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FOOTBALL AS A VEHICLE OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION:

THE CASE OF CAMEROON

Department of Sociology and Social Psychology

International School of Social Sciences

Master's Thesis

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# Abstract

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This study set out to examine the influence of football in nation-building, in which case national integration. A qualitative research method was employed whereby the contents and discourses of Cameroonian football analysts were retained and analyzed in relation to the concept of national integration. The objective was to examine the meanings which the analysts make of the role of football in national integration, peace and in cultivating collective sentiments. The data were collected during several months from some popular Cameroonian Football websites, where Cameroonians around the globe comment about Cameroonian football in particular and world football in general. The data were analyzed qualitatively along related themes to national integration.

The study is particularly important in the context of Cameroon as a recurrent successful football nation in Africa because of its national unity, integration and longstanding peace, which contrast its very diverse and fragmented multicultural, multi ethnic and heterogeneous society, with over 200 ethnic groups. This record of peace which may be indicative of its national integration makes Cameroon an interesting case study to which none in the (Central and West African) sub-region may be comparable to. The strategies of the Cameroonian government in pulling together the different ethnic groups to be both, a recurrent successful football and peaceful nation were some of the issues of interest in the research.

Despite the controversial natures of some of the arguments and the negative impacts of such sentiment-driven activities, the study generally suggests that, football in that particular context and other collective activities could be as important and influential as any major political or economic instruments in nation-building processes. The contribution of football seems significant in the

national integration and peace processes in Cameroon. In a successful football nation like Cameroon, football may help divert attention from serious political and economic issues like poverty, government businesses, governance debates and underdevelopment. Because of the accumulated heritage in football and consequently its capacity to mobilize collective sentiments and love for the game, people especially the lay majority, tend to forget their differences because most of their attention and discourses are regularly focused on sporting events and in the case of Cameroon, football. Other literatures in the thesis suggest as well that sporting activities like football usually enhance social cohesion as well as lubricate national socio-economic and political processes.

**Key words:** *Football, ethnicity, national integration, unity, tribalism.*

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

The word “football” or “soccer” is used for the same sport in different countries in terms of its well defined infrastructures, rules and objectives. For the sake of consistency, I shall prefer to use “football” as it is the case of Cameroon on which this study is based. Football is one of the most popular and well-known games in the world. Many around the world, who might never have played or practiced football, may have seen it being projected on various television screens during major tournaments like the FIFA football world cup, European Champions league or Cup of Nations or the African Nations’ Cup. Beside the screen or media projection, those who have had the occasion to walk across an African village or even the suburbs of some big African cities have surely seen little kids running bare-footed after a ball or an approximately round object on a rough surface; the aim of the game being generally the sole desire to be the one to push the ball. This is an image of African children that is sometimes associated with poverty and all the signs of underdevelopment. It is also the same image that politicians want to project in a post conflict situation when they want to emphasize the fact that the lives of child soldiers’ have gone back to normal.

Football catches people’s imagination. Multiple cultural expressions find their place in various stadia amongst spectators. Prior to the creation of FIFA as the Football World Federation, one of its first associations had been created in England in 1863 (Boniface 2006, 19). In Cameroon and probably in other developing countries, the football stadium is a secondary living environment where only the darkness of the night stops the activities. Although women’s access to this seemingly male-dominated activity in Africa may be limited, they can regularly be spotted as they watch men play. Women and girls therefore accompany the men in football fields either by watching or taking part in related activities such as selling refreshments and the snacks to those in need. The popularity of football may also be captured in terms of its commercial characteristics in recent years, for instance, the multi billion Euros it generates. It thus has the capacity of drawing the attention of nations, various collectivities as well as individuals around the world. The major difference between the two preceding perceptions about football lies in the particular attention the first draws from the public and the amount of money that it can generate. This has made the International Federation of Football Association (FIFA) a very wealthy and powerful multinational organization with the ability to impose its decisions to national governments, even amongst the most difficult ones. Thus, Cameroon, Portugal, Kuwait, Iran, and many other nations have had to rapidly comply to FIFA’s rulings in order to avoid bans- an influence that even the UN may not be able to exert. FIFA appears in this context to be more like a multinational/transnational company

ruling over football in general and national football activities in particular. This global superpower which has both the political and financial authority affects the life of billions of people around the world as football has shown the capacity of raising collective sentiments and may be related to ethnicity, identity, nationalisms. On the other hand, we would observe that the love for football has no frontier. It has the capacity of uniting people with similar sentiments, irrespective of race, color, ethnic or national identity. Additionally one can speak about the political economy of football at the global level, which has given a whole new dimension to its surrounding issues.

In the 76 year history of the World Cup, its first tournament to be organized on an African soil is scheduled for June 2010 in South Africa. This historic event has drawn additional attention and is leading to analytic anxiety and ambitions about its impact on the entire African continent. As one of the top teams in Africa and world football, the case of Cameroon is significant in more than one respect. Only a few countries in Africa such as Nigeria, Ghana and Egypt can be ranked in the same profile like Cameroon. The Cameroon National Team has been as one of the first in FIFA's classification for almost two decades. The diversity and fragmentation of the Cameroonian population makes it a good subject for a study in terms of the impact of football in nation-building processes. Cameroon is indeed a bizarre case for all those who try to understand the reasons behind its leadership in football on the African continent. On the European and Latin American regions which are the hottest spots as far as football is concerned, international success in football for a nation can be related to the countries weight on other areas on the international scene. Thus the biggest nations in terms of economy, population and military tend to score high in international football. Cameroon in contrast is none of the developed countries but counts as one of the brilliant in football despite its lack of infrastructure, poor organization and constant financial difficulties.

During major international tournaments like the World Cup which are generally organized by developed or in certain measure emerging countries, what strikes us the most is the use of those events by the media. It is always the occasion to promote products from world leading multinational company, it is the occasion for rich countries to promote their national tourism and for the host country to boost its economy; this explains the fierce battles that generally surround the designation of hosts countries. This phenomenon has drawn suspicions on the fairness of decisions taken at the higher spheres of decision at the Football World governing body. Some observers identify signs of Eurocentricism, capitalism and to some extent the confiscation of the 'people's game' by rich countries and other multinational companies.

Football is said to have the ability to arouse great national sentiments. National flags, national team

jerseys and all the tokens that represent a nation see their sales soar and their uses exacerbated during major football tournament. Victories in such tournaments are no more seen as victories for a small group of people but are celebrated by the entire nation including those that under normal conditions are overlooked and left aside in the nation-building process. In many other cases, football even stands as the game of the poor as they provide the biggest amount of supporter to their team.

Some prominent world leaders including the former UN chief Kofi Annan as well as the European Commission are unanimous about the ability of football to, alongside the already existing development programs; help relieve poverty in developing countries. In most of these countries football is without contest, the sport of the masses because of its affordability and its ability to pull crowds together. If the USA has indeed imposed its culture, its music and its way of life to the rest of the world, it has not been able to impose its major sport, situation which has allowed football to be the dominant sport on the planet. Additionally, football is said on account of its neutrality, to be able to cross the political, religious, linguistic and cultural boundaries that the society builds between people.

According to recent statistics from FIFA's, more than 250 million people play football around the world in about 200 countries and more than 150 millions of them do so in developing countries. Although this figure might seem insignificant compared to the number of poor people living there, empowering them through this sport which for many stands as an "act of survival" could prove to be a helping hand in the challenging fight against poverty. More importantly, the point seems to lie in the possibility of using football as a unifying factor in shattered communities and as an instrument to bridge the various gabs between ethnic groups, cultural entities and religious tendencies. This sounds highly relevant as one of the major impediments to development is the division and conflicts amongst people. The fight for survival in many communities is indeed sometimes synonymous to the fight of one group against another as people tend to see success as a zero-sum game.

### **1.1. Location of Cameroon**

The Cameroon is a "democratic" republic situated between central and west Africa in the armpit of the African Map. It is bordered to the west by Nigeria; Chad in the northeast; the Central African Republic in the east; and Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Republic of the Congo to the south. Cameroon's coast line lies on the bright of Bonny (also known as bright of the Biafra), part of the



Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean. The country is called “Africa in miniature” for its geological and cultural diversity. With an estimated population of 19 million inhabitants for a surface area of 475 000 square meters, Cameroon is an average sized country. Its natural features include beaches, deserts, mountains, rainforests, and savannas. The highest point in Cameroon is Cameroon Mountain in the South West Region and its largest cities are Douala and Yaounde, the Economic and Political cities, respectively. .

Cameroon became a German colony in 1884. After World War I, the territory was divided between Britain and France as mandates of the League of Nations. In 1960, French Cameroon became independent as the Republic of Cameroon. The southern or British Cameroon merged with French Cameroon in 1961 to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon, meanwhile the northern part joined Nigeria. The country was renamed the United republic of Cameroon in 1972 and the Republic of Cameroon in 1984. In multiple speeches addressed to Cameroon football team after international victories, the Cameroon head of states have formally designated the national team and its players as “les premiers ambassadeurs du Cameroun” (the first ambassadors of Cameroon) (Le Messenger, February 2000).

## ***1.2. Football in the Cameroonian Social and Sporting Landscape***

### **1.2.1. The Kings of the Forest**

When in 2003, Cameroon played the final of the Confederation Cup against France at the *Stade de France*, it was for all Cameroonians and many Africans, a magical moment mixed with excitement and sadness. There was excitement because after the draw recorded between the two sides the previous year, there was going to be a second and more important confrontation between the former colony and the former colonial master, a confrontation opposing the then African and Olympic champion to the then European and World champion. It was also a moment of sadness because for the first time in its major tournament, millions of spectators witnessed a football player dying on the football pitch. Cameroon was indeed going to play France without its mythical number 10, *Foe* who succumbed three days earlier to an aerial shock with Columbian player, *Yepez*. Despite a defeat against France, Cameroon which had on its way defeated Brazil and other great football nations had reinforced its status as a football legend on the African continent. For some few weeks, the Cameroonian people had forgotten the hardship of daily life and dreamt of life along side the greatest in the world. Cameroon is indeed a legend in African football, a country which faces most of the crises common to other African nation, but which are at times are overshadowed by its

success in international football.

Generally-speaking, sporting activities occupy a very prominent position in Africa for several reasons. It is a social gathering where people, both the actors and the spectators come to interact with each other, to be relieved of boredom as many may be idle due to economic crises, high unemployment and lack of education. In fact, sporting activities is a source of hope for every idle youth. For climatic and financial reasons, the range of sporting activities is limited to a few sports. Amongst the major ones are: football (soccer) and athletics. Whereas, other games may require special and expensive equipment and infrastructures, football and athletics are amongst the less demanding. In some cases, life itself could be considered as an athletic event as most of the people living far from big cities have to walk on long distances (often over 10 km) to accomplish daily activities such as going to school, the market or the farms. It is therefore common for children going to school or farm while kicking a round object or a football for that matter.

In contrast to East African country which has the history of producing legends in athletics as it is the case in Kenya and Ethiopia, most West and Central African countries have been notorious in collective sports, notably football. Opinions are divided over this regional preferences and success. It has been suggested that East African with naturally svelte structures are better equipped for athletics while West Africans are fairly better in football which require stronger body muscles. It is also sometimes suggested that a country's performance in a particular sport has much to do with its colonial past. Thus countries like Zimbabwe and South Africa, who have had a very strong colonial tie with Great Britain, do quite well in sports like Rugby and Cricket which are almost unknown in most of Africa.

The introduction of football in Cameroon was also a result of colonialism. In contrast to some British colonies like Ghana where the game was introduced at an early stage and directly by the colonial master, that of Cameroon, the then German Colony was only until after the First World War. According to Tsonga (quoted by Vidacs, Ed Gros; 170) football was introduced in Cameroon around the 20s by African migrants from other African countries. Vidacs reports in effect that at that time, the then 'indigenous' Africans where migrating to other African countries for better opportunities. At the beginning, African Football was by no means a mere replica of the British game neither in its structure nor in its underlying intended function. In other colonies, the football crowds offered nationalist and political leaders a sort of refuge as they were in constant fear of government arrests and also served as very important tools for political protest used in the struggle for independence (Darby 2002, 27). In the Cameroonian context, it was going to play a different

role. Ntonfo(1994, 56) and Vidacs(ed Gros,173) argue that it was from the start inscribed in an ethnic agenda which was later on reflected in the formation of the first local teams.

The African football was also different from the British, in terms of infrastructures and the physical structure of its players. Cameroonian footballers for instance, had a very strong structure which might have been inadaptable to the British style; they played on rugged surfaces and hardly wore boots. Ntonfo (1996, 91) reports of the first visit of the Cameroon team in France in 1950, where the players were more brilliant as a result of their physical built-up and the fact that they were playing bare-footed than by their playing skills. However, the status of the Cameroonian team along with Cameroonian football started evolving already four years before the independence in 1960 when they defeated on two occasions one Austrian team in Cameroon. It still had to go through a long process before becoming what is known today as the 'Indomitable Lions of Cameroon' with a well established international status.

In any country on this planet, victory on the international scene is widely celebrated by citizens of that particular country, but for some reasons, that victory hardly ever has the same significance from one country to another. Political, economic and social issues in a particular country definitely have a strong influence on what that influence can be. In the case of Cameroon for instance, understanding political, economic, cultural and even historical facts is crucial in grasping the football phenomenon.

### **1.2.2. The Place of Football in Cameroon's Sport**

As in many developing countries very few options are left for idle population. Every day scores of university graduates and the other academic dropouts come to increase an already high number of unemployed people. The political and economic reforms that the government promised back in the early 90`s are still expected. The non-fulfillment of those promises has generated a lot of anger and frustration amongst the population. Besides the resentment that the population has towards the government with regards to political and economic issues, a similar feeling has started to take hold of the population concerning other social activities. Cultural activities for instance have been tribalized by the government in its attempt to promote values inherent to certain tribes. (Nyamnjoh and Fokwang 2003,188 Ed. Gros)

In the absence therefore of activities capable of bringing together different factions of the Cameroonian society, football emerged as the big winner, gaining popularity in almost all the social classes. Many football observers argue that Cameroonian football was right from start different both

in style and function to the British football. A large portion of the Cameroonian population is from Bantu origin with very robust physical features. Those physical features have led to style that most football experts call slow and powerful. Cameroon has surprisingly shown differences from other neighboring African countries, Nigeria and Congo for instance. However Cameroonian football has fundamentally kept the basic rules established by the British at creation. Due to the fact that most Cameroonian football players get to football schools after having received thorough skills in the streets, they tend to have spontaneity that others, say European footballers, lack.

Football is not only one of the most important activities in Cameroon, but it is the most important sport. It is generally referred to as the “sport roi” (literally “sport king” and meaning the most important sport). Football appears to be an activity in which most men have at least once been initiated to in their childhood. It is in most communities the ultimate activity that sets the demarcation line between both genders. Thus a boy who does not take part in football related activities at one point in his youth could be easily considered effeminate. The prominence of football can also be noticed in the importance granted by the state authorities. Sport news is dominated by football, leaving very little room for other sport activities. Football programs on TV and radio stations are overwhelming. During international competitions like the World Cup or the African Cup of Nations, other sports are forgotten altogether. During such period, the national football team is the only one that receives special attention from the head of state himself. Vidacs (1998, 2) notes that during the 1994 World Cup for instance over six hours of program was attributed daily for football and related coverages.

### **1.3. Research Statement**

Although some previous studies have stressed the relation between football and national related issues, it is important to note that most of these studies have been carried out in contexts that are very different from the situation in Africa. For instance, the studies carried out in Northern Ireland, dealt with the situation where the ethnic struggle associated with football involved 'ethnic identities' which was qualitatively and quantitatively different from the Cameroonian context. The ethnic struggle in Cameroon is in no way comparable to that of Scotland or the Palestinian struggle for auto determination. By African standard, the Cameroonian case looks somehow unique. Cameroon is in fact a rare case where the ethnic melting-pot combined with a centrality played by football provides a fertile ground for the study of the connection between identity, ethnicity and football, and their common impact on the nation building process in a postcolonial context.

It is absolutely clear that there is nothing pioneering about the study of the connections between football and identity or ethnic related issues but there is a set of facts that give some sense of particularity to the case study of Cameroon. The first is that the territorial entity that represents Cameroon is subject to acute ethnic, linguistic, cultural and regional divisions which are likely to impede national integration. Secondly, the previous and numerous successes have enabled football to be placed very high on the agenda in the national chessboard. Additionally the high level of diversity which politicians have used to divide the people for political aims makes ethnicity and identity a very highly sensitive issue in the Cameroonian context. One important factor is the notion of a nation-state which still seems to be a new concept in situations where the people are fragmented along several ethnic groups with weak feeling for nationhood. A study by Thomas (2004) about African tribes and borders revealed that ‘most Africans feel more to their tribe than to the young nation-state of which they are citizens’. This raises the question of how citizens’ loyalty to their states has evolved over time.

The above suggest the indispensability of a study on the role of a leisure activity like football plays in the nation-building processes.. In the context of Cameroon, football is so embedded in many areas of social life that it becomes even difficult to set a demarcation line between football as a sport, leisure, a profession or a game that stirs all the passions. According to the context some issue are more interesting to study than others. In many of the previous works done in the field of football, the questions have mostly been that of the violence related to it, Hooliganism generated by football competitions, the corruptions surrounding the football management and so on (Guilioni, 2005). This study takes on a more positive dimension.

### **1.3.1. Objective of the Study**

This study sought out to identify the different discourses that participants develop about Cameroonian football and its relationship to other issues of national life. The focus was on the concept of integration. At first sight, it has been interesting to understudy the reasons for the consistent high profile of Cameroon in African and international football despite its relatively fragmented ethnic composition, its strengths and also as a low income developing country. The second facet which constitutes the thrust of the study is the role football plays as an instrument of national integration.

### **1.3.2. Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Cameroonian participants on the website perceive the role of football in nation building or national sentiment?
2. How is ethnic relation negotiated in their exchanges?
3. What are the general meanings associated to football in the context of globalization?

### **1.3.3. Summary of the Methodology**

The main source of the data collection was a popular website (camfoot.com) where Cameroonians comment about football in general, their national football team and other related issues. A qualitative research methodology was employed which required a collection of emerging arguments and the contents of the various arguments were analyzed qualitatively (thus discourse analysis).

### **1.3.4. Significance of the Study**

The study of this relationship between football and the above stated issues thus appears relevant in many respects. On the one hand, football's influence even on the global level is yet to be fully evaluated and on the other hand, its impact in a multicultural context in relation to nation-building seems significant. There is indeed no shift in the interest attach to football as a sport but an increasing number of people including some from the academic sphere start to believe in football's potential to influence issues relevant at the global and the local level. One of the striking observations one makes upon undertaking any study on football; however is the little availability of literature about that sport in the academic arena. It is so troubling to notice that the most popular game on the planet has not been studied extensively. It is not until I came across documents confirming the limited number of studies on that sport that I gained some confidence.

Just as the growing value of oil on global market triggered more prospects in oil fields, the growing importance of football in many aspect of societal life is generating more interest from scholars in football related studies. Although it has long been neglected in comparison with less popular sports like rugby and cricket, some scholars have started in different fields to study its impact, from different perspectives and in different locations. Various scholars are approaching the issue from a global perspective, for instance, with regards to international relations, its impact on conflict mediation and the relationship to globalization. Studies on Football in multicultural European communities reveal its importance in bridging the gap between multicultural Western metropolises.

While the study of the impact of football on the African continent could also be extended to so

many areas of life in our society, it appears to me that certain aspects carry much more importance than others. If indeed Africa's major problem seems to be underdevelopment, it is clear that without a sense of togetherness (integration) their development processes would be futile. This suggests the importance of football in bringing people together. In a study conducted on the topic of football and Irishness in Scotland, Bradley (2006, 1197) argues that "sporting narratives and discourses are important indicators as well as reflections of life beyond sport". In other words, a good understanding of societal life of a people could be acquired by studying the narratives and discourses that are developed around sport activities in that society. Just as his study of football related discourses in the Scottish society lead him to interesting conclusions, the study of football narratives in the Cameroonian society could serve as a mirror through which one could have another vision of the Cameroonian society. Finally, the strength and novelty in this study could also be attributed to the instruments and methods that were used; the internet website as it is a new tool for collecting data in the Cameroonian context. It gave possibilities to interact under unprecedented circumstances, a situation that very few if any previous studies I have come across have considered.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

This section examines certain literatures related to the separate themes about “football”, then related themes “national integration” based on which the theoretical framework is built as well as the global perceptions and the case of Cameroon. In the 'Football War, Kapusckinski's journalistic view of the football related conflict that opposed the Honduras to El Salvador in 1956, points to the relationship between countries and their national teams. He describes the type of nationalism that led to the war which claimed 6000 lives and caused more than 150000 injured and the level and type of nationalism that football can trigger,. His work is not just revealing about the patriotism that is known to football but it also partly exposes one of the dark spots that have led scholars like Jean Marie Brohm (2000) to talk of football as of a “brutal game, bringing human beings to their most primitive state”.

