains itself and anxiously hopes for just two things: **bread and circuses**

(Juvenal, Satire 10.77–81)

Rationality in government support

Theory of retrospective voting (Kramer, 1971; Fiorina, 1981; Lewis-Beck, 1988):

- People evaluate performance of government from the perspective of well-being changes;
- Increase of well-being determines raise of support; decrease determines negative trend in support;
- The economic factors are the basic predictors for support rate.

Limitations to rationality (1)

- Natural disasters: people blame politicians and bureaucrats for events that are actually not under their control (Achen and Bartels, 2004; Cole, Healy and Werker, 2012)
- Exogenous economic shocks (Leigh, 2009)

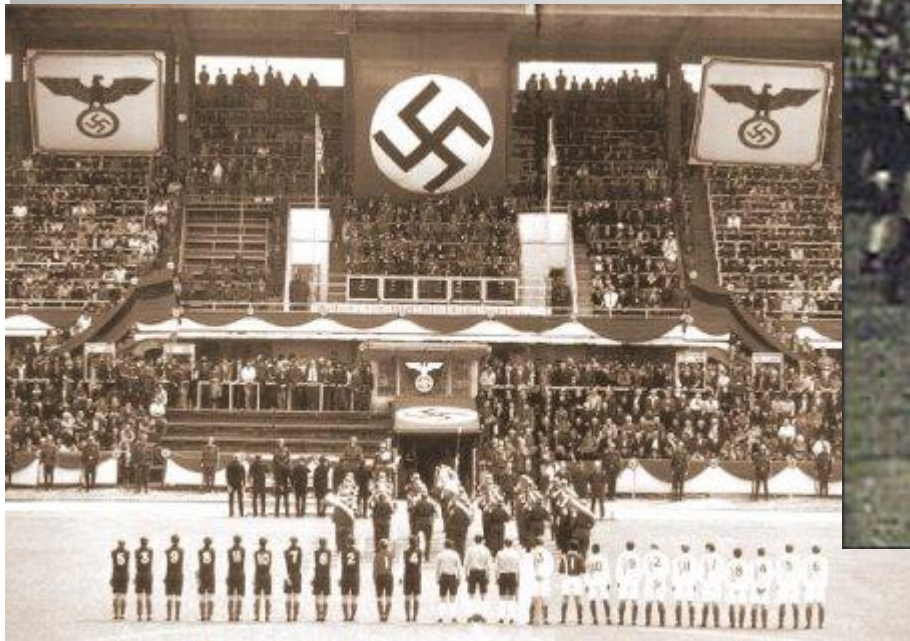
Limitations to rationality (2)

Irrelevant events:

- Sports: the results “on the eve” of the elections may shape electoral behavior (Healy, Malhotra, Mo, 2010)
- Christmas Lottery outcomes in Spain (Bagues and Esteve-Volart, 2011)

Football and Politics

- Football as a mechanism of regimes support and influence in Europe in 1930s-50s



Football and Politics

- “Soccer war” between El Salvador and Honduras (1969)



Football and Politics

- World Cup success against political crisis in Brazil (1961-1962)



Questions

- “Bread and circuses” – where is the balance between rational choice and emotions in government support?
- How do results of national football team affect the support of government?
- Does the above effect depend on values of the society?

Voting or support?

- Support rate gives more precised evaluation of incumbents performance by citizen;
- Usage of support rate excludes variations of strategic voting effects;
- Support rate provides more representative data for short-term effects analysis.

Hypotheses

- (H1) Sports successes tend to increase level of popular support for government in short-term
- (H2) Sports defeats negatively affect rating of the government
- (H3) An effect of the sports successes/defeats tend to be less in more postmaterialist countries
- (H4) Volatility of the popularity function caused by sport events is less in more democratic countries.
- (H5) An effect of international sport competitions' outcomes tends to be less in more prosperous countries.
- (H6) An effect of sport events is less in the countries with higher level of happiness and subjective well-being.

Methodology and Sample

- Multilevel time series analysis (September 1994 – September 2012)
- Twenty one country: 7 in Latin America and 14 in Eastern Europe
- Monthly popularity rate of government institutions

Dependent Variable

Monthly support rates of:

- President in case of President Republics
- Government in Parliamentary Republics

Predictor

Results of international football games

(1, X, 2)

Model

World and Continental Cup

Qualifiers

Finals of International club
tournaments

Olympics

2nd "national sport" results
on the international arena

Impact on
support of
government

```
graph LR; A[World and Continental Cup] --> D((Impact on support of government)); B[Qualifiers] --> D; C[Finals of International club tournaments] --> D; E[Olympics] --> D; F[2nd national sport results on the international arena] --> D;
```

Control Variables

- GDP per capita
- Monthly Unemployment rate
- Monthly Inflation rate
- Democratic transition indicators (Polity IV, Freedom House)
- Ethnic heterogeneity
- Value proxies from the WVS Data:
Postmaterialism, Satisfaction with life, Trust, Political Activism
- Significant events: disasters, wars, celebrations, national mourning, etc.

Potential Contribution

- Irrelevant effects on government support
- Political processes in transit states
- Values transformation in democratization framework.

**Thank you for attention.
Questions and feedback are
welcome.**