

## **Abstract**

This essay deals with the phenomenon of using football in order to exert influence over the domestic policy on the particular case of Russia after Vladimir Putin assumed the office of the president in 2000. Football in the Soviet Union and Russia developed in close interaction with politics almost through its entire history. However, the form of instrumentalization and the key players who had a chance to intervene into the football world were changing along with the changes of political and economic environment. The ascension of Vladimir Putin into the presidential office and his intervention into the existing power of oligarchs meant a major shift towards a stronger and active role of the Kremlin also in the process of using of football clubs. The analysis of particular cases along with the fact that most of the Russian professional clubs are currently owned directly by the state make the author of this essay to formulate the concluding thesis that after the consolidation of Putin's regime it is Kremlin who became the main player also in respect to the instrumentalization of football. This perspective means a shift in the research into the interaction of Russian football and the politics in which the stress was laid primarily on the role of oligarchs (process of "Berlusconization") so far. The concrete form of direct using of football clubs by Kremlin is illustrated with two most distinctive and media-covered cases – Terek Grozny from Chechnya and three clubs from Crimean Peninsula. Through Terek Kremlin endeavoured to present the normalization of situation in Chechnya as the region was recovering from the armed conflict, through the incorporation of Crimean clubs into the Russian competitions Moscow aimed to promote the integration of Crimea into the Russian Federation after its annexation of 2014. These cases contain many common features, but at the same time they also show in which direction the instrumentalization may develop when certain external factors do or do not appear.