Franklin Foer in: *How Soccer Explains the World: an Unlikely Theory of Globalization* reports about the entanglement of football, politics and culture in the rest of the world. He gives an interesting view of how people try to define themselves through soccer and how highly relevant and sensitive issues like the Jewish Question and the Islam Question can be looked at through the lenses of football. More than just another book about football, he explores various facet of the sport in places where it matters and even in places where the game is just burgeoning.

In *Football and anti-colonial sentiment in Cameroon* , Bea Vidacs uses the situation offered by the backlash of the Cameroon National Team at the 1994 World Cup to discuss the anti-(neo)colonial discourse which followed the competition and was centered at the then head coach Henry Michel. By analyzing this discourse based on the reaction of Cameroonians in a call-in radio program, she establishes that sport is easily used as a metaphor as it makes them jump from football to the fate of their country. In fact, the question of the incompetence of the head coach from French origin is likened to the question of the relationship of Cameroon to France.

In *Football & Mondialisation (Football & Globalization,)* Boniface makes use of the concept of globalization in football to approach multiple current issues facing the world today. One after the other, he discusses the issues of nationalism, racism, football related violence, international politics, money and other social phenomena related to the game. Although his status as a supporter of the game leads him to sometimes appear as being a bit too positive about the benefits of football, he convincingly argues against scholars, such as Jean Marie Brohm, who perceives football as a game favoring civil violence, racism and sometimes used as an instrument for the control of the masses



by authoritarian regimes.

In *Football et Politique du Football au Cameroon (Football and Football Politics in Cameroon)*, Ntonfo in an attempt to understand the reason(s) behind the success of the Cameroon National Team undertakes a general study of Cameroonian football. Through the study of various aspect of Cameroon's football including football politics, he takes the reader through the history of football in Cameroon from the introduction of the game to the year 1994. Although in conclusion he is unable to answer the question why despite a total lack of infrastructure coupled with chaotic football politics, Cameroon makes it where other countries fail, Ntonfo provides the reader with extensive historical information on Cameroonian football. A third point to consider is the fact that the African continent's space in the previous research on the topic is very marginal, leaving a wide gap to fill in football related studies about the continent. Very little literature on the topic can be found in the mainstream study, both because the topic has not been extensively researched and that the African continent occupies a very marginal spaces as far as research is concerned.

A single internet search using any search engine with the words football and unity generates hundreds of thousand of entries. 'Football is a uniting sport' we often hear from commentators or read in articles related to football. The statement is generally so peremptory that very few people in the public opinion dare to question it, as if it were a proven fact accepted by all. That football is a sport that brings people together is still to some extent a political or economic idea which has yet to be unanimously accepted. The few scholars who have attempted to contest that 'reality' or to even outline the negatives sides of football have been submerged with critics from various works of life. Bradley (2006) argues that 'sports narratives and discourses are important indicators as well as reflections of life beyond sport'.

## ***2.2. Dealing with Ethnic Diversity***

Cameroon is not only a very ethnically diverse country but also has a much ethicized society. Ethnic entities in the Cameroonian society are very distinct for various reasons. Languages are certainly the most remarkable of these factors as they guide and define interethnic relations. The distinctive cultures of each ethnic group also play a roll in defining interethnic relations. Although there is no major or dominant ethnic group in terms of size, the Cameroonian society constitutes of several ethnic groups with related interest to take control of the society. Ethnic struggle which is clearly reflected on the political and economic scene seems to have also taken hold of the Cameroonian football. Before any idea of a national team was ever conceived, at the time when Cameroon was

still under the colonial rule, the first football clubs were constituted in the neighborhood of Douala, today's economic capital of Cameroon. Vidacs argues that discrimination was part of football right from the start with teams reserved to colonizers only and others reserved to indigenous only. The first Cameroonian teams evolved in Yaounde and Douala. They were according to Ntonga, a perfect reflection of the ethnic components of the Cameroonian society. Each club seemed to be created to represent a particular ethnic entity.

Cameroonian local football clubs were created and evolved to respond to needs of a clan or an ethnic group. This could be seen in the following factors: the club's ownership, the geographic location of the club, the origin of the clubs fans and that of the players. Although the economic capital, where the first clubs originated, is known to be inhabited by various ethnic groups, it is also known to be a place where particular ethnic groups live in particular locations. Thus an area like New Bell which is reputed to be home to huge Bamileke clans was the birth place for Union, while Akwa, Bali and Deido saw the birth of three clubs that were known to belong to the Douala tribe. In order to fill the absence of a Bassa people's presence in the football stadia, members of the Bassa tribe residing around the area of Nkonmondo decided to found the club, Dynamo. All those aforementioned clubs were not only founded by members of particular ethnic groups but the supporters were from the same ethnic group and with players selected within the group. It was therefore automatic for any talented player from one ethnic group to play only in his "ethnic" club. Failing to do so would have otherwise been considered a big treason.

It is not possible in all the cases to tell whether ethnicized football clubs were just a reflection of the social environment or if it was a factor in the ethnicization of the environment. However it is clear that some factors led to the formation of football clubs with an ethnic character. Among those was the mythical dimension that some particular clubs were believed to possess (Ntonfo 1994, 56). Beside the simple technical aspect of football itself, many people had superstitious beliefs that required some sort of homogeneity of the club. And homogeneity in those cases simply meant that the players had to be able to communicate in the same language and take part in the same rites. The disappearance of a certain number of ethno-centered clubs from the national scene as a result of poor performance was a setback to ethnocentrism, but although it has weakened tribal groupings on the football scene it has not killed it. In the recent years, there have been few cases showing that the marriage between football and ethnocentrism has been difficult to erase. In 1993 for instance leaders of the club *Leopard of Douala* on the eve of a Cameroon Cup final said something to the effect that their players had to descend in the Wouri River at 1 a.m for the last rite that was destined

to render them invisible to their opponents eyes (Ibid). Although some people took it as a part of a psychological war, others could not forget that there is indeed a rite performed in that river at night by the Douala people and where only the ethnic Douala themselves can take part. More recently in 2008 after a football match which opposed *Fovu of Baham*, a club belonging to the Bamileke people and *Foudre of Akonolinga*, a club belonging to the Beti tribe, incidents of looting and physical attacks on Bamileke people and property led to one victim and considerable material damage. This showed, if need be, that although the ethnic grip has loosened somehow with players being exchanged between different ethnical clubs, football teams are still seen as ethnic entities belonging to, funded and defended by the ethnic group.

Although any of the over 200 ethnic entities in Cameroon can form their own football team and recruit whoever and from wherever they want when it comes to the national team, the options are extremely narrow. Football is indeed a sport which cannot accommodate more than 22 players in a team and where not more than 11 players can be on the pitch at the same time. This basically means that in the case of Cameroon there is never going to be a situation where representation, which is very dear to Cameroonians, will be respected. So when the time to select the players to join the national team comes those in charge are faced with a very difficult situation. The task of forming a competitive team while respecting the Anglophone/ Francophone, North/South, Christians/Muslims balances is indeed a complicated one. This has led to the Quasi-phenomenon of the “sorcier Blanc” (literally white magician). The “sorcier Blanc” is a term generally used by Cameroonian journalists to designate the providential coach, generally a foreigner (most often a European coach) who is expected to bring a magical touch to the national team. In the expression “sorcier Blanc” lies an implicit perception of superiority of the western coach over other local coaches.

Although many other African football federations made recourse to the expertise of European coaches, it played in the Cameroonian society an additional role. Due to his unawareness of tribal differences, the European coach cannot be accused of tribalism during the selection of players as he is not expected to even know which player comes from which tribe. The European coach was therefore standing both as a football expert and the better compromise in the formation of the national team. The contribution of the European head coach could be clearly seen in the way people handled outcomes of international football matches. In few cases where a local coach was appointed to lead the national team, defeats had always been followed by accusations of the coach being ethnically biased. The coach is thus seen as a tribalistic person who has preferred to select people from his own tribe to the disadvantage of more competitive players. In case of success however

people tend not to perceive some kind of expertise as it would be the case with a “*sorcier Blanc*”. With a European coach victories are celebrated as both a sign of the strength of the national team coupled with the expertise of the coach. When defeat comes under his leadership, tribalism is hardly used to account for the situation. The blame is placed upon the players as a team and the coach as a poor manager, but not as individuals, as members of particular tribes. Although attempts have been made to reduce its pervasiveness, tribalism still seems to be an integral part of Cameroon`s football.

Some attempts have been made by officials of the Cameroon Football Team to alleviate tribalism. The control of players by ethnic entities and the constant problems in the national team affected the performance of local teams on the international scene and on many occasion even the national team. One former Cameroonian Minister of Youth and Sports, Michel Njiensi proposed a formula of reorganizing clubs according to administrative divisions instead of ethnic regroupings. However, that seemingly bold and ingenious attempt which had been proven efficient in Guinea almost caused a riot and caused the minister his post (Ntonfo 1994, 63). The minister who was accused of attempting to destabilize state institutions was diabolized and presented as an individual seeking the destruction of Cameroon`s football. People organized protest marches to denounce what they saw as a move to sabotage the “sport roi”. All these actions forced the then head of state Ahmadou Ahidjo to revoke the decision of the minister and later on sack him. Although the president was himself a very committed proponent of national unity he had to take a decision against his own principles just to satisfy his people who seemed to like their football ethnicized just as it was.

With the commercial importance of football today, it is not surprising any more see a player from the Christian South playing in the Muslim North or an Anglophone playing in a Francophone team, where the highest bidder draws the player. Even between traditional opposing tribes like the Beti and the Bamileke, players are being traded. Less people question the identity of the players in the national team and there have been many occasions where about two or three ethnic groups dominate the team without public attention. It is unclear what has triggered such a change, but at least one could say without much fear of being mistaken that the current government has done very little if any to help that happen. If we buy the arguments of some observers of the Cameroonian society (C. C. Fonchingong, 2005; 364) who claims that dividing the people so as to control it is part of the government`s agenda, we could even suppose that an ethnicized football was and is in the advantage of the leaders. Football is actually so high on the government`s agenda that it would be difficult to understand Cameroonian football without having some knowledge of Cameroonian politics.

### **2.3. Politics and Football in the Cameroonian Context**

Cameroon which Gros (2006, 20) calls Africa's crossroad is famous not only for its ethnic diversity, its multifaceted geography, its complex colonial past but also for its politics. While many African countries including all Cameroon's neighbours have plunged at one point or another into bloody war, the country succeeded to remain relatively peaceful. It has also maintained a somehow viable economy that has contributed to help it from falling into the type of humanitarian crisis that other countries have known. This has helped cast a veil on the political failure of its leaders. It is a country called democratic but where all the power is concentrated into one man's hands. Gros (ibid) considers it to be the most effectively centralized state in Africa. Embezzlement, mismanagement of resources and other forms of malgovernance have become commonplace in the Cameroonian society. After scoring twice in 1998 and 1999 respectively according to Transparency International as the most corrupt nation in the world, the government took some timid decisions which despite having produced a couple of spectacular results has failed to tackle the corruption issue. Tired of seeing their resources squandered and their economic resources used by a few elites to build themselves heavy accounts in foreign banks the people lost all confidence in the government.

In the early 90s when the wind of democratization blew on many African countries Cameroonians saw in it the ultimate means to get rid of the government in a democratic process. But after 18 years of 'democracy' marked by massive fraud, rigged and flawed elections, constitutional modification to allow an eternal reign for the head of state, the resignation of the Cameroonian people is total. They can contemplate changes happening elsewhere while hoping only for a miracle in order for change to take place at home. At the point where most Cameroonians felt that everything was going wrong in their country, the football national team was faring quite well. This maybe explains why the football team has occupied such a predominant place in Cameroonian's life. It might have stood not only as a unique source of pride but also as an outlet helping to cope with the vicissitudes of life.

Football as any other activity in Cameroon today was meant to go bad. It has suffered from all sorts of negligence from the government and paradoxically the same government has always been keen to claim the national team's victories as its own. On the other hand the government exploits the people's infatuation with the sport and the national team to political ends. Marx's conception of religion as the opium of the people could make a lot of sense here as football tends to be some kind of religion. People loose their interest in the way the state is run and while they are busy supporting their national team the government passes laws that are going to affect their daily life. Football

achievements can therefore be seen in the Cameroonian context as both a blessing and a curse, if it is proven that it stops a majority from focusing on the way state affairs are run.

## **2.4. FIFA: The World Football Ruling Body**

### **2.4.1. Identity and Objectives**

The abbreviation, FIFA that stands for the Federation International de Football Association (International Federation of Football Association) represents the World Football Governing Body. As a powerful international organization, FIFA enjoys political and economic powers and has a somehow special status in comparison to other international organizations. FIFA is indeed one of the international organizations with the highest numbers of affiliated members. With 208 members as at the present, FIFA has more members than the United Nations (UN). In comparison with the UN, for instance, FIFA is an INGO (International Non-Governmental Organization), having global remit but not being accountable to any particular national government(s). (Sudgen & Tomlinson 1998, 5) In other words, although FIFA gets contribution from various national federations and companies, its authority is not derived from any nation. By comparison, an organization such as the UN has influential members whose interest matter in any decision while the poorest ones have somehow limited powers. FIFA is one of the oldest international organizations. It was established in 1904 with just seven members, all of which were Europeans. FIFA already had up to 200 members by 2004 when it was celebrating its centenary.

The world football governing body heads six regional confederations representing six geographic entities. These include the UEFA for Europe, CONMEBOL for Latin America, CAF for Africa, AFC for Asia, OFC for Oceania and CONCACAF for Central and North America. (ibid, 6) All six confederations control national football federations and are accountable only to the world governing body. This portrays the independence of international football, vis-à-vis national governments since national federations, despite working closely with their respective governments, are not legally bound to the latter by any means.

FIFA as an organization was charged with the task of administering professional football world-wide. It also undertook to achieve a massive, global expansion in the popularity of the football sport and its immediate objective was to identify and implement appropriate methods to manage this expansion. FIFA was also intended as maintain an organization that would provide equal rights and equal opportunities to its members. Thus in contrast to the UN, which has special members with different status, like the five permanent members of the Security Council, FIFA has no special

members. Regardless of their political, economic and military size, all the members in theory have equal rights and equal responsibilities in the organization. The United States for instance has the same voting right as Somalia or Palestine. (Darby 2002, 6) However, that equality among affiliated members has been perceived by some critics as being only apparent. They point in that respect to numerous cases where they allegedly perceived western domination in decisions making to back those claims. Due to its tremendous powers and previous achievements in football, Europe has primarily been the target of those critics who then talked of Eurocentricism.

FIFA is without contest one of the most powerful organizations in the world today. It is powerful in terms of finances as the global football industry is a business which has grown to be worth over \$250 billion per year. FIFA also enjoys political powers as the head of the most popular sport in the world. Football is the single most global and most famous sport on the planet and its influence is exerted beyond the arenas where the matches take place. FIFA therefore has the power to influence the lives of billions of people on this planet through football. It has the ability to impose its decisions on national governments without having in return to abide by the rules of any nation. This simply means that the man/men in control of that organization are wielding a huge amount of power. It is with no doubt the primary reason that has fuelled alleged Eurocentric attitudes. In the 108 years of its history FIFA has had eight different presidents, all of European nationality with the exception of Brazilian born Joao Havelange who presided over football's destiny between 1974 and 1998 (Darby 2002, 16).

The apparent membership equality between FIFA members also allegedly hides some dark areas of power imbalance in the FIFA family. The most striking is the number of participants allocated to each confederation when it comes to international competitions like the Football World Cup. This is an area where Europe gets the "lion's share" with 14 participants (out of 32 national teams) while the other five confederations share the remaining 18 places left. In reaction to questions on the criteria used to arrive at the final allocation of teams to different confederations, European proponents of this attribution system hold that it is for the betterment and competitiveness of the game as football is more developed on the European continent than anywhere else on the planet. This is surely without taking into account that football quality is improving all around the world, that European Championships are steaming with players originally from 'inferior confederations', that European teams are having nowadays a hard time defeating teams from less developed countries. Cameroon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Morocco have all at least on one occasion defeated European teams in international competitions.

In addition, numerical advantage at the start of the competition gives more chances for European teams to be found in the last four or the last two. In a statement backing the idea of European grip over the sport, Darby (2002, 49) asserts: “the European associations firmly believed that their position within FIFA should reflect the key role they had played in the establishment and development of the football world body and that at the start, almost 80 % of the world’s football organized activity was based in Europe.” Another area of contention to be added to the previous points is that of the selection of the World Cup host. This is an important and very coveted opportunity due to its economic implications and the publicity that host nations get from the rest of the world. Hosting the competition, Sudgen & Tomlinson (1998, 100) argue, ‘delivers a rationale for revitalizing the communication and civic infrastructures of primary sites and locations, provide a forum for the articulation and celebration of national pride generates huge profits...the bidding process has developed into an expensive, ruthless and many would say unethical contest between national delegations’ .Here again Europe gets the biggest share with 10 hosting occasions out of 19. Advocates of such decisions advance political, economic, security and infrastructural reasons to justify the dominance of Europe as the most common host of the Football World Cup. Referring to the situation at FIFA in the 50s, Darby (2002, 46) argues that “rather than suffer any dilution of its traditional position, Europe began to examine ways in which it could protect its position within world football”. This projection of Eurocentricism was itself already preceded by acts from British leaders, attempting to control the game that they created. This is colorfully expressed in the following statement from the British International Board: “Britain invented the game, gave it to the world and was going to damn well control it”. (Sudgen & Tomlinson 1998, 10)

It is obvious that some developing countries are simply unable to handle the whole process required for the organization of an event such as the World Cup, but other countries fulfilling all the requirements might never have the opportunity to organize the competition if the world’s developed countries are still given all the opportunities. Today there are no doubts about the multiple economic and even political outcomes which accompany the World cup event. These have made the voting of the host country as well as the voting for the FIFA president very controversial issues, generally surrounded by rumors of outward corruption as it was the case during the re-election of the current FIFA president Sepp Blatter and during the allocation of the 2002 FIFA World cup host. (Le Monde, December 2002 quoted by Boniface)

#### **2.4.2. The “Global” and “Local” in Football**

Even if it could be possible to get a single definition to globalization, its significance would be



different when you go from the developed countries of the West to the developing countries of the South. In the expression “the world is now a planetary village” which has generally been associated with globalization, developing countries’ portion in that global village seems to be negligible. The flow of information, of knowledge, of wealth, of influences... is still massively going in one direction. Most African countries are still perceived by some outsiders as plunged in the darkness of pre-history as many people outside Africa would not be able to point them out on the map, would either not know about their existence or would altogether consider Africa to be a single country.

The magic with football lies in the fact that due to its extreme popularity and the media coverage of competitions like the Football World Cup, a poor remote and not well known country can easily hit the headlines. The stakes are for those reasons, very high for developing countries taking part in such international competitions. Having a national football team in such a globalized world therefore appears to be as important as having an army or diplomatic missions around the world. To reinforce that idea, Boniface (2006, 47) suggests that alongside the traditional criteria used to define a nation state notably: a territory, a population and a government, a football national team could be added.

This places many developing countries under another chain of dependence as they desperately need FIFA for their international exposure as much as they need other international organizations for all sorts of financial and political aid. FIFA’s authority which it has exerted on various occasions when it summoned some countries to abide by its ruling is partly derived from the importance it carries for every nation. Even nations who traditionally are reluctant to respect UN resolutions tend to cooperate more easily when faced with the prospect of a ban from FIFA organized competitions. The Cameroonian government for instance which political leaders accused of not having a great reputation when it comes to abiding by the rule of law has in every case complied very swiftly with FIFA recommendations.

