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Sport and Politics in Multiethnic States: A Political Development Approach

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Abstract:

Research into politics has sparsely considered sport as an actual or potential vector of political development. This is partly because the scientific legitimacy of sport in Political science is weak and as Eric Dunning explains, sport is considered and perceived as a leisure activity and its physical character is not engaging with the supposedly higher mental and aesthetic functions of the brain required in politics. This paper intends to fill this gap by attempting a connection between sport and politics in multiethnic and vulnerable States. Using the Political development approach of Almond and Coleman and with measures and examples principally drawn from Cameroon, a well-known football country in Africa, this paper finds that through sport political systems fulfil certain political functions including: interest aggregation and articulation, political socialization and recruitment, political communication, control and regulation and of course the mitigation of political instability. The study is a contribution to the literature on political participation that unfortunately, typically focuses on socioeconomic status as major factor of political engagement.

Keywords: Cameroon, political, politics, political development, sport

1. Introduction

Ordinarily, people believe that sport and politics are or should be disconnected. First, sport has been considered and treated as different from politics with primary focus on the health aspect of it and the joy and wellness it produces as a game (Abell et al., 2005). Second, research into politics has not often considered sport as an actual or potential vector of political development—rather; sport is perceived primarily in terms of economic and social benefits. Generally, this is can be due to the fact that the scientific legitimacy of sport in the social sciences and political science in particular is weak. Normative political theorists see dissociation between sport and politics, given that they are governed by separate structures (Cachay, 1988) and therefore perform different functions—with sport seen as regulator of the human body (Acree et al., 2006) and politics perceived as society's regulating mechanism (Easton, 1965; Skocpol, 1992). Even if that was the case, the precarious nature of multiethnic and divided States would require something in addition to the specialised political structures to mitigate the potential of political instability and conflict. In the much still relevant *Politics of the developing* areas by Almond and Coleman, sport was not considered as a political vector in political systems and politics never perceived sport as all that significant in the production of political values.

However, today, the political reality in multiethnic and divided societies of the developing States shows that not only there is a connection between sport and politics but the two are inseparable and this sometimes leads to the conclusion that sport in itself is politics and politics is sport. In as much as sport provides a forum for political socialization, the political uses sport as a foundation of political values such as nationalism, political development, national unity and political legitimacy. Although sport appears to be an institution on its own in State politics, the reality reflects a manifest association and connection between the two. Sport is not only a vector of human development health wise but a vector of political development through the creation of political institutions that regulate sport matters within States. Sport lays claim on the political and the political is sometimes called to regulate sport. There might be specialized structures governing the sport realm and which are not political in the real sense of the term but governmental structures have intervened to make, apply and adjudicate rules governing sport.

The purpose of this paper is to provide further theoretical and empirical evidence of the nexus between sport and politics in modern States with a focus on the role of sport in political development of precarious multiethnic and divided States. We argue that political development is also an outcome of the connection between sport and politics. In addition to the health and physical benefit of sport, there is a holistic political function and political benefit of sport to modern States in terms of development of political institutions, civic attitudes and behaviours. There is political interest for sport and there is a sport interest for the political. Sport is used as an instrument to justify the creation of coercive political institutions of control, and to reify, project and sustain political values. The political has an interest in sport when it intervenes directly or indirectly to appropriate it for symbolic and practical political gains, among others. Sport has an

interest in politics when it seeks the political as a regulator of sporting life and when sometimes it is used as a scorecard to penetrate the political field. It is in this interwoven framework that political institutions and civic attitudes and behaviour emerge and develop.

The State of Cameroon is mostly used as litmus test of sport legitimacy in politics. It is a multiethnic and divided State and this precarious nature has left no political leader indifferent to sport and in particular football it is well known for as champion in sub-Saharan Africa. Cameroon never waited for UN Resolution 67/296 of 23 August, 2013, declaring an international day of sport for peace and development before it could consider the political value of sport. The political value of sport is part of the political culture of the political system in Cameroon and this can be found in the institutional arrangements that promote sport and physical education. Cameroon is one of those States in which sport and in particular football and politics feed on each other in several different ways as we demonstrate in the rest of the work.