### **2.4.3. National Football Teams and the World Cup**

There are very few social gathering points like football. Almost everywhere around the world, people congregate around football, either interpersonally, at the game itself, at related events or intellectually as they debate about football-related issues. They also do so through the media and other forms of popular media to make strong public declarations about who they are, what group they identify with, who they stand for and who and what they stand against. Every single club has a fan base and the development of more communication media means that interactions beyond the football field are profoundly enhanced. The World Football Cup is the excellent occasion where

people of all backgrounds congregate, where passionate and rooted feelings of national pride or shame are steered, where the rich and the poor have the occasion to measure their determination to defend national colors.

The congregation of people is intensified by the television which Boniface argues, “makes of the planet a big stadium where everyone can find their seat” (Boniface, 2006; 23). Held once every four years, the FIFA World Cup is one of the most famous sporting events on the planet, second only to the Olympic Games. It includes 32 national teams from all around the world belonging to the six confederations. During the competition that lasts about a month, the different teams put up their rivalry to see who would be crowned the World Football Champion.

The World Cup is not just about the sporting activity involving the twenty two actors playing in the stadium. It is also and mostly about all the symbolisms surrounding the event and the social impact it has on the planet, even in the least expected places. One of the most thrilling moments in the world cup event is the lifting of the national flag which goes simultaneously with national anthems being sung, when a whole nation is in one accord, having their unique moment in the eyes of the world. This is one of the moments when the idea of nation gets its full meaning for a whole lot of people. It is a unique moment that no country would like to be deprived of. If the *Football War* that opposed Honduras and Salvador in 1969 was seen by distant observers as another petty war opposing two developing nations, most scholars who studied the context, including Kapuskinski and Boniface, explained that such a situation was predictable, given that the match was directly qualifying for the world cup that was to take place in neighboring Mexico the following year. The world cup has the particularity to situate a country on the world map. Some nation-states which for most world citizens were non-existing can achieve the challenge of being known by more people during the short month that the competition lasts,.

Gone are those days where military confrontation was the ultimate means to establish hierarchy between nations. Economy is being progressively established as the measurement standard nowadays and after a close observation of the last Olympic Games where there was an open leadership competition between China and the USA, it is clear that sport performances contribute in building a nation's status on the international scene. As a matter of fact, Winstanley underlines the importance of the notion that sporting victories and losses are seen as symbolic of the health of a nation. This importance, she argues stems from the idea that in international relation as well as in question of nationalism and identity, perception matters, and sport is a conduit for the way these variables are manifested in the international political realm ( Winstanley, 2009;10). There is a

similarity when we talk about different countries' performances at FIFA world cup. The general perception is that a nation that wins on the pitch is stronger than or at least as strong as the other great nations and its citizens just feel that they are stronger and more important on the international scene. This is not to say for instance that the Iranian national team's victory over the USA in 1998 overturned American economic and military superiority, but it at least gave Iranian the certainty that the USA was not invincible. They spent a couple of nights with the illusion that they had defeated the strongest nation of the planet.

According to N Robert Elias (quoted by Boniface 2006, 47) "sport is a dominant foyer for collective identification, probably because opposition is one of its inherent features. Two teams oppose each other for victory. They engage in group identification process both on a positive level (us) and on a negative level (them)." In other words, the non-identification with our opponents which justifies the confrontation helps strengthen the identification to other members of the group to which we belong. A win against another nation, particularly when it would be the case against a traditional enemy like the USA, for Iran serves the purpose of strengthening Iranian identity amongst their citizens.

Football through its World Cup is thus not just a tool for international recognition or international exposition for the nations involved. It can also be a useful tool for nations facing secessionist or separatist movements as the success gives the occasion to celebrate national unity. In vast and diversified countries like Brazil, the national team plays the role of cement, holding the people together. Boniface (2006, 49) says for instance that marginalized people living in poor neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro feel during the competition that they are part of this great nation which on ordinary days seems to belong to those living in the rich neighborhoods. After the South Korean qualification for the world cup 2002 semi-final against Spain, news papers reported an incident that took place at the generally very tensed border between the North and the South, where soldiers from the North rejoiced with those from the South and extended their congratulation to them (ibid,61). During the same competition CNN (Cable News) Network reported events that took place in Kurdish towns after Turkey's qualification for the semifinals. Aware of the problematic Kurdish situation in that nation, Observers took notice of Kurds' expression of joy when Turkey scored, and of scenes of desolation and mourning when Turkey lost, even though there was no Kurdish player in the team. In this case, football thus offered them the opportunity to express a feeling of national belonging that they generally repress because of the political situation in the country.

Just as the World Cup can be occasions for the different components of a multicultural society to

celebrate the nation common to all of them; it can also provide a platform for the inclusion of some minority groups in the nation building process. In most nation states, some minority groups are indeed excluded or neglected due to their ethnic background and all the stereotypes and labels that are attached to them. That has been the case for Arabs and Blacks in some European countries like France. The high representation of players from ethnic minorities in the national team in France for that matter gives a unique opportunity for citizens from ethnic minorities to identify with the nation in which they live. In France for instance, the ascension of players such as Zinedine Zidane and other descendants of migrants to the status of national idols has reinforced the national sentiment of other descendants of migrants.

## **Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework**

When it comes to understanding and using sociological concepts, ordinary people even amongst the most educated might be less informed about their meaning. Caught up between ignorance, political correctness or contextual constraint, they might misuse such concepts in a manner which compels any academic paper to bring some clarifications so as to avoid ambiguity. My intention therefore in this chapter is to present the meaning behind some recurrent concepts that appear in my study and which are central to its understanding. Those concepts are closely related to the research question that guided the research. I however do not intend to go in to any full examination of those concepts but instead give the perspective from which they are to be approached in the Cameroonian context in relation to football. There are concepts such as nationalism, ethnicity, tribalism, identity which is widely used in other scholarly works and which offer various perspectives according to particular context. My intention here is to make use of the approaches that are the closest to my study and can therefore help provide a better understanding of it.

### **3.1. *Ethnicity***

During one of my visits to the Tampere city library in Finland, something drew my attention concerning the label given to the different types of music available. There is a category of music labelled as ethnic although it is made up of music from different genres, rhythms and origins. Although it is difficult to tell how those types of music qualified to be categorized as ethnic, one could clearly see that they were not mainstream music. It is of course not only in that music department of the library that one can hear about ethnicity or ethnic related issues. Newspapers and TV programs seem to be full of it. Media reporters around the globe are generally very keen to term, the conflicts and events that they cover as being ethnic, as opposing people from different ethnic groups, even though they do not attempt to tell us what is ethnic in them. For numerous media consumers, the question as to ‘what is ethnic’ does not even come to mind. What really is ethnic and how are we supposed to understand the concept of ethnicity?

In the everyday understanding at least, ethnicity includes the idea of otherness, mainly the other who is considered inferior to the dominant group (Eriksen, 1993; 4). The dominant group which is in a position of force and therefore can define the other and ascribe them a certain identity is seen as non ethnic and its culture and belief universal. That has generally been the case with the West and the rest of the population of the planet. However, ethnicity does not always have to be mentioned only when there is as much difference as it exists between the West and other ‘non-civilized’ cultures. From a social anthropological perspective, ethnicity “refers to aspects of relationship

between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive (ibid). Still amongst anthropologist, there are different approaches to the concept of ethnicity. Although they agree on it as having to do with the *classification of people and group relationships*, the term may serve different analytical purposes (ibid).

There has indeed been a change both in the perception given to 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic', and in their recurrence in scholarly works. On the one hand the 'small scale societies' that had constituted the object of study in classical social anthropology have become part of nation-states which has automatically meant that there would be a relation between what is national and what is ethnic. On the other hand, migration has created numerous minority groups both in Western countries and in major cities of developing countries triggering massive studies on ethnic related issues. This chapter examines the issue from a purely social anthropological perspective and from an approach that is applicable to the Cameroonian context.

It is often common to come across documents which use tribes and ethnic groups interchangeably. Eriksen however notes that, there has been a shift in the use of those terminologies amongst Anglophone scholars for two particular reasons. First, the use of ethnic group instead of tribe suggested an interaction between the groups involved while tribe could signify a group in isolation. Also, the use of ethnic group helps anthropologists to distance themselves from claims of Eurocentric biases which place others as primitive beings. In the Cameroonian context at least there do not seem to be a difference between what is ethnic and what is tribal. For linguistic reasons, the expression 'groupe ethnique' and the word tribalism are more commonly used than tribes and ethnicity. Indeed the word tribalism which denotes a strong feeling of identity with and loyalty to one's tribe or group is more common and it tends to refer exclusively to ethnic discrimination. However when it comes to ethnicity, its French equivalence is seldomly used. Since the concept of identity seems to be important in the definition of ethnicity, Eriksen (p. 60) asserts that identity in Social anthropology be made clear in relation to social identity and not the depths of an individual's mind.

As I noted earlier, ethnicity in the Cameroonian context is to be seen with some particularities. Historical documents do not say much about what the idea of ethnicity represented before the colonial period but it surely tells that the territory was divided into various kingdoms and chiefdoms. Official documents numbers between 200 and 279 ethnic groups in the country. The terms 'over', 'about', 'more than' used by various scholars to give a quantitative estimate of the ethnic groups shows just enough how difficult it is to determine what an ethnic group represent in

that context and how different it is from the neighboring groups. In a context where there is as much similarities between the groups as there are differences, the basic factors used to set a demarcation between groups has been phonotypical as between a northerner and a southerner, and linguistic in the vast majority of other cases. But in the context of a nation where individuals will hardly ever come to know personally all the other members of the community, another factor is also taken into consideration. The last name of every individual gives considerable information to others about their geographical origin or in what group they should be placed. Erikson's approach to the concept emphasizes distinctiveness and interaction amongst group in relation to ethnicity. Still, one could wonder what amount of differences is necessary to fulfill the requirement. If linguistic differences were enough, we would conclude that the number of ethnic groups in Cameroon is equal to the number of local languages enumerated, but no scholar has ever taken that step. It may not be about the number of ethnic groups but the type of relation.

Irrespective of the ambiguity in the definition of ethnicity in the Cameroonian context, there are groups which regard themselves as ethnically distinct and relate to each other accordingly. The Bami /Beti case is the most striking illustration. These bigger ethnic groups are themselves ethnic container within which one can count dozens of other groups which claim their own singularity. The questions on the demarcation between the groups remain unsolved. Eriksen (p. 36) insists that ethnic groups should not be confused with cultural groups even though a shared culture constitutes a strong basis for ethnic identity. This is furthermore important in the Cameroonian context where some cultural identities might have been lost as a result of colonialism or as a plan from the successive governments to maintain a better control. The mechanisms through which ethnic boundaries are maintained, crossed or erased as a result of integration between different ethnic groups to form a nation may not be well understood and probably will remain difficult to decode. However, considering Osaghaes definition of ethnicity as “ a derivative of the ethnic group marked by objective diacritics such as language, culture, territory and political organization... with a clear “ us” and “them” differentiation ”, it is clear that the aforementioned diacritics help maintain the demarcation line between ethnic groups.

### **3.2. Patriotism**

Patriotism and nationalism are concepts which sometimes seem to be synonymous or are interchangeably used due to the fact that they represent two facets of the same reality. However, according to the context in which they are used and the fact that they would be either ideological or practical, it is possible to distinguish between them. In the 'Football War' describing the open

conflict between El Salvador and the Honduras, Kapuscinski (1990, 177) makes mentions of an incident that took place in a Mexican prison following Mexico's victory over Belgium in a football encounter. Augusto Mariaga the director of a prison for life-sentenced criminals started running in all the directions, full of joy and shoot in the air with his pistol shouting: "VIVA MEXICO". He then opened the cells setting free one hundred and forty-two dangerous criminals. The tribunal as per the verdict acquitted him "because he had acted as a result of a patriotic burst".

This incident does not help us define what patriotism is but it gives us an idea of the expression it can take. Although the expression of patriotism in the previous account might at first sight suggests a negative attitude towards the nation, patriotism is generally used to denote positive or supportive attitudes by individuals and groups of individuals towards the fatherland. A closer examination of the incident involving the prison director would reveal that he acted out of pride for the nation. Patriotism therefore goes along with attitudes such as one's pride for the nation, pride in its institutions and culture, its achievements-as it is the case of the director-, a desire to defend its territorial integrity and to promote and uplift its values. According to Anderson (1991, 141) the driving force behind patriotism is rooted in the fact "that nations inspire love, and often self-sacrificing love". The character of that love, he adds, is even strengthened by the naturalness of the ties we have with our nations (p. 144). As a matter of fact, if we can choose to join an organization or a political party, we can also choose to leave it as we please, whereas the nation we are part of seems to be attached to our very essence as individuals. Anderson further likens it to issues like skin color, gender, parentage and other things we cannot help but live with.

In ordinary life the expression of patriotism is not as vivid as it could be in time of trouble when the country's existence is at stake. Being a patriot in those moments of peace is summarized in simple acts like: the respect or the display of the flag, singing the national anthem the commemoration of the country's official celebrations, the respect of institutions or just simply doing one's citizen duty. This level of patriotism could be found in the expression of the late US president J. F Kennedy who in his inaugural address to the American people in January 1961 declared: "Don't ask what your country can do for you but ask what you can do for your country". This was a clear statement intended at encouraging Americans to have enough love for their country and the values attached to it, even before their own preoccupations.

But patriotism as we have seen just does not limit itself to this level of civilities, regardless of their number. As a matter of fact some scholars' conception of patriotism is so high that one should start talking of patriotism only when there is an act of the patriot putting their life at stake in order to



protect their beloved nation. Following this understanding of patriotism, a person or nation's level of patriotism could be better measured only when the nation is at war with another or subject of any form of external aggression. This form of patriotism involves not just acts of promoting one's country's values but most importantly the willingness to sacrifice one's life to defend the fatherland. Patriotism may be generally attributed to the attitude of soldiers who decide to put their lives at stake while fighting against an aggressor in order to defend their country and its citizens. In these modern times where the different international organizations and different treaties allow limiting conflicts, international sport competitions are the best theatres for the projection of patriotisms. If I have mentioned in the previous chapter, the World Football Cup as an event that offered national teams the opportunities for international exposure, I can at this point add that the possibility it offers to players to show how much they are willing to sacrifice for the nation. For if the simple idea of patriotism in certain countries easily call reference to oppressive and martial past as in the case of Japan and Germany in the two Wars (Boniface 2006, 63), or to hooliganism and football violence as in the case of England (Abell et al, 2007; 98), Constant and Bouchard (1998) argue that football is one of the remaining sphere where it is acceptable to openly display patriotic sentiments.

Football indeed offers the possibility to project all the expressions that are linked to patriotic sentiments. It is notable indeed that during international encounters, we have the possibility to sing our national anthem not just for us but for the world, we lift our flag high not just in our own land but also in foreign lands and in front of the whole world through international media. The regularity of international football competitions and the presence in football jargon and ceremonies of martial-like expressions such as 'defend the honor', 'defend the flag' , 'pierce the defense', 'attack the adversary', 'dominate the adversary' give football the ability to capture effectively the notion of national sentiments, say, Britishness or Irishness better than some other sports. In that respect, Duke and Crolley (1996, 4) emphasize how football perfectly "captures the notion of an imagined community". It is much easier they argue, to imagine the nation and confirm national identity, when eleven people are representing the nation in a match against another nation.

### **3.3. Nationalism**

If most scholars avoid having to make the difference between patriotism and nationalism with some switching from of the terms to the other without notice, it is still important to note that others actually mark the demarcation line between them. If patriotism as we have seen in the first part of this chapter seems to tell more about an attitude and actions taken to express that attitude, Appadurai (1999, 160) underlines the fact that patriotism is 'an unstable sentiment, which thrives

only at the level of the nation-state. Below that level it is supplanted by more intimate loyalties; above that level it gives way to empty slogans rarely backed by the will to sacrifice or kill.' We can understand through this statement that although scholars sometimes seem to describe the same reality, nationalism is a bigger container than patriotism which is limited at the level of the nation-state. One simple example of this is the notion of Arab nationalism which carries more than the idea of a nation such as Egypt or, say, Jordan. Appadurai still attributes the 'willingness to die for one's country' more to nationalism than to patriotism. Esman (1994, 28) defines nationalism as "the ideology that proclaims the distinctiveness of a particular people and their right to self-rule in their homeland". This is to say that nationalism urges people to glorify their history, accomplishment and aspirations while urging them to observe loyalty to the community, its institutions, symbols. It also acts as warning against external treats.

If the idea we have of football is generally far from that of people dying and shedding blood for the sake of the nation they belong to, or that they want to establish, it is in many respect related to nationalism. This is referred to in Boniface (2006, 47) as 'the champion of national ideas'. According to him, football provides grounds to mobilize and demonstrate collective identity. It enhances the expression of local, religious or social antagonisms and to affirm one's group in relation to others (ibid). The term hereby expresses not just a simple, ordinary football encounter between two neighboring teams but the oppositions that characterize social life around the two teams. It is the case of the Rangers and Celtic in Scotland where the Protestant / Catholic divide find its best means of expression through football encounters which have the reputation of turning in most cases into violent conflicts between fans of the two clubs (Foer, 2005; 35). Similar cases can be found in Turkey where the opposition Fenerbahce/ Galatasaray, two teams of Istanbul convey all the identity differences of fans of the two clubs. The same situation could be observed in Cameroon where as Ntonfo (1994) notes; football encounters between *Racing of Bafoussam* and *Tonnere of Yaounde* have always been a clear representation of ethnic tensions between the Bamileke ethnic group and the Beti ethnic group.

However, if it is clear that local antagonisms between football clubs contribute to forging a certain group identity and thus differentiating neighboring groups, Boniface notes that there have been clear cases where football contributed to forging a stronger identity at the national level. Thus, if globalization and the formation of stronger blocks like the European Union ( EU) seem to give the impression that national identities are being neglected or undermined to the benefit of larger groups' identities, sport in general and football in particular appear to remind people of how different they

are from those they associate with. As Hobsbawm (1990, 143) indicates: ' what makes sport a unique means to inculcate national sentiment, is the ease with which individuals, even amongst the least politicized can identify with the nation, epitomized in these young men and women excelling in what basically everyone want or has wanted at one point in time: be gifted in.' By identifying with the sprinters on the track, with the eleven players in a football field or the 15 players on the rugby stadium, individuals or group of individuals therefore more easily establish a bond with those who share the territory, the language, the religion and the culture they have in common.

As seen in the previous chapter, there is a set of conditions for a group of people obtaining membership status with the International Federation of Football Associations, and those are highly related to the potential the sport has in fostering nationalistic sentiments. In that respect, Darby (1998,9) argues that: 'other than being admitted as a member of the United Nations, membership of FIFA is a clear signal that a country's status as a nation state has been recognized by the international community'. In other words granting a country membership with FIFA is synonymous to telling the country: "we recognize you as a sovereign independent state". This is one of the reasons why FIFA claims that 'when adjudicating the sovereign status of new membership applicants it is guided by decisions already taken by the United Nations in order to avoid being seen as an organization encouraging nationalistic and secessionist movements' (ibid).

In cases of contentions between 'countries' or other entities seeking independence or some sort of autonomy from another (such as the case for Occidental Sahara from Morocco or Kosovo from Serbia or else Canary Island from Spain), the obtainment of FIFA membership giving them the right to organize and take part in international competition would be a sign encouraging the fight for independence and football could thus be clearly seen as a rostrum for nationalistic developments. Darby (ibid) again notes the cases of Palestine and Bosnia-Herzegovina, two countries which were given provisional membership of FIFA before their official status as nation states had been formally recognized by the United Nations. The whole process seemed as if FIFA, having acknowledged the unanimous desire of the international community, decided to lend a helping hand to these countries in their national struggle. The evidence is thus convincing that in those cases, the formation of a football federation is not just a consequence of the formation of a new nation but that football can be very significant in the awakening and communication of ideas of nationalism. Football can therefore be related to the issue of nationalism in many aspects. It appears as one of the most important tools of national identification both within the nation and without.

As mentioned earlier, in the process of formation of groups with common interests like the

European Union where economic, territorial, cultural and institutional borders are being erased, football stands as one of the last bastions for the resistance to a common identity. Old rivalries between nations are carefully maintained and acted upon in the football arenas. Thus if we take the case of France and Germany who have opposed each other in numerous conflicts in the past and who are today working for the same goals within the EU, when it comes to football confrontations the people are reminded that they are different nations with separate identities. Boniface (2006,59) subscribes to that and underlines the fact that during international competitions like the World Cup, French supporters stand in their majority for Brazil if the encounter was to oppose Brazil to Germany and that German supporters would surely do the same.

In less compact groups like the kingdom of Great Britain formed by the four nations that are England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, a somehow similar situation could be observed. Is it not a strange situation that the kingdom of Great Britain is affiliated with the International Olympic committee as a single nation whereas the four components of the Kingdom are affiliated with FIFA as individual nations? The simple reason behind this dislocation of the British block when it comes to football competition lies behind the potential football carries in preserving and expressing national sentiments. Any attempt by the British government to merge the different national teams into a more efficient one including all the best players from the four British Islands has been a failure. As a matter of fact, neither the Scots, nor the Irish, let aside the English are willing to give up on their national team, although it might mean losing against bigger teams like Germany or Brazil. When the then British interior minister Jack Straw suggested in December 2000, the merging of the four British football team into a single national team, the reaction was almost unanimously that of consternation. Boniface quoted the famous British daily newspaper, *The Guardian*, as writing that, ' Such an absurd suggestion could come only from a person who had lost their reasoning capacity and who had spent half of their life on planet Saturn or the Amazonian forest'. This testifies of the attachment each of those groups have in their representative national football team, as if it would more than just an ordinary sport like other disciplines.

In the case of small sovereign nations whose independence is declared but remains under threats by other nations, the affirmation of the national identity through football is a very serious asset that they can use for their benefit. With the international exposure that football offers, taking part in a top football competition is as valued as being given the possibility to speak for one's nation at the UN's parliament. It does not just let the world know that you exist as a nation but it also emphasizes the fact that they have to 'count you in'. For small size countries like Uruguay lost between its two

giant neighbors Argentina and Brazil or Kuwait that Iraq once saw and probably still sees as just a strayed province of his, the expression of national sovereignty through football is just a way to remind others of one's uniqueness and individuality as a nation-state on the international scene. Thus for Uruguay, a small nation who obtained independence to the disadvantage of Argentina, organizing and winning the first football World Cup ever in 1930 was a strong signal to the neighboring Argentina whose citizens according to Boniface (2006, 59) still saw in Uruguay as an appendix of their own nation.

For other territorial entities seeking independence or some form of autonomy from another nation-state, the fight for establishment of the nation can be enhanced by football. For the same reasons mentioned earlier, namely international exposure and possibility of the people to see themselves through the performances of the same team, many of the today established nation-states in their decolonization process had placed the formation of a national team and its activities along side with the military fight for independence and negotiations at the United Nations. A striking case was that of the team of the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria which played about 91 matches between 1958 and 1961 along side the military conflict that was opposing its guerrilla to the French national army. Football in those cases served as a more moderate branch of the bloody fight, serving the purpose of showing the world that behind those images of men and women fighting for independence and presented on Western Media as mere terrorists, were human beings, aspiring just to live their lives the way they wanted to.

In a case as that of Algeria where a portion of the population were opposed to the nationalistic movement due to the privileges they were getting from the French, the football matches during which the flag of a nation they were aspiring to was lifted, participated in federating a much larger portion of the population and to muster a hunger from a number of fighters for the struggle.

In multicultural nation states, certain communities regardless of their size, their level of integration in the larger nation-state and their autonomy level, might be tempted to use 'the game' in order to preserve their identity that they value enough to risk having it melted in the larger community. Football in such cases serves to promote a soft nationalism and the establishment of a virtual or somehow symbolic state. The attempt by territories like Greenland, Faroe Islands, Lapland, Spanish territories like Canary Islands, Catalan and also the British territory of Gibraltar; to affiliate their representative football teams with FIFA and the UEFA testifies of the attachment these people have for what they would call a nation of their own (Boniface 2006, 57-59). This is the situation where Weber's definition of a nation as earlier seen fits. It requires a distinction between the state and the

nation. Could we say for instance that the Danish nation and the Finish nation are identical to their respective 'nation-states'? Do the Same people of Lapland or the Faroese of Faroe Islands feel totally part of the nation attached to their respective 'nation-states'? In a study of the Francophone / English-speaking case in Canada, Esman (p. 151) argues that although political solution can help reduce the differences between different communities in a state, it cannot totally annihilate the desire to have one's own nation. Thus, language, past heroes and other cultural differences might justify the sense of nationalism felt by these small communities who attempt to affirm themselves with football through the FIFA.

Many former colonies in this post-colonial era, mainly on the African continent, after fighting and obtaining their 'independence from their former colonial masters are today faced with the challenge of making of the colonial legacies nation-states with clear national identities.

For most of the today's African nations, the borders were drawn up arbitrarily by European powers during the age of imperialism. According to Thomas (2004, 79) national boundaries were cut through the middle of some tribes with part of them in two or more countries. This act lead to some tribes which had an already conflicting past, marked with hatred to be forced to share the same entity called country and for which they had to sacrifice some of their ways and customs. It is therefore obvious that the colonial legacy that in most cases was left in the hands of African leaders had a long way to go in order to become nations with a common, well defined and shared national identity. The multiple conflicts that has marked and is still marking the African continent today is a testimony of the failure of most African states to form strong nation-states. While it appears that elsewhere and more precisely on the European continent where it was invented, football is believed to have played and to be playing a role in nationalist movements, the African continent has not totally been neutral to it effects. Most scholars of African studies including Boahen (1990, 35) generally underlines the fundamental role of youth association, political parties, ethnic associations, trade unions, literary clubs and various religious associations in resisting and protesting against colonialism. Darby (2002, 27) argues that: 'although largely neglected in writings on African resistance, football also came to represent a focal point for expression of national solidarity and political protest against European rule'. Despite being a product of imperialism and colonization, it is thought to have played a key role in the decolonization process of the continent and some scholars still place in it high hope in African countries' march on the path of effective nationalism. That nationalism went along side or was for many synonymous to resistance to the colonial master.

The explanation to the above role played by football lied according to Darby in three simple facts:

Football represented one of the few meaningful instruments over which Africans could realistically secure ownership. With other organizations being proscribed or going under control, football then became the ideal medium for challenging the colonial status quo; the game was at the same time entertaining, mobilizing and lacked expenses in its achievement (ibid). Considering that many of those African countries obtained just a facade form of independence, also the constant enmity between major ethnic groups forming those nations, nationalism still remains highly relevant in the African context. This buttresses Landy's conception of nationalism that include a sense of destiny, and a set of definite goals towards which the efforts of the society are directed (David Landy, 1958; 251). In the absence of common objects of identification, in the absence of a common language or a common system of beliefs, with flawed political systems that have no other impact than widening the divide in the population, football still has a role to play and can in the case of certain countries stand as the prism through which the population learn to see that their differences do not matter as much as they have been thought to think.

### **3.4. Identity / National Identity**

Identity as a concept is a very vague term which cannot be easily defined. From the layman's understanding, identity would be about the essence of an object, an individual or a group of individuals. It would be about who or what the person, object or group of people are in relation to other who are different from them. In social sciences and in the case of my study, it is however about identities based on ethnicity. Ethnic identity is according to Esman a "set of meaning that individuals impute to their membership in an ethnic community, including those attributes that bind them to that collectivity and that distinguish it from other in their relevant environment." Identity in the context of my study goes simultaneously with the concept of national identity as the study deals with individuals and groups of individual pursuing a goal of building a common sense of togetherness. Many scholars including Anthony D. Smith and Benedict Anderson have extensively studied the question of national identity in relation to ethnic identity. Although their views are similar on certain points, they approach the issues of national identity from different perspectives.

While making a clear distinction between national identity and nationalism which he sees primarily as a political movement, Smith's understanding of national identity is that which involves both cultural ideas (such as ideas on common ancestry and common history) and cultural symbols ( such as monuments, poetry and architecture). Smith's perspective which involves common ancestry however implies a sort of homogeneity in the ethnic composition of the nation-state with possibly, a unique ethnic group. This suggests that the nation has always been and that any form of nationalism

intended at forming a national identity would consist just in awakening what has always existed but at one point in time become dormant. Smith's perspective might prove incomplete or irrelevant when we refer to African countries and other products of colonialism. Ethnic and cultural identities was neglected in the interests of the colonial masters, with the consequence that people who belonged in the same groupings were divided. On the African continent for instance there are few if any countries where the population would boast on sharing common ancestry or being all from the same ethnic group.

On his side, Anderson has a more inclusive conception of what national identity should stand for. He conceives the nation-state as a form of 'imagine communities'. This is not to say that the nation-state would be some sort of 'fabricated' or 'invented' entity but rather "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion." This perspective goes close to that of Habermas' position who makes a related argument by saying that: "modern nationalism involves communities of citizens in the territorially defined nation-state who share the collective experience, not face-to-face contact or common subordination to a royal person, but of reading books, pamphlets, newspapers, maps, and other modern texts together " (Habermas, 1989). In other words, the formation of a national identity wouldn't necessarily have to rely on the people sharing a common ancestry or all belonging to the same ethnic group. There is an approach that fits perfectly the situation of most countries that were created as a result of colonialism like Cameroon and its neighbors.

The creation of a new nation or the declaration of independence, as it was the case in colonial Africa, hardly came along with the new fellow countrymen having this sentiment of national identity. It is something that needs to be built and maintained. This could be done by the government with the establishment of border and exclusion, with some clear and honorable ideal through which citizens can identify, and which they can be proud of. The formation of national identity could also stem from popularly based nationalism for which Smith uses the term 'demotic'. In the African context where most of the leaders have proven to be power mongers and dictators, the formation of national identity rests more in the hands of the population which has to find a form of activity and ideals around which to congregate as a nation. In most cases, after having noticed the failure of major cultural activities to create a bond within the population, people have started turning to football and other forms of non divisive activities in order to generate that sense of national identity. Although the potential of football in bringing a nation together might still be



questioned by some critics, we have heard on many occasions' officials and other important voices draw people's attention to the perceived uniting power of the game.

Before the decisive match opposing Côte D'Ivoire with Cameroon as qualification for the 2006 World Cup in Germany, we could for instance hear Mr Agre, Cardinal of Abidjan express himself in the following terms:" Ivorians went to Marcoussis, to Pretoria, to Lome in order to solve their problems but it did not bring peace. Now a round ball is pulling all the Ivorians together" (Boniface 2006, 62). This is just one case amongst many others where we hear high ranking officials expressing positive views about football's ability to be more than just the sport that it is expected to be.

On the same occasion, the communication director of the Ivorian Football Federation held similar arguments. According to him, "In football nobody says he is from this or that ethnic group'. Everybody encourages or criticizes the player for what they have done". If we were to rely only on these accounts, we would easily conclude that football offers huge possibilities for national identification in multicultural societies, especially in a context similar to that of Cote d'Ivoire which was still dealing with the demons of an ethnically motivated civil war. We could on the other hand also think that those statements were just part of political propoganda and therefore it would be necessary to get the contribution of other actors of the national scene, namely the people; as I intend to do in the Cameroonian context in the case of my study.

### ***3.5. From ethnic and patriotic football to multinational industry***

An attempt to approach the evolution of football since its introduction in Cameroon revealed that it has followed a similar pattern to other countries around the world. Unlike many European countries the introduction of football in Cameroon coincided with a period when Cameroon was under the colonial ruling. Although scholars are unable to give an exact date of the introduction of football in Cameroon, there is certainty that football was already practiced in Cameroon before its independence in 1960. Mythical clubs such as Oryx de Doualla (the first ever winner of the African Champions League) are said to have played an important role in the fight for independence as they helped to build a sense of identity for the people living on the land which officially became Cameroon (Ntonfo,1994;16). Although Cameroon national team was formed and took part in encounters abroad, they were not officially recognized as the Cameroon national team until the independence.

The independence of Cameroon as well as many other countries around the world meant that they

could officially wave their flags around, have a national team and national jersey. Independence however did not mean instant success and international recognition as the then Cameroon national team did not make any positive impression for long period of time. With the post-independence struggles various activities including sporting activities like football endured major setback. This is no special case for Cameroon as it turned out that many other African countries had to wait for a long period before seeing football activities seriously taking off and in some cases they never took off at all. As mentioned earlier football clubs in Cameroon were mostly formed along ethnic lines, each ethnic group trying to have its representatives in football elite. Similar trend has been observed in Spain where each region had football team promoting the identity of that region. The transition from post-colonial – like type of football to efficient, “ modern” imposing style of football is considered to have taken place after 1972 when the former president of Cameroon officially named the national team *The indomitable lions* (ibid, 94). Cameroon has then went on to win four African cup of nations, one Olympic gold medal, one silver medal in the confederation club and was the first African nation to reach the quarter finals of the football world club. Part of that glory has been achieved with footballers who played for the pleasure and the opportunity to represent their nation, at the time where money played a secondary role. Many of players ended their carrier in poverty having made no money and some with inaptitude that might have been sustained during their football career. The younger generations know very little about these forgotten heroes who served their countries with patriotism.

Nowadays money related issues are so embedded in football that younger generations could not imagine that at the certain time people played football with the perspective that they could never get rich by doing so. The global trend is that of rich football players making stupendous amount of money. It is also that of rich European clubs and other entities roaming the football pitches of developing nations in search of the next big talent. The recent years have also experienced a new development with the creation of football schools across many African countries including Cameroon by opposition to the past football legends who learned to play by themselves in the streets. Younger generations have a different experience as football promoters planned to maximize the chances of getting good players while limiting the risks of having many casualties by putting together academic studies and football studies. Although such initiatives are praiseworthy, the reality remains that scores of youth are lured into believing that they would make it big with football, but in the end they end up wandering in the streets of foreign countries.

Interestingly, existing data pointg to similar patterns in the dynamics of football. The most striking

are the relation between football and colonialism on the one hand and the relation between football and economic power of the nations involved on the other hand. This concerns precisely the movement of players between countries and clubs. Data shows for instance a direct coloration between post-colonialism and the movement of players from formal colonies.

Number of foreigners playing in European associations by continent in 1994, 1998 and 2006

<b>Region</b>	<b>Asia</b>	<b>Africa</b>	<b>TWE</b>	<b>EE</b>	<b>LA</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>Oceania</b>
<b>Italy</b>	5	7	16	12	29	0	14
<b>Spain</b>	0	6	8	17	31	5	5
<b>England</b>	23	8	41	7	16	55	52
<b>Germany</b>	36	8	13	18	9	27	5
<b>France</b>	8	25	8	5	7	0	0
<b>TWE</b>	23	34	12	18	8	13	24
<b>EE</b>	5	12	2	23	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>N</b>	22	194	232	162	133	22	21
TWE= The other Western Europe, EE= Eastern Europe, LA=Latin America, NA= North America, N= Number of player							

The previous table taken from Antero Heikkinen study indicates players' movements from different continents into Europe which here stands as the holy sanctuary for football (Heikkinen, Ed Itkonen & Nevala, 2007). Heikkinen also clearly indicates the relation between former colonies and their colonial masters. Thus if we take the case of France for instance data shows that most former French colonies have a majority of their players playing in French leagues. For example in year 2006, 57% of Ivory Coast players were playing in France. The same situation can be observed in Spain and its former colonies, Great Britain and its former colonies and even Portugal and its former colonies. It is unclear what factors determined such representations, but at least one could say that the cultural and linguistic ties play an important role in it. Additionally Heikkinen remarks a hierarchy in that distribution of players. Thus Western Europe attracts more players than Eastern Europe and while there is tremendous movements into Western Europe there are few movements of Western European players out of their home country. For instance of all Italian players, only three played outside their home country, respectively in Chelsea, in Madrid and in Marseille and in 2006 there were only five Spanish players playing outside Spain, respectively in Arsenal and Liverpool.



## **Chapter 4. Data Collection and Methodology**

Any single piece of research is carried out on a certain amount of data and with a specific or a combination of methodologies. As such, this chapter presents the investigative practices, processes and procedures that accompanied the data collection as well as their analyses. The chapter would provide an overview of what process took place between the moments that the researcher possessed the data and was analytically looking through those data in relation to the research questions. As earlier announced, a qualitative design was employed whereby the researcher was exposed to various comments, conversations and discussions about Cameroonian football and its location in the international landscape. The study was therefore characterised by discourse or content analyses whereby the contents of the comments, conversations and discussions were analysed inductively and categorised according to the themes of the study. Also certain themes featured from study which supported the study. The chapter will also discuss how the researcher found his way in the piles of the data and could determine which texts were relevant, how portions of the texts could be categorized, as belonging to the same discourse and of course the method of analysis which were used for my study.

### **4.1. Data Collection**

Both the tradition in social sciences and the means researchers have at their disposal encourage a physical contact between the researcher and the subjects and/or the objects of his research. This has generally meant a movement of the researcher from the confined location where theories are discussed and elaborated to the open air of the streets and villages of our society where phenomena are generated and sustained. This has sometimes been carried out through various ethnographic methods like participant observation, interviews and so on. These methods of data collection have considerable advantages as the face-to-face contact is credited by some proponents to giving a better insight to the researcher. However, such methods also have their weaknesses considering that the movement of the researcher from the location A of academic venues to the location B of data collection might require additional financial resources

With the rapid and constant development of information technology, it is possible today to reduce or eliminate that financial cost by making the academic venues and the data collection field, one and the same place. The process could for instance consist in collecting data digitally through the internet with various mobile and non mobile devices. If it is not yet extensively popularized in the scientific community, this form of data collection does not need to be introduced as it has already been used in a considerable number of researches by various scholars (Davidova 2007). It is

therefore with confidence that the researcher chose to collect the data from an internet website which provided the advantage to dispose of a huge amount of material without having to make the costly and time consuming trip to Cameroon. The website in question is a Cameroonian website dealing with issues related to Cameroonian football and its development. According to the Cameroonian organization *Agence Nationale des Technologies de L'information* (ANTIC) , just about 5 % of local Cameroonians have access to information and communication technologies like the internet in a population estimated to be about 19 million inhabitants.

#### **4.1.1. The Data Source**

The data were collected from a popular Cameroonian website called “camfoot.com” where Cameroonians all over the world discuss about Cameroonian football-related issues in particular and football in general. The website Camfoot.com is one of the several websites created by Cameroonians since the introduction of the internet in the Cameroonian telecommunication media in 1999. According to information collected with the help of the website Whois.domaintools.com, the website Camfoot.com was created on 03 -03 2001 and attracts about 325712 visitors per month. It has grown very rapidly to become one of the most visited websites in the Cameroonian media. The website has about 42, 8 % of its visitors based in Cameroon and the rest out of Cameroon. The website has succeeded in winning the trophy of the best Cameroonian website during a ceremony organized on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008, distancing it therefore from all the other websites in the category. According to its promoters the website was created, to provide the Cameroonian public with a constant flow of information about football and the national team. A quick look at the front page shows that the website deals among other things with information on international football, the Cameroon national football league and the Cameroon national team. The website operates dominantly in French as all the headlines are written in French. A closer look at the different headings at the top of the page is quite revealing about the different sections that are provided.

The “Forum” is the discussion section where members register in order to give their contributions and exchange information, ideas and opinions about Cameroonian football and the world football landscape. Immediately, upon entry in the forum section, one notices that the bilingualism of the country seems to have been respected on the front page. The website therefore offers possibility to both English-speaking and French-speaking participant to give their opinion. Although this linguistic inclusiveness is a good point marking the difference with other Cameroonian websites which are either French-speaking or English-speaking, it was realised that there was very little communication between the two linguistic parts of the site. The English speaking section registered

1328 members by May 2008 while the French-speaking section registered 1528 regular members at the same date. Considering that French-speaking Cameroonians account for about 80% of the population, it is easy to notice that the English-speaking Cameroonians are highly represented. There have been regularly less than ten female participants on the forum which somehow reflects the reality in both football as a male dominated sport and the Cameroonian society where the voice of women is yet to be given as much importance as that of men. Considering that access to the internet is still very low and that a huge number (about 57%) of participants are Cameroonians living abroad, one is tempted to question how representative the informants on the website were of the Cameroonian society.

Right next to the forum part of the website, is probably the most important part of the website called 'toli toli: Parle pour toi je parle pour moi' (to be understood as: express yourself and I express myself) also called 'toli sous le manguier'. In contrast to the forum part where the discussions are based on a particular topic suggested by a participant, this section is freer with discussions sometimes falling out of the football world to which it is reserved. The different names given to this section of the website provide us with an idea of what it is expected to be. The pidgin-English word 'toli' deriving from the English word story is commonly used in the Cameroonian context as a substitute to the verbs, speak and talk. One can therefore imagine that the author of the website wanted to project the idea of social communication as it takes place in the streets and social gatherings in Cameroon. This use of a street language in the heading of that section seems to be intended at projecting the conviviality that is observed at most of the drinking and eating spots in Cameroonians cities. Such sites are known to be places where people socialize as they get their drinks or some local dishes while discussing current issues going on in the country.

Beyond this projection of that part of the website as a representation of such gatherings, the other title given to that section, namely 'toli sous le manguier' gives another very important projection of some social practices in Cameroon and other African countries, that are unfortunately disappearing as a result of westernization. 'Talk under the tree' which is what the second heading of that section of the website means, denotes a practice that was long linked to social life in traditional Africa. Community issues and problems between individuals were then solved under the big tree, so called 'arbre a palabre'. It was generally headed by clan's chief, or the village chief or just by the patriarchs. The creators of the website seem to have been willing to reproduce that whole atmosphere on a football website, giving participants the feeling of a community life as witnessed only in some specific places in the country. In the absence of some sort of moderator for discussions

and debates between participants, some rules have been established to avoid all sorts of deviation from the accepted form of language that can be used by participants. The 'code of the toli' therefore forbids discussions on political issues, calls for genocide, personal attacks and all forms of comments made along ethnic or tribal lines.

Upon reading few comments on the website, one can observe freedom in the way participants express themselves. Besides using English and French in their discussions, participants also use Pidgin-English and Francanglais. Pidgin is a form of Creole spoken in five West African countries (Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone) but Francanglais is specific to Cameroon as it uses French, English and words from some local languages. Although language standards can be very high on the forums, participants in most cases prefer to do away with English and French and therefore use these languages than cannot be fully understood by outsiders. This increases the difficulties one has in understanding the phenomenon unfolding on the website.

Despite recommendations prohibiting discussion of political issues and tribalistic divisive terms, it is easy to notice that participants flout those rules. The result in such cases is very heated debates which contribute testing the uniting force of football. It is quite interesting in those moments to see the reaction of participants and the side they take when situations tend to place tribal lines amongst them. The website has been functional and with registered members since March 2002, and therefore has yielded huge amounts of material. There has been hundreds of articles posted and with them, thousands of posts by participants. That huge amount of material has however not been produced on a consistent basis as participants tend to show more or less interest depending on the period of the year and FIFA's calendar for international competitions. The presence of visitors and contribution of participants on the website has for instance reached its peaks in moments when the Cameroon national team got engaged in international competitions, in moments when there has been major political crisis in the country or in combination of both as it was the case in February 2008 when up to 20,000 visitors were registered for a single day. This limited my choice in the time frame for data collection and directed me to a collection with no specific time frame. My collection of data has therefore been guided by topic relevance, regardless of the period of the year or a specific year. The difficulty with this method is obviously the selection of good and relevant data out of all that has been produced in about five years.

I started visiting the website early in 2006 when my former high school class mate sent me the link just for my information. As a Cameroonian concerned by what is going on in my country I was indeed very interested in reading political, cultural and sport information on Cameroonian websites



which were at that point the only source of information since there was no internet radio or television channel broadcasting through the internet. In contrast with the other websites where politics was the main topic and where one could read all sorts of animosity between citizens of the same country, the sports website appeared to be the alternative to anyone who wanted to read more positive news and positive attitudes amongst Cameroonian citizens. Unlike certain sectors of activity in the country, sports in general and football as a case has indeed been a source of good news as Cameroonians tend to do rather well both on national and international levels. I therefore started spending a lot of time reading all sorts of information from football websites and Camfoot.com in particular. I initially spent ten to fifteen minutes on the website on a single visit per day but that time went up to between one to two hours with multiple visits every day. That increase in time spent there was explained by the fact that in addition to academic interest in the website as study material, I also had personal interests as a Cameroonian wanting to keep in touch with Cameroonian realities.

The data collection per se however did not start until early in 2008 when I came to know more about the different sections of the website and what type of material I was specifically after. It is indeed important to mention that a website is not a very conventional site for collecting material as it does not fall under the traditional methods used in scientific research. It is for instance in no way comparable to a data collection through an interview where one asks questions and expects to receive specific answers to those questions. Data here are produced randomly and they do not answer to a specific question(s).

#### **4.1.2. Method/process of the Data Analysis**

During the data collection process, the researcher had to identify topics that were the most debated as well as those which were related to the research questions. Some of the analyses and comments seemed to be converging but they did not follow any chronological pattern. As a matter of fact, there appeared to be a recurrence of terms such as nationality, ethnic groups, tribalism, FIFA and patriotism which are all linked to the subject of my research. The contents of the analyses and discussions were grouped by the researcher under the related themes and categories to the study. With the set of questions that had been adopted for the inquiry, the researcher went through the texts and thus examined how they responded to the research questions. Emerging issues from the discourses were about the nation, ethnic groups, ideas associated to patriotism, local and global organizations such as FECAFOOT and FIFA and most recurrently, financial issues about football. The portions of the texts related to the above issues were regularly selected to represent specific

discourses and either printed or saved on the researcher's computer according to their length and their content. Upon completion of the data collection, discourse and content analyses were found suitable in answering the research question and especially most convenient with the type of data that had been gathered.

In order to make sure that "discourse analysis" which I adopted would be clear enough to me and any reader, certain available documents were consulted for the purpose. For instance, the work conducted by Jonathan Potter and Margeret Wetherell on the one hand and by Fairclough on the other hand proved to be very informative. Based on several scholarly documents, discourse analysis appears as a research method that cannot be defined in single terms. Moreover, some authors claim that rather than providing a method, it should be characterized as a way of approaching and thinking about a problem. Discourse analysis is also said to be neither a qualitative nor a quantitative method, but a manner of questioning the basic assumptions of quantitative and qualitative methods. This information is still far from what discourse analysis is. What is discourse analysis then and how would I be sure that what I am doing can be labelled discourse analysis without abusing the term?

Discourse analysis as a research method in scientific disciplines is far from being a well defined research method. It could be better defined as a research framework or orientation, which justifies its use in different disciplines and for various types of discourses. The multiplicity of discourses and the variety of disciplines in which the method is used urges Pietikainen (2000, 56) to talk of discourse studies rather than discourse analysis. All literature on the topic however differentiates between discourse analysis in linguistic and what it represents in other fields of study. An emphasis is also laid on the meaning of discourse. The glossaries of sociological terms define discourse as a body of ideas, concepts and beliefs which becomes established as knowledge or as accepted world-views. In most fields of social sciences, discourses are used to refer to what can be thought or said about a topic in any given social, political, historical or religious context. Fairclough's broad idea of text that can be analysed, includes "written and prited texts such as shopping lists and newspaper articles, (...) transcrip of conversations and interviews, as well as television programs and webpages"(Fairclough, 2003;5).

With reference to the thrust of my study, discourses on the topic of ethnicity on the website for instance would refer to what participants on that website think and say about the topic of ethnicity in the different context, especially in relation to football. There therefore, exists at this point no

ambiguity as to whether the text produced by those participants on those various topics can be called discourses or not. What can be said then to clarify the idea of analysis as attached to the discourse analysis? If the idea of defining discourse analysis makes researcher uneasy, that uneasiness does not disappear when it comes to telling how the analysis is to be carried out. While suggesting the difficulty involved in discourse analysis Wetherell & Potter assert that that the 'method' is better explained or learned through the study of a case. Indeed, very few documents provide the exact process to be followed in discourse analysis. However the above authors outline some particular features to pay attention to when doing the analysis of discourse. In the study, discourse analysis could be seen useful to assess what kind of discourses participant on the website construct as they debate about football related issues.

#### **4.1.3. Coding**

Most documents dealing with text analysis be it content or discourses stress the importance of coding as a process in the analysis of data. While Potter & Wetherell (1987, 167) mention the commonality of this stage to most forms of analysis, they emphasize that by contrast to content analysis where this stage is sometimes considered already as analysis, it is in discourse analysis just an analytic "preliminarily preparing the way for a much more intensive study of the material". It is clear therefore that categorizing my data could not yet be considered as a form of analysis. "Category" is indeed a term that appears quite often in texts talking about data coding. Data are either being coded into different categories having similarities or a search for relevance as to allow the researcher to group the data into different categories. In any case, this part of the works is classified by most researchers as coding.

In the categorization process used in coding data, researchers generally rely on the research questions and the related literature to search for emerging themes. In some cases however, the researcher is opened to creating new themes and to adjust initial codes in subsequent analyses. This is an attitude that is attributed to the open coding process. Considering the fact that the researcher took notice of the content of the data as it was read,, in contrast to some methods where it could have been possible that the researcher takes part in the data production process and therefore had a clue of what it contained, I was attracted to the idea of open/generative coding as it is described in grounded theory. This basically means that I do not consider my categories and therefore the discourse I am after was exhausted until I had gone through the material. The possibility of overlapping discourses or discourses hidden within others actually pushes for this attitude.

As far as the preliminary coding of the data was concerned, I relied on a quite simple procedure

where it was possible to do an automated search using key words relevance. I applied it and the results were categorized as intended to be part of the same discourse. This concretely means that since my intention was to study the discourses participants develop on the football website in relation to the nation state, I had to single out certain key words that could lead to identification of main discourses. Simple examples would be the use of patriotism or tribalism to search for discourses around those two themes. In the other section of the website where there was no possibility of automated search of relevant keywords, I proceeded with an increased attention paid to titles of different threads opened by participants. The appearance of words like Anglophone, Francophone, Bassa in the headings for instance pointed to some debates which would turn out to be tribalistic. Printing pages of my material or saving them in my computer were therefore done with the perspective of this coding. Different chunks of printed papers got labelled according to what I thought they contained and that helped me know which bundle of paper I had to refer to for a particular type of discourse. In a preliminary stage I thought of making use of those labels as titles of the various discourses they represented.

#### ***4.2. Validity and reliability of the data***

In contrast to most research where the researcher has some sort of a dialogic interaction with the informant(s) in order to produce the data, or has the possibility to incline the data collection towards a certain direction, my research has been based on a source of information that could not be easily manipulated. It has therefore meant that by opposition to say, an interview where the asked questions could give some direction to the researcher my approach had to be different.

My data is produced without any influence from me and it is only when armed with my research questions that I can trigger a minor interaction with the material. The text produced there is continuous and its production will not stop with the completion of my study.

The two sections of the website provided me with about 3500 web pages of material and going through that amount of text in search of relevant section would have been practically impossible. In the section of the website called 'toli toli', the possibility offered by technology to search for portions of texts according to words relevance made that task doable. In the section named 'forum' however, I had to read through countless number of pages for the same result i.e the identification of relevant material.

## **Chapter 5. Presentation of the Data**

This chapter presents the empirical data that was collected and used for the study. They have in some case been translated by the author from french or Francanglais into English. Basically, this empirical phase consisted of a collection of the various discussions, conversations, comments and analyses in relation to Cameroonian football and its position in the international scene as well as its role as a factor of integration. The comments were collected and their contents analysed along the following themes:.

### **5.1. The Tribe and Ethnic Related Issues**

The reference by participants on the Cameroonian web forum to concepts of tribalism and other denominators that remind of the multiethnic nature of Cameroon is recurrent enough to draw attention. The constant use of their related terms commanded me to wonder why they were so pervasive in their discourses. Of all the themes that have drawn my attention, the one dealing with the meaning and perspectives under which the word tribalism appears is by far the most documented. Dozens of pages of text are produced around the topic of tribalism and covers not only its influence in Cameroonian football but also in other aspects of societal life. Considering that the word tribalism appeared in different context for different realities, my approach has been to categorize those different uses of the same term under the same heading where they seemed to have commonalities.

Tribalism can be seen as the exaltation of one's tribe above other groups. In a context where we are talking about nation-building, such exaltation should be problematic only if it raises the group's interests above those of the nation. The main problem here is to define what can be labeled as tribalism and what cannot. From the texts produced, it is possible to see that tribalism could be anything and everything and could take various forms. Therefore in order to answer the question; what participants think or say about tribalism, we would be able to categorize the instances under which they appear in three different groups. Those who support the portrayal of tribal identities, those who stand against it and those who accept the depiction of the tribal identities so long as it does not conflict with the national identity. There is indeed different view amongst participants as to what tribalism is and even on whether it should be mentioned at all during their exchanges. There are participants for whom either the mention of the word 'tribalism' or the use of any word or pseudonym for a particular ethnic grouping can be considered tribalistic. To participant *Coumcoum* who made mention of the village of origin of one player, another participant DJSTRING has the following reaction. "You have the most stupid attitude on this forum. Tribalism should not have

room on this forum, and even less in Cameroonian football”. Considering that the accused here portrayed no overt attitude that could be properly called tribalistic, we can see that the tribal issue is a very sensitive one. If we can successfully distinguish authentic tribalistic attitudes from simple accusation of tribal biases, the task of categorization does not become easier for all that. My attempt to place under the same heading attitudes that are for, against or mitigated about the representation of one’s tribal identity is impeded by the definition we should give to an authentic portrayal of a preference for one’s tribe. Amongst accusation and counter accusation of tribalistic biases, the three categories above mentioned can be singled out.

### **5.1.1 Advocates of Ethnic Identities portrayals**

Under this heading are the views of participants who are against hiding tribal identities under the pretences of a fight against tribalism. The issue of the selection of players in the national team has always been controversial as there are concerns that some players are selected more for their identity as members of a tribe than based on their skills as players. One solution has generally been to avoid talking about player’s ethnic background. Some participants however think that tribalism does not have anything to do with that. One of them under the pseudonym of *Conseiller* expresses himself this way.

“The problem of selection in the national team is *Gombo* (to be understood here as corruption and traffic of influence), and dubious friendship amongst some top players. Tribalism has never been the selection method in the national team. When we had 9 Bassas in the national team, the coach was not a Bassa man, but a white Man.” In his opinion, what others see as a result of the ethnic composition of the country should instead be understood as the manifestation of the generalized corruption that has plagued the country. He is not alone to think that talking about tribalism or portraying one’s tribal identity is not the root cause of problems in the Cameroon. Another participant called *John Barrick* shares the same view. To a fellow participant who criticizes his propensity to refer to the tribe he belongs to, he has the following answer.

I am not going to shut up just because someone who acts like a cloned individual shouts ‘hatred and tribalism’ every time one talks about their origins. Cameroon is a united country and there is not going to be a tribal war just because we start one on the *toli*. (*Jonh Barrick*)

The sensitivity of the issue in his opinion does not have to be seen as counteracting any debate about tribalism. Some of the participants even take it as complicity with those who mismanage the country to avoid talking about tribalism. A discursive attitude toward tribalism should even be the solution to the problem, if we consider this participant’s view.

Him who ignores that the head of state instituted state tribalism in Cameroon surely lives in a hole. Go have a look at the list of state ministers. Half of them are Beti people, and the other half is divided between the northerners and all the other ethnic groups in Cameroon. Have a look at the list of those arrested in the anti-corruption investigation. 90% of them are *Beti*. The hater is therefore not the one who talks about the tribal nature of our nation, but instead those who choose only their tribesmen to pillage the country and expect other to stay quiet about it. (*Conseiller*)

Opposed to those participants who struggle for more debates about the issue of tribalism, are those participants who think that things would be just better if nobody mentioned anything related to the multicultural nature of the Cameroonian nation. They advocate for a silent or non expression of identities in Cameroon.

### **5.1.2. Silent identity as an Answer to Tribalism in Cameroon**

Amongst those who believe that tribal and group identities should be ignored, the motivations are diverse. It could stem from the idea that building a nation is an ideal difficult to reach which takes more time than is generally thought. On a continent which has gained a poor reputation when it comes to the relation between the different components of the nation-states, it seems legitimate to expect multiple approaches to how the tribal issue can be dealt with. The following contribution from participant *Bocande* recommends precaution whenever the question of tribalism is to be dealt with.

On the debate on tribalism, I think we should not confuse our ideal with reality. Yes the sense of belonging to a tribe should be accepted sometimes encouraged. But the current social and political context in Cameroon and the dramatic experiences from other African countries imposes a minimum of precaution in our actions and communication. One cannot put together over 200 tribes and (naively) utter beautiful concept which does not hold to reality. (*Bocande*)

Other approaches are categorical about both the debate on tribalism and the portrayal of one's belonging to particular tribes. They defend their position with the fact that football is not a site giving itself to such practices. It is summarized in the following contribution from one of the participants called *Ferd*.

I say that such debate on origins and belonging to different tribe has no legitimacy on this forum devoted to football. I do not talk about tribalism and any other tribal related issue. That does not make of me a person who ignores their culture or who does not know where he comes from as some of you insinuate. (*Ferd*)

The two previous views on tribalism do not cover all the positions held by participants in their

exchanges. There is indeed another approach to the issue of tribalism which tends to combine the two previous ones. It includes the participant who do not want to ignore the ethnic dimension of the Cameroonian society, who want it to be discussed as they believe that there is a possibility for ethnic and national identity to be combined in an individual without it being conflicting. Expressing himself about the selection of a coach for the national team participant *Bamenda* speaks in the following terms:

Definitely, there is no competence issue with national (local) coaches. The problem is elsewhere. We should stop blaming everything on tribalism and face our differences. If there is tribalism amongst us, we should deal with it and solve the problem instead of ignoring it. How else are we going to develop? Otherwise we should have, at the eve of independences, after noticing that we were tribally minded, decided to remain under the leadership of the colonizers. (*Bamenda*)

Many other participants in their contribution expressed the idea according to which one solution to tribalism is to deal with it so much that it stops having any meaning to all Cameroonians or at least stops having the meaning that they currently give to it.

The following quote expresses just how much the idea of otherness is imbedded in some people's reality. Even when they cannot rely on the traditional ethnic markers to express their ethnic discrimination, they seem to be able to create some.

Honestly I should admit that I do not understand any more what some of you guys here are after. Where is the problem if we decide to call all the talent that Cameroon disposes of, whether they are black white or mixed-raced? When I read some contributions here talking about the danger of ending up with a mixed-raced National Team (Asso Ekoto, Ngog, Matip, Choupo-Moting, Njdeng, Perrier Ndoumbe...) I am just tempted to think that we are doomed. If some people here go as far as to doubt their patriotism because of the fairer complexion of their skin, I just ask them to remember what Perrier Ndoumbe did during the Confederation Cup. Despite the fact that he was not born in Cameroon and that he has one European parent, he proved that he had the same level of '*hemle*' as the other Lions. We all know that those guys are not better than the home-grown one in terms of intrinsic technique, but they have the advantage of having followed training from a very early age and therefore have internalized most of the things that the locals have to learn when they start a professional life. (*BG*)

## **5.2. The Nation-state**

The football website being studied was created primarily as a channel through which its authors could promote Cameroonian football in general. Although local and international football constitutes an important portion of the topics debated, the national team and its activity is without contest, the main focus for participants, be it in terms of visitors attracted or the amount of text



produced. Participants' debate around the issues of nation and nationality is thus a recurrent issue. All the topics evolving around the issues of nationalism, nation-state and nationality provided a range of meaning given by participants to those concepts.

An aspect pertaining to the idea of Cameroon as a nation-state was provided by the creation of the parallel national team by the English speaking section of the country. It is generally admitted that the significance of the idea of the nation state is not as strong as when it is under threat. In this case where an organization representing two provinces out of the ten that Cameroon is made up created a parallel team called The Southern Cameroon national team, one could test the attachment of Cameroonians to this social construction called nation. For some participants from the English speaking part of Cameroon, it was the best response to address to their French-speaking counterparts. *Junior Lion* for instance, a participant from the English speaking part of Cameroon had this to say "it's about time we have our own team away from those segregator East Cameroon. I will support the team any way I can. Way to go boys." The creation of a national team for the people of the Southern Cameroon had more significance than it does for a mere team as we witness every day. For the creators of the team it was part of an agenda which is; the fight for the independence of the Southern Cameroon. Supporting the initiative can be interpreted as supporting the partition of Cameroon into two linguistic entities.

In an attempt to understand the texts produced by these participants, one has to be careful to confuse oppositional identities and complementary ones. An individual is indeed capable of projecting two types of identities, national and tribal, without them being conflicting. In some contexts, tribal or ethnic identities and national identity can be viewed as oppositional whereas in others, the tribal identity can be viewed as one of the many identities that sum up to constitute the national identity. (Bradley, 2006; 1202)

The idea of an Anglophone team is associated by many to a solution to what they call 'the Anglophone problem'.

Issues pertaining to the idea of a nation state are also talked about by participants from various perspectives. It could for instance have something to do with the very independence of Cameroon as a nation or some other aspects as it is expressed in the following quote made by *Buncol*.

" Our pseudo-independence, our leaders ( if we can call them so ) without any vision, and the people who develop the clan, the ethnic group, the tribe, the region to the disadvantage of the nation, and France which makes benefits of all that. So the question I always ask myself is the

following: Does the African man really love his continent? ”

Some take the debate about the nation to eras which even preceded the current nation states and the geographic locations. Such views capitalize on past migrations to account for their stand on nation-building issues as we can see in the following quotes by *Boss*.

What you say about ethnic groups is interesting. I followed the history of the school of the Douala tradition created by *Esso*. Its aim is in fact to instruct young *Sawa* people about their tradition and mostly about the role they have played in building Cameroon. Where do we come from? That's an aim worthy to be praised if we just don't get contempt in repeating words: Bassa, Douala, Bami. It's high time we teach the history of our ancestors migrations to our children. Therefore many of you would be surprised to know that there are Bassas living in Cote d'Ivoire and Benin, that there are Doualas in Congo, in Somalia and in South Africa. Seen from that perspective we would understand that it's Cameroon and not an ethnic group which goes to the Olympic Games, to the World Cup or in this commercial war called globalization. (*Boss*)

The nation-state and its relation to the tribe or the ethnic group or the clan seem for some to be inseparable. According to this school of thought, he who says “nation” says a group of “tribes” as nations would be built from tribes. Related to the previous view by participant *Boss*, participant *Conseiller* expresses himself in these terms: “A man who doesn't know where he comes from will never know where he is going. We come from tribes which are over 3000 years old and the Cameroonian culture as a nation is less than 60 years old. The notion of *Bassa* as a people is stronger than that of the Cameroonian nation. It is therefore important to know that we are *Bami* and that we draw our strength from this thousand-year-old culture. The white men during colonialization did their best to make us forget our culture in order to alienate us. Every French man remembers that he is Breton, Corsican or Norman without it posing any threat to the nation of France. We are therefore either hypocritical or we do not understand the importance of our ethnic groups. ”

The notion of the nation state is also sometimes debated from the perspective of the factors that can constitute a real danger to it. While some people perceive the tribe as the foundation on which the nation should be built, the tribe is for others the stepping stone in the maintenance and strengthening of the nation state. The tribe, or the role played by the tribe is pointed as being responsible for many harms. The following contribution by *Nasoide l'Autochtonologue* expresses it quite clearly.

If you are a veteran of the *Toli* you should not be surprised by my stands on the question of the invasion of posts at CRTV (Cameroon Radio television) and all other administrative posts

by the Beti people. Likewise, I have denounced the fact that there is no non-Bami person standing as municipal councilor in the West. In like manner, I have denounced the meeting by the Bassa members of the national team organized by J.A Bell. I so reject every tendency to confiscate power by an ethnic group or an oligarchy of ethnic groups. I have also talked about the Sawa land for the re-distribution to Sawa people (Douala) of the lands ill-acquired by our brothers from the West during the independence war. But never have I insulted. I provoke a debate on ideas for an equal sharing as it is the only way to keep this nation in one piece. (*Nasoide L'autochtonologue*)

Considering that the nation is represented by the national football team, some participants have the difficulty to accept the idea of a national team being headed by a non-national, especially when the nationals have the expertise to lead the team. The following participant laments over the continuous leadership of European nationals at the head of the Cameroon national team.

“How long shall we have to wait before our own nationals take leadership of every aspect of football management in a country like ours which is said to be proud of its accomplishments? A country which enjoys a whole generation of highly qualified professional players trained by expatriates both in Cameroon and abroad, professionals to whom we never hire in position of responsibility. We rather seem to be satisfied to see them appointed as subordinates to European coaches. That’s where nationalism has to matter. It seems as if our professionals work in one of these buildings where they can only contemplate foreign bosses from the lower floor, knowing that they will never have access to the upper floor. So how long do we have to wait before things change?” (*Zutera*)

### **5.3. Discourse on FIFA and FECAFOOT**

The exchanges between participants on the forum as seen from previous discourse relates to activities taking place in the stadium and those out of the stadium. As far as football as a game is concerned, those activities are particularly regulated by international and local organizations: FIFA at the international level and FECAFOOT at the national or local level. FIFA is generally associated with the concept of power, be it political or financial. FIFA is a big decision-maker one of whose activity involves the ranking of national teams on global football. It is therefore one reason why FIFAs monthly ranking draws a lot of attention. Some participants very often refer to FIFA when they talk about power balance in the institution itself to depict the FIFAs tremendous power. *Grand* expresses himself this way.

“We can play the clown and affirm that we don’t care about FIFA, but the reality is something else. Cameroon does not matter that much in that type of institution. Whether we agree with it or not it doesn’t change much. FIFA makes the rules and everybody is bound to comply, otherwise its exclusion. In addition if my information is correct, we have been in very bad situation with FIFA, due to this incompetent minister we have as head of the department of sport and physical education. If not because of the quick reaction of the president to disown the minister, we would be in trouble by this time.” (*Grand*)

FIFA as the organizer of the Football World Cup is also sometimes criticized for certain practices. The football game which is still considered by many to be the sport of the masses has started to be seen simply as a profitable organization. This comment by *Buncol* related to the next World Cup appropriately summarizes it.

The tickets for the 2010 World Cup are on sale on FIFAs website as from the 28th of February. In the first category the prices vary between 450 and 900 dollars (from opening matches to finals). In the third category which is supposed to be for the less financially endowed varies between 200 and 400 dollars. So basically if one decides to watch even just a single match then one has to starve to death...The World Cup has really become a big business. (*Buncol*)

#### **5.4. Discourse on Patriotism**

Patriotism is often mentioned to explain, qualify and demand a certain attitude from the football players and the people responsible for resource management in Cameroon.

“It’s a secret to no one that Cameroon Football leaders are incompetent and that at every level of the scale. But if tomorrow a young player like Eyong Enoh decides to play for the Netherlands, I would not find any reason to blame the leaders. Contrary to other young players such as Kana Biyik, Songo’o, Ngog, Moting..., this guy was born in Cameroon and lived part of his life here. There shouldn’t be any problem for him making a decision. If he says that he hesitates between Cameroon and the Netherlands, then we can do nothing about that. He just does not have the patriotic fiber.” (*L’Unique*)

The issue of patriotism at least as debated on the forum emphasizes too much the attitude of football players toward their country. It just seems that the expression patriotism can be achieved exclusively through sport and football in particular, something that the following participant refutes.

Some hide behind accusations of tribalism to explain why they are not doing anything for the country. I will say again that they are selling illusion and are using distraction to hide their apathy. We are here in Europe where there is no tribalism. What have all those who accuse Bell achieved or have his other former team mates done for Cameroon? As to other commentator, to t a player should not claim Cameroonian roots if they do not play for the Cameroon team as if patriotism could be expressed only by wearing the green-red –yellow jersey. Should we then conclude that Boumsong and others who play for foreign countries are not patriots? (*Hristo*)

For some other participants there is no way to dissociate the Cameroonian society from Cameroonian football, precisely the national team.

“One has to look at a broader picture of the Cameroonian state in order to understand what is

happening with the Lions. I just arrived from a trip to our country and I can confirm that there is only one thing people are concerned about: getting rich at all cost. Patriotism and the love for good achievements have gone away. Judges do not care about justices, Army generals are not interested in protecting our borders, and ministers flood our town with private mansions. A while ago the Lions were still immune from that but I tell you, today the national team is just an occasion to make money.

(*Conseiller*)

Patriotism has also been used in context where it sounded almost ambiguous, with a meaning somehow unexpected. The following quote by *Immortel*, it denotes the opposite to egoism.

“The difference between Africa and the West can be summarized in one word: Planning. When Domenech selects young Blacks, Arabs or other minorities at least one time, it is with the intention to make sure that according to FIFA’s regulation, if these guys emerge in the future France benefits from it. That is patriotism. As far as we are concerned, we wait until we can see a player prove their skills with AC Milan before we can manifest our interest. It is another manifestation of our leaders’ egocentrism who by thinking only about themselves end up being unable to do a minimum good for the nation.”

Some contributions give an approach to patriotism which is very radical and uncompromising. The football players according to this view are expected to give their all, even if they get nothing in return.

The Lions have won; Bravo! But that does not give them the right to blackmail the government. They should be satisfied with the small money they get. When one goes to the Olympic Games it should be more for the honor than the money. Besides, the Lions label gives them a lot of career opportunities. Such antipatriotic behaviors should be reprimanded with the last energy. Our players should play with humility and with the passion that haunts every Lion. Milla, Mbappe and other defended the *green-red-yellow* color with passion and patriotism when football had no money. These young ones should learn that. (*Hristo*)

Patriotism is a tricky issue because some of those who criticise the football players are medical doctors or engineers living in a foreign country, while Cameroon is lacking people with their qualification. At the same time, the country leaders who have pillaged the resources are less mentioned than the football players. But one participant underlines that fact here as follows.

“Is the head of state is himself a patriot? People overlook Cameroon –at least what is left of it- everywhere because of that man. We know that it is only out of patriotism that our national team defends our flag. These guys could get better elsewhere. If the head of state refuses to do anything for Cameroon, why Eto’o should be receiving blames with all the mess created around the team. Cameroon is faring very badly my brother and fewer and fewer people are afraid of us. So please you guys should leave *Eto’o* and the other players alone” (*Edo Halley*)

## **5.5. The Influence of Money**

In the introduction, it was underlined that playing football in some poor neighborhood in Africa is generally more an act of survival than a genuine practice of physical activity. Practicing the game appears therefore as a cheap method to cope with poverty as kids use it to occupy their idle moments or to cope with moments of hunger. Before becoming the big business that it is today, with some players joining the ranks of the filthy rich, football in Cameroon was and still to some extent is an activity for the academic drop outs with little or no options. The huge financial revenues generated by the game makes the discourse about money and related financial issues on the web-forum an important and well debated issue. It ranges from the players' salaries to the financial impact in the society, with considerations on infrastructures.

The salaries paid to football players in the Cameroonian league are generally very low, with the minimum established about 85 Euros for the first league and the 70 euros for the second league. In the third league basically no salary is paid and the players have to get content with the food offered by the team. Players selected in the national team do not have a regular salary and therefore are generally paid what it would be appropriate to call bonuses or incentives. Although there have been many reports of players not getting their money after some encounters, participants on the web-forum still have extremely controversial positions when it comes to relating players to the reward that they should be paid for serving their country. After a loss encounter for instance one participant held this view:

When I watch these guys play I really start to think that even the incentives we pay them are excessive. For the quality of football they are delivering at the moment it seems to me that they are being paid salaries similar to that of the CEO of AIG. They are not worthy to be Cameroonians. The mid field is nil and the strikers are nil. This haphazard planning is inherent to Cameroon. Why should we pay any money to these guys if it is to have heart attacks? Oh what a country! (*Mola Omar*)

On another occasion participant *Hristo* held a similar view as players of the Cameroonian Olympic team decided to go on strike in order to get paid. And he says:

“Why should we be surprised? The Spaniards have established a well structured program for development and promotion of football talents. As far as we are concerned we have the same quarrels that date back to the independent days. Bell used to ask us how we can expect progress when in the same canoe people paddle in opposite directions. Our junior national team decides to go on strike for money related issues. This is a scandal! In my opinion they should be able to go and take part in the Olympic Games even for no salary, because they increase their chances of getting a contract with major clubs. The minister should not give-in to that form of black -mailing. If they do not want to play let us bring them back home. When

one is under 23 one first plays for the pleasure and looks for money later on. (*Hristo*)

A similar view is expressed by another participant with the same relentlessness. *L'Unique* has the following view:

Why should we accept the dictate of those players? How can Cameroonians demand so much money before defending our colors at the Olympic Games to the point of threatening not to play? I am extremely disappointed that some people here are supporting those guys who are literally taking our jersey hostage. We know that most Lions boost their professional careers after having performed well with the national team and they make so much money that they pay some back to the country. These guys should understand the process instead of getting rich over our country. When one sees how much money they are asking for, one could even stop thinking that we are a poor country. I hope that this 'golden youth' is not going to plunge into the cult of money. Look at what those who won the gold medal in 2000 were paid and you see the difference. (*L'Unique*)

Another participant holds a complementary view to the previous ones as he expresses himself this way:

“The ‘spoiled children’ of the ‘sport roi’ (major sport) are demanding a revalorization of their bonuses. Those bonuses are currently rated at 3 million CFA (4500 Euros) per match. And if that revalorization is accepted, it will amount to 5 million CFA (7500 Euros) per match. I hope nobody gives into that pressure and I am already quite happy that the ministry and the federation are opposing the move”. (*Buncol*)

For another category of participants, the situation is not quite clear. Even when they do not fully support players' action to be paid they nevertheless highlight the fact that every work deserves a salary. In other cases they are concerned by the outcome of football encounters as they know that unpaid workers tend to do bad job. Participant *Mudo* has this to say:

All these money related issues gangrene Cameroonian football and has been doing so for many years. I do not know how much money was promised to these players but a compromise should be reached very rapidly. In December 2007 the national team presented us a very shameful image by getting on the pitch two hours late and the reason that we were given was that they were debating about the money that was supposed to be paid. Even if the Olympic idea is to participate, these guys should not be treated improperly in the name of the nation, while some white collar bureaucrats are getting rich on their back. (*Mudo*)

Other participants wonder why the whole government makes such a fixation on the football sport when there are many other successful sports in Cameroon.

I find it difficult to understand the way we spend money when it comes to sports and especially football. When a minister of Youth and sports has to travel all over the globe with his wife, cousins and secretaries just to watch the lions train in Europe then brothers and sisters we have a

problem. The combine cost of this overhead over the years is sufficient to boost the level of our stadia around the country. Doesn't it look very poor when you look at *Cannon* and *Tonnere* playing in the capital on a sandy or muddy or military pitch? How shall we continue in such moral bankruptcy? We need to be a shamed of ourselves. (*Pius*)

With the development of football around the world, many football schools have been opened in Cameroon and the expectation laid on the graduates of those schools is again a subject or disagreement between participants. To his opponent who disapprove of the influence of European club on those players, the following participant has this to say:

What you are saying is rubbish, KSA (Kadji Sport Academy) is a sport academy and their sport is to bring up young players who want to make football their vocation and if a local club for example (Canon) or any other Division One club has the money to buy this player after their formation then is ok, but most of them cannot afford this players so the European clubs who can afford them, buy them. So *Kaham* is correct; their job is so train and sell, if they make it to Division one, fine. If not, no problem, because that is what an academy is all about. You learn, graduate and move forward. So blame the clubs in the Cameroonian League not being able to afford the players from the academy (*Naami*)

## **5.6. Football's Impact on Societal issues**

Although I focused so far only on football related themes as debated by participants, I would like here to present a collection of what those participants think of football itself. They would no doubt have different perceptions of the role played by football in the nation-building process. Here are some excerpts of the comments:

My point is that while we are all fans of this game, we shouldn't put soccer or players where they don't belong and this is exactly what we are currently doing. Think about it, should it be the priority in a country that lacks the most essential infrastructures to spend tax payer's money on building 10 soccer stadia? I mean what has happened to the Yaounde and Douala stadia for which we haven't been able to perform basic maintenance? Is the situation going to be different for the new ones that will be built? It is pity that with all the intelligence, we have been unable so far to put in place a sensible development policy. It's not gonna make any difference to build tiny islands of prosperity in an overall sea of misery. (*Uncamer*)

Various opinions are expressed about Cameroonian football in general, including the way it is managed and the state in which it is in present days. For the following participant, to whom it seems to bear extremely high importance, action has to be taken so as to save the major sport.

Let's stop talking about issues that have nothing to do with football or which do not help our dying national sport. Almost all the other African nations which deserve to be called so, have had friendly preparation matches this week. But in Cameroon, we are going to wait until one month before the competition to know who can play, where and how. I don't know who to blame, the minister or the Fecafoot, but I think that after observation of what happened in the



past years ministers have been changed but the problem has persisted. FECAFOOT in my opinion bears a big share of responsibility in this disorder. We should by all means force the President to invite all the FECAFOOT staff to resign as well as change all the personnel at the football department of the ministry. (*Small-Lion*)

Although the comment by the following participant might sound ironical, it expresses some ideas which are common amongst those participants. Many think that if Africans ever dream of deconstructing European supremacy in general, they can better start by defeating them in the field.

Millions of Cameroonians, who are however satisfied with the Lions' output during the Confederation Cup, will bear with me that we could do better if our honorable *Mr. Press Conference* was not in charge of the national team. Sincerely, should the team be better organized and led by persons who have a sense of respect to the only sports the Lord has left Africans to take control of through Cameroon. Then it would be no surprise to get the World Cup in Cameroon some day. One opportunity just squandered, we have many others. (*Royalprince*)

For some participants, nation-building and a sport like football seem to be working on opposite agendas. *Justicier* thinks that the outcome of football matches does not just help the development process in a poor country, instead it impedes it.

You guys should be happy not to be in Egypt where I am now. Every thing that looks black is their opinion Cameroonian and they are very proud to claim that they eliminated the great Cameroon. For all those of you who are talking about drowning your pain in beer, I say that it is very sad, and that is the problem with football. People drink when there is victory, drink when there is defeat and they drink while waiting for the next encounter. Remember that great countries have not been built by men with fuzzy minds having their brain soak in alcohol. The saddest thing is that many men spend all the family's livelihood in that process. (*Justicier*)

## **5.7. Discourse on Development**

When a country has been categorized as a 'highly indebted poor country', it is naturally that every activity taking place therein would be linked to the issue of development. In the case of Cameroon, the success of the various football team raised hope amongst the population as many expected international exposure to attract more tourist, to bring in more money that would eventually improve the economic situation. Amongst other issues participant such as *Buncol* express the hopes he invests in football.

I know that even if we got to South-Africa for the World Cup, the problems which are inherent to the Cameroonian society are not going to be solved. But contrary to you, my hope for a qualification are motivated by the following reasons: Sports (best football Ambassador on the continent), Historical; (first edition on the continent and we all know that the second edition might never come), Financial (substantial flow of money from FIFA) and finally the pride to belong to the football elite. Additionally, I believe that African country can perform

better as Europeans won't have much room for fraud.

*(Bunco)*

From another perspective, another participant quotes one football club's president to back his view that professionalization of football in Cameroon would definitely play in favor of development.

I just followed an interview from the President of *Botafogo Football Club*. He propose not less than a full partnership between the football club and all those companies which are looking for ways to promote their products. In his opinion, so long as our football will be managed the way it is now, we will keep on having those pigsties that we call stadiums. My opinion is that with better partnership and improved management styles, football can start playing a major role not only in terms of development of football infrastructures, but also in terms of development in general. *(Eto'ofille)*

### **5.8 The Political Economy of Football**

As it has appeared in some previous passages, competitive football in particular and competitive sport in general seems more and more to go hand in hand with big money. Perhaps more than in any other sport today the association between money and football seems to be vital for the global leadership of that sport. Players and clubs are traded like precious commodities and the result is partially projected during the European Champion Leagues where we see the most skilled actors of the round ball compete for our pleasure. Another facet of the football-business reality takes place however far from the cameras and is reflected in participants' exchanges on Camfoot-web forum. In an attempt to draw attention on the faith of African footballers, one participant presents the following quote by former Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho.

Mourinho believes that the depth of talent in the African game could provide bargain buys for European clubs unable to compete for highly-priced players. His club spent a record US\$45million to bring Ghana midfielder Michael Essien to Stamford Bridge. But the manager of the English Champions said cash-strapped European clubs ready to make the foray into Africa could reap amazing rewards. *(Lionking)*

As far as national teams are concerned, if European nationals face no dilemma as to what national team to play for African players face much more problematic situations as they are torn between countries. Although the situation might make a point for ethnicity and even nationality it generally turns out to be all about political economy. The following quotes seem to make the point.

Do you guys remember that Marcel Ndjeng, Alex Ikeng and all the other players that some of you are counting as part of Cameroonian players are French, German or other nationals. Does the fact they have Cameroonian fathers indicate automatically that they are Cameroonians? I think that all these other countries can claim them as theirs. I believe that they with their parents are the only ones to decide who they want to play for. At the moment we are unable to

keep even those who were born and partly raised in Cameroon but we start claiming those who have only their genes attaching them to Cameroon. (*Bon's*)

Although the following quote make a point about the influence of money in football, at also makes a point about how the bad football policies in Cameroon affect the allegiance of binational players. It also of course makes the point about ethnicity and nationality for those football players.

My brother Barrick let me tell you this: When a player has a European nationality, playing with the Lions is not his priority. The idea of playing with Cameroon becomes a reality when the dreams to play with the European team vanish. I will just name these few, Ipouah, Pagal, Etame, Perrier, Matip. If you are not convinced, ask yourself why there always have to be so much negotiation with them and their parents before them making a decision for the Lions. If you take the case of Ngog for France and Moting for Germany, you can ask them the question now. They are for the moment not deciding for Cameroon because the circumstances still allows them to hope for a chance with European national teams. But ask them the question in 4 years time and you will tell me. Please stop being hypocritical by pretending not to know why Etame does not want to play anymore with the Cameroonian team. I try to imagine myself in his position, playing for a country where nothing motivates you to play. I assure you, it takes a little bit more than patriotism to keep on playing under those conditions. (*Hristo*)

The following quote which certainly makes many points also clearly makes the point about the political economy of football. A developed nation offers more possibilities and opportunities to players than the developing one. Although the quote might seem to be about players having a hard time choosing national team, it underlines a situation caused by big money in football. Even issues of nationality and identity can be easily influenced by the economy.

I do not stigmatize the youth of the diaspora. But at the same time, the Cameroon National Team should not be some sort of an outlet for those who have not been able to make it to the national teams of France, Germany and others. I already noticed here that Ngog and Moting are following normal tracks of French and German internationals. It is comprehensible that young players born out of Cameroon hesitate to join such a messed-up selection in a country which besides every other thing does not have infrastructures. Bassong for instance declared wanting to play for the Cameroonian team, but when he was called to play with junior French team, he did not hesitate. We should therefore be very careful when we deal with these players who are lost between two nations. (*Mudo*)

Without a clearly defined politics to rule over football activities players' movements would be extremely complex especially when it includes a poor country and a rich one as one can notice from the following quote.

Hey Guys! Just to let you know that the convocation of Choupu Moting by the Cameroonian team is giving sleepless night to the Germans. They do not want to imagine even for a single moment that the player who is considered by many observers as the next great striker of the Mannschaft could decide to play for the country of his father. The German coach of the under 20s Horst Hrubesch has indeed indicated the player had not yet notified him of his decision to

play for Cameroon and he has been trying to contact him to remind him what are his responsibilities towards Germany. In his opinion Moting has completed his whole training with the Germans and it is therefore logical that the boy eventually plays with the German National team. My opinion about this is that things are not going to be easy because the pressure to which the boy is being subjected to from the German federation is almost unbearable. I therefore suggest that the Cameroonian federation contacts his father so that together they attempt to get the boy from the Germans' hands. *Speed*

A game, whatever the one we pick, would be very different in importance if we took away the political economy that surrounds it. It is for instance difficult to imagine what face the world famous American basketball would have if we dissociated it from the NBA (National Basketball Association), the sponsors, the local and political leaders who feed on it and all other fans and entities which gravitate around it.

As a more internationally represented sport, the case of football is even more worthy of attention. Besides the role it plays as an important object to symbolize the nation, its other aspects, namely the regulation of players' transfer from team to team, from nation to nation – all influenced by huge flows of money – make the politico-economical aspect of the game an interesting topic. It is with no surprise that many portions of text on the Cameroonian web forum deal with related issues.

One interesting part of it covers the aspect of players' mobility between clubs. In comparison to this situation as it took place almost a century ago, noticeable changes have happened. Quoting Eduardo Galeano, Boniface (2006, 152) notices that in 1921 it was impossible for black players and mulatos to make it to their national team in most Latin American countries, while a transfer to another team in another country would have been even unthinkable. Nowadays we seldom hear of such barriers and any player with good skills would primarily be seen as high priced commodity. The dilemma however is about finding the balance between national interest and the global one, or seen from another perspective, the interest of the player against that of the team which employs him.

Although it might seem simple if we only think about European players, things could not be more complex if we included players from poor countries in the picture. Players from wealthy countries indeed have options and could have something else to do or at least some means to survive if they could not go professional. For players from poor countries, however, the pressure is deadly. Amongst other things we could mention that many of them are academic dropouts, that they are well placed to talk about poverty for having experienced it, that they are constantly fed with the illusion of professional football players making it big and that many caress the dream of moving to Europe if not for football related reasons.

The immediate consequence of this is the vulnerability of would-be professional players vis-à-vis the wealthy football clubs on the one hand and vis-à-vis rich countries on the other hand when we consider the naturalization of poor players. In appearance the situation generally looks like a win-win relation where the players are saved from abject poverty by clubs who pay them good salaries in return for their skills. In reality however, one has to consider that very few out of the thousands who invest in the sport make it to the top. Some players' agents abandon their protégé in foreign countries when they fail to make it. Players from poor countries can easily be tricked into signing disadvantageous contracts just because they don't have options. Those players can also be influenced into adopting another nationality so as to play for the national teams of the richer countries to the disadvantage of their own countries.

A more recent topic of concern has been that of the impact of professionalism in football on local teams. Every country which has produced talented football players expects to capitalize on their skills in order to make good impression during international competitions. It has until recently been thought that having prominent players in European leagues meant for African countries that they would have strong national teams. Two major problems have, however, surfaced to contest that idea: The first problem is that players, due to the fact that they play in different countries and sometimes different continents have very little time to build the cohesion that makes a team. In addition to that, the reluctance of European teams to release their players during international competitions makes it even more difficult for poor countries to form competitive national teams. The attitude of the owners of those teams is perfectly understandable considering that they spend tremendous amounts of money to buy and maintain their players. In order to fairly arbitrate between both parties, namely the country of origin of players and club owners, the football world governing body FIFA sets rules to be respected both by the players and the clubs who employ them. As a matter of fact, FIFA has always been presented not only as organizing the good functioning of the football game, but also as the fair judge which makes sure that all the parties involved in the "people's game" are equally treated. That assumption leads us to wonder what is observed in the daily practice of football reflects those claims of equal treatment.

The easiest way to assess fairness in FIFA's ruling would be to look at the two aspects which today make FIFA the global superpower that it is, i.e. a strong political power and a considerable financial powerhouse. As a political power FIFA has on various occasions had the possibility to sanction different countries, both rich and powerful ones and poor and insignificant ones. With maybe some extremely rare cases, FIFA's rulings have appeared to be indiscriminate, irrespective of countries'

global status. Thus countries like England and Somalia have been equally sanctioned.

As far as the financial aspect of FIFA's impartiality is concerned, a few questions have been raised, notably that of the attribution of international competition organizing rights to various countries. Despite the multiple reasons evoked, such as security concerns, it is still difficult to understand why almost the same countries gain the right to organize international competitions, when we think about the enormous financial revenues generated for the host country. It seems therefore that the forces driving the political economy of football have an influence that could at some point cause both the players involved in the game and the fans who support them to believe that the "people's game" is getting out of hand. Money, money and more money seems to be the leitmotif in the game. The sponsors who use sporting events to promote their products, the cities who want to gain international exposure still through the game, political leaders who think of football as a means to acquire some votes, all contribute to unsettle the whole dynamics within the football game. The question of how much football contributes to development in a country like Cameroon therefore becomes an imperative when we consider how much is invested in it in terms of human and material resources.

## **Chapter 6. Discussions and Conclusion**

This study set out to examine the influence of football in nation-building, in which case national integration. In the context of Cameroon, the study examined the general claim as highlighted by other scholars, some of whom have been cited in the preceding chapters, that football could be as important and influential as any major political or economic instruments in nation-building processes. The study aimed at responding to certain (research) questions which revolved around the meanings which the Cameroonian football analysts make of the role of football in nation-building or in cultivating collective sentiments.

The study was particularly important in the context of Cameroon given especially its recurrent successes in football, its national unity and integration as well as longstanding peace over the years, which none in West or Central Africa in recent years, may be comparable to. Whereas, it can on the other hand be seen that the Cameroonian society is a very diverse and fragmented multicultural, multi ethnic and heterogeneous society with over 200 ethnic groups. The strategies of the Cameroonian government in pulling together the different ethnic groups to be a recurrent successful football and peaceful nation were some of the issues to be addressed in the research. The contribution of football seems significant in the national integration and peace as well. The initial assumption motivating the study was the idea that in a successful football nation like Cameroon, football may help divert attention from serious political and economic issues like poverty, undemocratic governments and underdevelopment. This preliminary perspective held that because of the accumulated heritage in football and consequently its capacity to mobilize collective sentiments and love for the game, people especially the lay majority, tend to forget their differences because most of their attention and discourses are regularly focused on sporting events and in the case of Cameroon, football. The global perspective of the perceptions and general meanings made by the Cameroonian football analysts were examined as well. With analogy from the various discussions, comments, arguments and conversations which featured at the Cameroonian Football websites along the researcher's themes and questions, this chapter discusses and makes assertions on some of the issues.

### ***6.1. The facilitative role of football in societal issues***

Apart of the objective to fill certain gaps in existing literatures, this study of football in Cameroon was aimed at shedding some light on the role of football in relation to the nation -building processes in Cameroon. The work was predicated on the idea of the cohesive power of football. The study on the relation between the Cameroonian football and its influence on the nation building process was

to capitalize on the two observations of football influencing on global issues on the one hand and local issues on the other hand to assess its impact on the nation building process. Giulianotti in *Sport a critical sociology* (2005, 69) argues that “sport certainly enables Africans to articulate senses of nationhood and cultural pride on the global stage”. At least from daily observation, and from various literatures, there is a sense of football giving an opportunity for various nations on the globe to come together, even if it is for the time being during which the competitions last.

### **6.1.1. Synthesis of the discourses**

The use of football related discourses on a website dedicated to football provided a useful tool for the research. Football related discourses developed by participants on the forum have indeed been an important indicator of societal life in the context of the nation. By examining the questions of: how participants view the nation-state, how they talk about the different ethnic groups, how they talk about football administration at the local and the global level, what views they have on their national team in relation to the rest of the national teams, and money related issues in football the aim was to acquire clearer view on the relation between football and the nation-state. My expectation was to observe a more peaceful, consensual and progressive exchange between participants and to pick up clues of the uniting effect of football. At least by comparison to other Cameroonian websites not dedicated to football, there was no doubt that the exchanges were less warlike.

The observation makes it clear that the opinions are not only diverging but can be conflicting. Football for some is the only thing that binds the different sections of the Cameroonian community as some of the quotes showed. They see in it the symbolism by excellence of the Cameroonian nation and advocate for political, financial and human investment to improve the sports. Other views are not that positive. They see in football an instrument that serves the interest of a few, which takes in a lot of resources that could otherwise be used to trigger a genuine development in Cameroon. Those participants upon observation of the negative aspects of Cameroonian football doubt if it has ever contributed any positive thing in the Cameroonian nation. In between those two groups are those who besides enumerating the different negative aspects of football do not fail to mention all the good things that it has brought to Cameroon.

On almost all the other topics examined in the case of the study, views appeared to be diversified, conflicting to some extent and dividing. When looking at the concept of nationalism which was closely related to the idea of the nation-state, both the significance given by participants to the concept and the positions held in relation to it were far from being unanimous. If the concept was



for instance looked at from the perspective of the English speaking minority of the country, it meant totally something different from what it represented for the French speaking majority. Most English speaking participants perceived themselves and were perceived by others as being a separate entity distinct from their French speaking counterpart. Nationalism for some of them carried the idea of a struggle for a separate nation-state alongside the French speaking part of the country. In relation to football, although many of them clearly showed their support for the Cameroon national team, they were also somehow unsure about whether to approve or not the initiative by Anglophone nationalists to form a separate national team alongside the Cameroon national team.

From the French speaking perspective, nationalism had relevance when it was directly related to the fight for independence which saw the sacrifice of national heroes such as Um Nyobe, Felix Moumie and many of their comrades. Nationalism is also mentioned by them to criticize the government and its management of state affairs. As a matter of fact, many participants blame the chaotic state of things in their country and the failure of nationalist movements to achieve genuine independence on the brutal massacres of nationalists by the French colonial master, which gave pseudo-independence while placing its protégés in positions of power than real independence. Seen from this perspective, the English speaking Cameroonians who advocate the separation from the French speaking Cameroonians have their views overlapping with those of their French speaking counterpart. Although nationalist ideas are expressed along linguistic lines, many participants conclude that it comes down to an economic problem. A restricted group of people are squandering national resources living lavish lives while the majority of the population lives in abject misery. Upon reflection, a number of the English-speaking minority withdraw their support for a separate national team and a separate state as they got convinced that if Cameroon was managed efficiently, most of the divisions wouldn't even be heard of.

Participants' views on patriotism are could be likened with other topics: politicized, ethnicized and tribalized. However, patriotism seems to be primarily urged upon football players. The level of patriotic demands laid upon them gives the impression that the best expression of patriotism could be projected mostly by football players. This goes in line with the national discourse on patriotism whereby politicians constantly demand expression of patriotism from football players, while they never themselves question their own attitudes. On the web forum where the national discourse on patriotism emphasizes players' attitudes, participants extend the concept to other aspects of societal life, including the army, the judicial system and other law makers.

On the views on tribalism and ethnicity, an observation of the exchanges between participants on

the web forum shows that those topics are the ones more likely to drive the debate close to a physical confrontation. Considering that an assessment of football's influence on the nation building process had much to do with how different communities, ethnic groups could be brought together through the game, the concepts of tribalism and ethnicity are the ones which benefited from maximum scrutiny. The nation is indeed far from being just a reunion of the ten geographical administrative regions that Cameroon is made of. It is primarily perceived by the population as a melting pot of ethnic groups. The uniting power of football had to be therefore assessed from its ability to bridge the gap between the different ethnic groups of the country. Vidacs in her study of football in the Cameroonian society argued that despite the continued importance of ethnicity in football, thus its role in maintaining ethnic distinction and boundaries, it is also undoubtedly leading to a crossing of boundaries in the level of the everyday practice of the sport (Gros, 2006;173). In other words, at least as far as the actors of the sports are concerned, football serves the purpose of blurring ethnic lines. One could also expect that the same effect be replicated amongst the population, given the degree with which people tend to identify with those players that they admire.

On what would be legitimate to call the local level including multicultural communities in western metropolises and remote village communities in developing countries, some studies could serve as cases to support the argument of the uniting power of football at the local level. In previous studies, such as those which studied the Irish communities in Scotland through the football club Glasgow Celtic (Winstasley 2009, Bradley 1994), the case of the uniting power of football at the local level could be very clearly established. Other studies, including that of Giulianotti (2005) in some European cities also shed some light on the ability of football to positively influence local communities. In the African context also, the influence of football at the local level could be established through the dynamics of club formations in the early stages of football on the continent. In Cameroon for instance, it was mentioned that football club formations were made along ethnic lines as they tended to include and represent primordially the ethnic or linguistic group.

In between the global and local dimensions of the influence of football lies a national sphere which some would tend to classify as local: the nation-state. The influence of football and even any other sport at the nation-state level is a bit more difficult to establish than it is the case for the local and the global stages. This is due to some few reasons.

On the one hand in developed countries the nation-state is articulated around a framework composed of different activities. Many of those countries have economic, political and cultural activities which with time, have equally contributed to building a sense of nationhood. To assume

for instance that countries like Germany or Italy derive their sense of nationality solely from their relationship to their national team would be a massive overstatement. They have developed economic brands such as BMW, Mercedes and Ferrari which can all claim high contribution in the nation building process. Winstanley holds the same argument about the Scots as she thinks that religious, class, gender and race divisions between football fans and non football fans do not allow football to account for the sense of national identity. In developing countries where sports could claim to be the major contributors to the idea of nationhood, very little studies have been conducted on the uniting power of football. In countries like Cameroon, Nigeria and Ghana who have enjoyed success on the international scene while at the same time having no major activities to compete with that sport, very few studies examine the relation between the sports and the nation-state.

## **6.2. *The Multinational industry***

A close observation of the exchanges on the forum in relation to local football clubs shows an important shift from what value it held at the earliest stages of football development in Cameroon. Players and coaches independent of their ethnic background are moved from clubs to clubs depending on the position where money is located. Allegiance to clubs based on ethnic identity has therefore considerably waned and additionally, transnational European clubs oppose a deadly competition to local clubs by proposing better quality football with planetary idols. By comparison to the texts produced on European football clubs, local clubs are almost inexistent and the forum sections reserved to them draw very little attention.

In the battle between the local and global football here represented by transnational football clubs such as Barcelona, Manchester United, and Arsenal. European football clubs definitely emerge victorious and if we were tempted to ask whether it is a bad thing or a good thing, the answer would be yes. We know what is bad about it, namely some form of cultural imperialism as more and more local people give up on local clubs and are attracted by the glamorous features of transnational football clubs. This is translated in jerseys of those clubs being sold even in the most remote places of the world whereas even famous football nations from the third world such as Cameroon would hardly have their jerseys in European cities. Additionally, some people from poor countries develop such an addiction to these transnational football clubs that it becomes life-threatening. This raises questions on the rationality of for instance, some two incidents which took place in Africa in 2009? (BBC, May 28 2009) “A Nigerian fan of Manchester United killed four people and injured ten others when he drove a minibus into a crowd of Barcelona supporters, Nigerian police said Thursday”. (BBC, May 6 2009) “A Kenyan fan of English football club Arsenal has hung himself

after his team's defeat by Manchester United". This represents what can be pointed out as the negatives sides of global football on local people.

As for what is good about it, we could notice a redirection of energy which was formally spent on mutual hatred as fans of different local football clubs, towards something that takes place away from the local. Although there are still incidents involving fans from different local teams, they have considerably reduced in number in the recent years. It is nowadays, more common to have participants from different ethnic groups supporting the same transnational football club and to some extent even local clubs.

Seen from the financial perspective, money which has triggered and sustained a constant movement of players from clubs to clubs both at the international and the local level has redefined the very significance of allegiance to one club. The lines are blurred as many local and international clubs include players and staff who have no close relation to the club except the signed contract between them. Added to this is the influence of sponsors who generally care more about making their investment profitable than maintaining ethnic entities. More recently, it has been proven that not only players and staff can be bought, but that even clubs have become mere commodities.

One would therefore be tempted to believe that the recent development in football which has seen maximum importance given to money is influencing identity dynamics in and around football clubs, be it national football clubs or regional football clubs. For a club such as Barcelona which is well known for its advocacy of the Catalan identity, it is somehow strange to observe that more than 50 per cent of the players can be what they call extra communal, i.e. players who have neither the Catalan identity nor the Spanish one. Another similar club such as Glasgow Celtic which is known to be the standard bearer of the Irish Diaspora is also a team full of non-Irish players. As a matter of fact, no single professional football club, except those which can't afford it, can pretend to function only with players ethnically related to the club. Even some national teams have now the obligation to enroll expatriates in order to increase their chances of making it to the most prestigious positions in football ranking. France, Portugal, Tunisia, Holland, Belgium, all have players defending their national colors, who have their ethnic root somewhere else.

### **6.2.2. The Impact of the Commercialization Processes**

Due to its market characteristics, the mobility of football players between clubs therefore serves the role of diluting ethnic ties between clubs and fans and ethnic identities of clubs. In the past five years when the Cameroonian football player Samuel Eto'o played for Barcelona, the Barcelona

football club became the greatest challenger to the Cameroon national team in the hearts of millions of Cameroonians. There are as many references to Barcelona on the web forum among participants as there are references to the Cameroon national team. Additionally, all other European clubs who employ Cameroonian players have their share of coverage on participants' exchanges on the forum according to the importance of the club and that of the player. Definitively, we have moved from the era where ethnic pride and national pride restricted the entry of non-ethnic and non-national players into respective clubs. Gone are the days when a player could fail to make it to his national team because of his skin color. Money and other influences seem to have altered the past conceptions of identity in football.

Over 94 million Euros for Ronaldo's transfer, 65 million Euros for Kaka, 69 million euros for Ibrahimovic and many others over 40 million Euros are the amounts paid by clubs to buy individual players (Aamulehti, August 9 2009). For those who are strangers in the football business it is hard to believe that such amounts are paid to acquire a player just because he can run and kick a ball, especially when we remember that we are in a moment of economic recession. Football has thus become an extremely lucrative business alongside what others effectively call the beautiful game.

Complaints have been made about the business side which seems to have overshadowed the sports aspect of the game. Whether the financial aspect is giving a bad image to the game, there is no doubt that without money football would be far from standing as the beautiful game that it is nowadays. Professionalization has not only led to a more esthetic game but it has guaranteed the players with a comfortable pay and the assurance of being taken care of in case of accidents and other injuries, unlike what was happening decades ago. Although one might in extreme cases debate the relation between money and good football, it is a fact that the hierarchy observed in the ranking of the best football clubs has much to do with their ranking in terms of wealth. Thus, the top ten football teams in the world happen to be also among the richest. It is therefore not a surprise if they can buy football talents from all over the world including Africa and by so doing perpetuate their position at the top of world football.

On the African continent the principle linking wealthy football clubs to good football quality and achievement is not always respected. Cameroon is a classic example which goes against that principle. Cameroon football achievement seems to be inversely proportional to the level of investment in football's development. It is famous for its national team and football legends such as Roger Milla and Samuel Eto'o but as well famous for the poor or inexistent state of its infrastructure. It is a situation that is easily perceived in the frustrated views of participants with

regard to the little investment by authorities in building infrastructures and therefore promoting football. Football has with no doubt generated a lot of money for Cameroon as a result of their achievements and their ranking among the top national teams. The anger and frustration about these issues unite the community of participants in their condemnation of football management in their country. The comparison is therefore constantly made between the investment of European countries and even some African countries in developing football infrastructures and the benefits generated thereof.

Without a proper and systematic investment in such a sport, which at least in some countries generate extensive added values, the fate of poor countries' football in general, and Cameroon's football in particular, is bound to be sealed. A vicious circle has been created with wealthy football clubs able to buy players from poorer clubs and poorer countries on one side, and football players from poor clubs in poor countries ready to sacrifice everything in order to make it to the biggest teams in Western Europe on the other side. At first view, this might look like a win-win situation as each party seems to gain. The clubs get the talent and the players get the money. However, a closer observation of the transfer phenomenon of players especially from poor countries reveals multiple setbacks for the player's country of origin and to some extent, the players themselves. First, for every player who makes it to a big team, there are dozens of others who haven't made it and are sometimes left to themselves in European metropolises as they failed to impress their employers and might consequently increase the number of illegal migrants in those countries. This situation would be likened to the lottery where only the winners are mentioned whereas millions of others would have participated and have lost. Secondly, for those who make it to a club, many are talked into signing disadvantageous contracts making them work longer than they would want and earning less money than their European counterparts. Even for those who could say that they have gotten the contract of their life, things are not perfectly rosy. Apart from sustaining all forms of abuses from fans and staff, they are not always set free or are set free very late when their national team needs them.

The consequences are huge for a country like Cameroon which has numerous players playing abroad. There is an increasing number of youth who drop out academically to pursue football career. The performance of the local teams and even the national team are also visibly affected by the phenomenon. Cameroon went from repeatedly winning the African Champions League with clubs such as Canon de Yaounde, Tonnerre de Yaounde, Oryx de Doualla and so on, to finding it difficult to even make it to the last four. The major factor contributing to this is that European

agents walk across the country and rid local clubs of their best players. Local clubs become therefore unable to compete at the continental level with North African clubs who succeed to keep their talents at home. Some European clubs are going as far as building training camps in African countries to guarantee the acquisition of more talents at a better price. Although such project might be hidden behind beautiful rhetorics, they might fulfill a neo colonial agenda similar to what Guilianotti denounced in one of his works. With similar example in baseball in the Dominican Republic, it is argued that the football “Academies operate like local sugar plantations. Both are established by American institutions, gather the best local resources (be it sugar-cane or baseball-players), undertake some basic refining, and dispatch the best products to North America, where final refining takes place before consumption by local consumers. Dominicans are left to consume the inferior residue” (Guilianotti 2005, 194-195).

As far as the national team is concerned, the continuous lateness in the release of players by European teams adds to the problem that players evolving in different leagues have in forming an efficient team. This has had as direct consequence that even countries which were not traditionally considered as football countries are fearlessly competing with countries like Nigeria, Cameroon and Ivory Coast who have various stars playing in European leagues.

In order to regulate the iniquities between the clubs, the countries, the players and the sponsors, the football world governing body enacts rules and regulations to be followed by all the parties for the betterment of football activities. FIFA’s missions have increasingly grown since its creation in 1904. As the number of national and local football clubs have skyrocketed since the early 1900s FIFA’s job of leading football affairs has become extremely complex and multiple. The financial and political aspects of football have made decision making less obvious than it used to be at the start. Just like power structures in the United Nations define the mechanism of functioning in the organization, similar patterns can be observed with FIFA. The fear with smaller states affiliated with the United Nations has generally been that of disproportional repartition of authority between the rich, powerful nations and the poor ones. By some mechanism which gives every member state equal voting right, there is much balance of power between the different nations affiliated with FIFA. The challenge however comes from the sponsors and all other entities flooding the game with money.

With the media coverage that football enjoys, sponsors are ready to pay astronomic amounts of money in order to promote their products. Nike, Puma, Adidas and all the others all profit from the football global coverage to sell their products to the most remote places in the world. While it

provides the sport with much needed money, critics have pointed out the direct influence of those sponsors in football outcomes. Allegations have been made about those sponsors taking part in fraudulent actions in order to make sure that their protégés, be it individual players or national teams and clubs always make it to important competitions. Boniface (2006, 132) questions for instance the actions of Nike in relation to the Brazilian national team, with which it had a 400 million dollar contract. With such important investments, the fear is that those companies do all the necessary to get a return on their investment. Those allegations are supported by statistics which show that players under contract with those big companies are almost always selected in the team to the disadvantage of their colleagues under contract with competitive companies. Cameroonian fans on the Camfoot website also sometimes question the actions of Puma, official sponsor of the Cameroon national team. On the one hand, the choices by the sponsor of the jersey style to be adopted by the national team prompted FIFA on two occasions to severely sanction the Cameroon team; a situation which is partly to be blamed for their non-participation to the 2006 World Cup. On the other hand, multiple complaints have been made against the German sponsor who is often accused of imposing inefficient German coaches to the Indomitable Lions. Out of complicity or unable to find any charges against the companies, FIFA has hardly ever taken any repressive action against them.

Another category of big guns changing the landscape in football is that of the oligarchs and other new rich from the Middle East. With the arrival on the football scene of Russian oligarchs such as Roman Abramovich things have changed drastically. Football players and football clubs have seemingly become actual commodities since those rich men have no limit in their spending to acquire clubs or players. Many English football clubs for instance have changed hands in the past two years (Manchester United, Liverpool, and Portsmouth). FIFA's president Sepp Blatter as in a reaction to the phenomenon was quoted as saying: "The hazardous way with which money has flooded football has extremely negative effects. Very often the fortune (of some clubs) comes from individuals who in the past had very little or no interest for football and who are using it to achieve other plans (...). They flood with stupendous amounts of money. Uneducated players with smutty language earn huge sums of money ... it's simply unbelievable that a player makes between 8, 75 and 11, 6 million Euros per year" (Boniface, 2006; 129).

Although no action has been taken to limit such activities in football, critics appreciated Blatter's statement and thus distancing him and the federation from individuals with unclear sources of money. The oligarchs' actions which might look like isolated ones are indeed likely to deeply affect



football even to remote places like Cameroon. The flow of money which has selectively targeted European clubs has further weakened other clubs and altered competitiveness. Not only that the smaller clubs can't compete financially, but they see all their good talents follow the direction of money. Additionally, there is a fear that football serves as a tool for money laundering in the hands of some mafia organizations.

The previous problem goes in line with another problem that has been recurrent since the creation of FIFA as an organization. Local and regional federations mostly from developing countries have accused FIFA of Eurocentricism and other forms of biases against poorer nations. Cameroonian participants in their debates regularly point out the concentration of power in mostly European hands and the decision making process which in the end largely favors Europe when we talk for instance of organizing important football competitions.

One point on which FIFA seems to have gained popularity among Cameroonian football fans is its arbitration between the Cameroon government and the Cameroon football federation. In a country where those who disapprove of the government actions are legion, any punch against the government is welcomed. In particular cases where FIFA's arbitration helped to protect Cameroon's football against the government crooks, it gained popularity among the population and it is reflected in debates on the web forum. FECAFOOT president expressed the difficult collaboration between the ministry and the federation in the following terms: "It is very unfortunate that FECAFOOT always has problems with the Ministry of Sport, but this is because of their poor interpretation of the role each party has to play in the management of Cameroonian football. They keep on provoking nasty situations, which frustrates the development of the game ... Some people are just not happy with our modern management of things."

Although there have been concerns and sometimes anger expressed at FIFA's actions towards Cameroon football in particular and African football in general, there seems to be much more positive attitude from web forum discussants towards the Football World Governing Body. There are positive responses concerning FIFA's ranking establishing hierarchy among national teams, concerning FIFA's moves aimed at offering more protection to young players from developing countries, concerning FIFA's relentlessness in applying its regulations to all countries even amongst the most powerful. A general observation, however, of the whole FIFA organization commands us to draw the attention on election mechanism which has maintained Blatter at the head despite all the scandals that he faced before election times. Additionally, the money circuits are not well known by people outside the organization, situation which has raised a lot of suspicion around football world

governing body and prompted authors such as Boniface to wonder “who really govern football?”

### **6.3. Football's and national Development**

When a country has been constantly categorized as: third world country, underdeveloped country, developing country and finally a highly indebted poor country, when it has been under financial assistance since its “independence”, when its youth are driven on the path of economic and academic exile, it is obvious that development issues have to be taken seriously. Whether Cameroon’s government officials take that in consideration or not, the association between football and development is a fact, which no serious government would dare to ignore.

As we have seen in some of the text gathered from the website, participants are not unanimous on the impact of football in development. Because they have yet to see some concrete positive changes in the Cameroonian society as impacted by football, some participants have very easily dismissed it as a mere entertainment having no potential to trigger development. Others went as far as to think that any investment in football is both a waste of time and a waste of money. Although this might sound like an uninformed opinion about football in general, a closer look at football in the Cameroonian context tends to favor such an opinion.

The state of Cameroonian football infrastructure and the continuous mismanagement of football resources have made of Cameroon, a very negative example. After organizing the African cup of nation for its first and last time in 1972, Cameroon has never again organized a football competition and the football infrastructures date from back in those days. Although it can be considered the most prestigious football nation in Africa for having highly achieved in almost every competition by comparison to other African nations, Cameroon ranks amongst the lowest when it comes to football infrastructures. The following comment by Essomba Eyenga, the president of one of the most prestigious club in African history adequately summarizes the situation as follows: “You can imagine that we, and even our city rivals Canon, with all our achievements at home and in Africa, do not own stadiums of our own. If a club with a rich tradition like ours is struggling to survive in the championship, you can imagine what is happening to the much poorer clubs in the country. I am hoping that building a proper ground for a club that has achieved so much in Cameroon and Africa is one of the lasting legacies that I can leave for Tonnerre.”

Additionally, every major success has been accompanied by characterized mismanagement of human and financial resources. Besides other aspects, allegations point to the fact that generalized corruption has affected its football. Many ordinary people believe that the bureaucrats at the

football federation just make money to the disadvantage of players and football staff. In such a context, it is very difficult to see any positive impact of football on development especially when one considers that huge amount of governments money are said to be invested in footballs development.

From another perspective namely development through football, the outcome that one could expect from a country like Cameroon which is a high achiever in football is not very visible. If Cameroonians travelling abroad can boost on being recognized even in some remote places as coming from the country of the Indomitable Lions, Cameroon has failed to capitalize on its global exposure through football to boost its tourism industry. Despite the numerous international achievements that have made it relatively known, the number of tourists visiting the country has barely improved in the past twenty years. This has provided an additional argument to those who believe that football cannot and does not help development.

However not everything is dark when one considers the association between football and development. Although the actions are not constant and numerous, the professional football players, at least as far as Cameroon is concerned, have besides supporting their own family been working with schools and hospitals back home by providing financial and material support. Additionally once we leave the Cameroonian context, the picture is a little bit rosier. Many other African countries regardless of their position in FIFAs football ranking have developed good football infrastructures and are making use of any opportunities offered by football. Smaller countries like Ruanda, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Malawi all have better infrastructures. Many others have seized the opportunities to organize football competitions to be known internationally. South Africa for instance is reportedly expecting to increase its number of tourist by over 2 million with the help of the next football World Cup. Outside of Africa, every other country which has had the occasion to organize either a continental or a global competition has been aware of the huge possibilities offered by the event. Jobs are created and infrastructures are built with the intention to be used when the competition is over.

A close look at an article published by a Cameroonian newspaper dealing with tourism supports the idea that if football has failed to for instance boast Cameroon's tourism, the blame is to be attributed to some other factors. The article claims indeed that Cameroon's lack of proper tourism policy, its bureaucracy coupled with its poor infrastructures are the reason for a stalled tourism performances (Mutations, September 2008). It therefore seems like instead of seeing football's inability to help development, one should admit that the same causes which are impeding Cameroon's football to

soar to higher height produce the same effects on Cameroon's tourism industry.

#### **6.4. Football and national Unity (integration)**

Establishing the uniting potential in football has proven a difficult task. At this point I am convinced of the uniting power in football. However, it should be acknowledged that it would be difficult to examine how that unity was achieved and its processes. The story of the Kenyan young man who took his life as a result of the defeat of the English Premier League Club Arsenal which he supported provides a hint of how the process operates. I remember how I and as well as many people debating on football forum were shocked when we heard about that incident. It was termed by some as result of European imperialism through football. To the question why such an act could take place, there was no immediate answer. Ranking at 105th position on FIFA's estimation, Kenya is not a particularly prolific country when it comes to football and as reflected by the lack of Kenyan players evolving in the English Premier League. There was therefore no rational explanation as to why a Kenyan boy would decide to die with his defeated team, except if we could think of Kenya's past as a British colony. That explanation does not convince however if we consider that English teams recruit fan all across the globe, even in country which have no ties whatsoever with Great Britain. Another recent event reported in the following quote from a Cameroonian participant on the forum links with those events.

"I am wondering what kind of people Cameroonians are. Are they all acting out of mimicry? I saw a large group of them burning Barcelona's jersey (at least what stand as Barcelona jerseys since those are all made in China) at the Mokolo market place. They are all rushing to buy Inter's jersey, and that is almost the attitude that most of you are having here now. You are all leaving the Barca's ship for Inter's one." Now there is no administrative or geographical ties between Cameroon and Spain, so an external observer would be shocked at the sight of Cameroonian young men burning the jersey of a Spanish club in a Cameroon market place.

The simple explanation would be that those youths have been angered by the row between that Spanish club and the Cameroonian player Samuel Eto'o, which ended with his transfer to the Italian club Inter Milan. A less obvious explanation would be that with time, Cameroonian fans of Eto'o adopted Barcelona as a second 'national team' which explains why they had a Barcelona jersey alongside the Cameroon jersey. In my opinion, the connection between those two stories gives an idea of how football operates in bringing people together, even in the context of a nation-state. If different people regardless of their remoteness to the places where football events are actually

taking place, regardless of the apparent lack of connection between them and a particular team can show so much emotions towards a team, one can just wonder what happens when the national team is the point of interest in that matter. Just as we see communities of people around the globe showing devotion to a club that they know only through television screens, we can imagine that in the case of a country, the people by developing the same type of devotion that we observe for European club definitely create a sense of unity. With the additional factor that players from a national team are more easily to be identified with, the bond between the people and their national team can be even stronger.

### **6.5. Concluding Statement**

As Boniface beautifully puts it, football is the “champion of national ideas”. It does not just appear to be the best tool in capturing the idea of the nation, but also it is today present at every level of social strata. The kids playing with any round object at most corner places of towns and villages to emulate the grown-ups that they have seen on TV, the adolescents and young adults who populate multiple stadia around the country while dreaming to become the next football star, the football professionals who have become a new form of commodity traded across clubs and countries, the local politicians who recuperate football achievement to political aims and above all the bureaucrats at FIFA who “pull the strings”.

Building a nation-state, it appears, is far more than just delimitating territory and assigning to it some common features known to a nation (military, government, flag, the currency...). It is much more difficult indeed to insufflate in the national construct, the most needed sense of national identity. In the case of Cameroon, which was a colonial construct, it would have been naïve to expect people to feel as one nation by virtue of a simple decree. The differences between the populations were just too big to be bridged in a short period of time. With the politicians who saw in ethnic diversity a useful tool for the control of the masses, the task of building a Cameroonian identity could not be more difficult.

Studying how people conceive the nation-state through football related discourses has proven to be definitely a task worthy to be undertaken. My work has revealed that football related narratives on the web forum provide participants with instances under which they debate on crucial issues such as tribalism, patriotism, nationalism and most importantly the different ethnic groups to which they have been allocated. Going from there to determine how football helps in building a sense of national identity was however a very complicated task. The huge amount of data collected from the

debates could lead us to some initial conclusions. First, it was a sign that there was communication between Cameroonians whatever the topic was. Secondly, the important number of visitors on that particular webpage showed that even away from the football stadia, football was still a topic that could pull a lot of crowds. In a multicultural society such as Cameroon, the major impediment to any idea of togetherness lies in the fact that the different entities stand as non-intermingling clusters of groups within the same territory. Despite any negative perceptions that one could have vis-à-vis football, one irrefutable thing we notice is the fact that it offers a rostrum for communication between people who might have otherwise been fighting.

An analysis of the data collected on the forum provides us with following results. Participants' identity as members of ethnic groups is a very sensitive issue. For some, building a nation requires that ethnic groups be forgotten as they seem to be intrinsically conflicting with the idea of national identity. For others, the ethnic group is this powerful container which envelops cultures, languages and ways of life of thousands of Cameroonians and therefore deserves to be as important and advocated as the nation. It is an aberration, they argue, to even think of abandoning or neglecting the ethnic group while the colonial master, who brought the concept of nation along, has not himself given up on his ethnic groups: Corsican, Basques, and Bretons...

For the third category of participants it is possible for citizens to carry two identities without them being conflicting. They argue that ethnic identity and national identity are not mutually exclusive. In the introduction to this study, a mention was made about both the perception that people had of football as a uniting sport and the hopes that people have of it bringing peace in shattered communities. In the course of the study I came to notice that the negative claims made on the brutality of football and the risk of it being used as an instrument to control the masses are not totally unfounded. If every football match does not end with hooligans fighting and not every government uses it for a political agenda, it is clear however that football is one of the sports where violence and racism seem to be ever-present. On the idea of football's contribution to building national identity there is at least an impression that more often than not football has helped nationalistic movements in the fight of independence, and for some country it has been the instrument through which the identity and the uniqueness of the nation was defined.

Irrespective of the case study, the data buttresses other assertions on the enhancing role games in general play and particularly football as a global activity. Despite occasional situations like racism, hooliganism and other violent acts surrounding some football events, the apparent communion between football fans from opposite sides has been interpreted by some observers as a genuine

manifestation of football bringing people together. In the context of the study (Cameroon), football could be likened to a lubricant in facilitating major political endeavours like national integration. This thesis holds on the general belief that football has the ability to bring diverging entities together. Besides the media and the actions of renowned organizations such as the United Nations through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with FIFA, there are many other organizations that hold the belief in the uniting capacity of football and that are taking action in order to tap from it and bring unity in areas of constant unrest. Organizations such as Football for Unity went farther than believing in football's uniting power. They took actions in organizing football-related events around the world in view of achieving unity amongst different communities on various continents. Slogans such as "bringing the world together through football" generally stand as their motto. Such organizations claimed to be: bringing together people from all religious backgrounds through football, promoting unity and tolerance and celebrating diversity and et cetera.

However that contribution of football seems to be contextual. In her study of football in Scotland, Winstanley gets to a different conclusion. She argues that any idea of football as a symbol of Scottish nationality would have to "ignore the fact that the problems of sectarianism in Glasgow, and indeed elsewhere in Scottish football, do more to undermine Scottish football's ability to forge a national identity and to create a national consciousness". In the Cameroonian context the answer could not be that straightforward. It is possible however to say that although the ethnic and national identity seemed to be conflicting, the globalization in football helps create another sense of otherness. Therefore the "other" which was previously represented by members of other ethnic groups is progressively replaced by a new perception of otherness. The European, the American, The Asian and even other African nations who are potential adversaries in football competitions are better perceived as the "other" than a fellow citizen with whom one supports the national team. One could say therefore that through its ability to pull huge crowds on the one hand, and on the other hand to create the opposition "us/them", football contributes in creating a sense of identity within some nations.

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