2. Sport, Politics, and Political Development

2.1. Sport

How might we understand sport? How might we differentiate sport from any other social activity? How can sport be singled out in the myriad of activities that modern humanity performs? There might not be a single meaning to sport. This implies that sport cannot be defined because of its multiple meanings. This is because once the name is pronounced it can signify quite a different thing to different people, at different moments and in different places. Like William Morgan, we propose a definitional approach that rest on contextualizing sport (Morgan, 1977). That is sport should be understood in terms of a given context. For some people when the name sport is pronounced it resonates as though it is about a sporting competition such as football, baseball, basketball, etc. encounter among individuals or teams. This definition that resonates professional-like is often associated with fans and lovers of professional sports and is different from a second category who sees sport as a physical activity of fitness and wellness. To this second category, sport may be dissociated from professional competitions because it finds in professionalism a money making business than a physical fitness one. In any case, our understanding of sport has been shaped not only by our personal feelings and emotions about it but also by the emergence of sport media. Numerous sport TV channels exist and are accessible and in most cases their programs are dominated by sport-for-money events such as football championships and others, than sport-for-physical fitness. This must have certainly influenced the professional understanding of sport. For example, in Cameroon, once the name football is pronounced, what people are likely to think of first is an international encounter of the National football team (Indomitable lions) than a football for fitness kind of thing. Peerfootball arguments among Cameroonians are more about football stars and clubs than about football-for-physical fitness. Within the same direction, social gathering discussions on football and other sporting events tend to focus around financial gains such as amounts gained by players, coaches, sporting clubs, and the like than about the amount of personal calories lost or gained from a casual physical exercise. This understanding of sport as a professional activity that makes use of the physical body to make money at the expense of a victory over an opponent is what is certainly dominant among sport lovers of professional sport.

At the other end are those who think of sport as an activity for physical fitness and wellness. The pursuit of excellence is not perceived as forming part of sport in this category except excellence is understood as having gained fitness and wellness. Among those who perceive sport in this manner are members of sport and physical fitness clubs and groups in cities and towns, individuals who do personal physical activity such as footing and gym for fitness and wellness. They are far from thinking about sport as a competitive and money making activity with the use of physical exercise and are likely to see in sport a leisure activity to keep the body fit.

In this paper, sport will be considered in the professional and physical sense as we mentioned earlier and this is for some reasons. First, the professional understanding of sport makes sport a widely appealing and money-making activity that goes beyond individual consideration. Second, its competitive dimension makes it a public attraction. Thirdly, the public character of the activity somewhat automatically brings in the State as rule-maker and adjudicator in some cases. This perception of sport first originated from the understanding of athletics as physical activity in which the pursuit of excellence and the agonistic principle are the guiding rules. The activity is characterised by competition and victory depends on the effort within a set of abilities specified by the rules, which also are designed to create equality of opportunity. In the words of Keating the

'...athletic endeavour demands sacrifice, dedication and training. Winning is taken as a sign of excellence provided that certain conditions are fulfilled: the competitors must be worthy, the rules must be obeyed and the victory must not be due to chance. The basic purpose of the athlete is to do his best - achieve his potential, which of course he develops in training. The way he approaches this personal limit is by trying to be the best among people with a similar purpose. Striving to win among like minded people is a mechanism which is the most likely means to bring the athlete near to his limit.'¹

This understanding of sport is not limited to athletics but also embraces other sporting activities that involve competition and quest for victory with the use of physical exercise and respect of rules and regulations. These include but are not limited to national and international football tournaments, basketball, handball, cycling, which are most common at least in Africa.

¹ Natan, A. (1969), 'Sport and Politics' in J. Loy and G. Kenyon (eds.), *Sport, Culture and Society*. New York: MacMillan, p.204.

2.2. Politics

How might we distinguish politics from other social activity? Is there consensus among people as to the boundary between the political and non-political? Politics like sport is another buzzword commonly used in public milieu and this implies that public conceptualization of it is more or less chaotic. The complexity of understanding politics derives from the fact that it is used in almost every aspect of social life and activity that involves some sort of competition including sport itself. It is a multifaceted word owing to multiple and overlapping interpretations. The chaotic and multifaceted interpretation of politics makes it difficult to discern patterns of understanding what it really means. Nevertheless, *politics* like sport is a social activity that involves competition among individuals and groups to gain power of control over society or some entities within it. Political scientists have closely related politics to power and control particularly in relation to the State. To say that politics is seldom associated with other social activities including sport can be explained by the fact that competition for power is almost a natural part of human activity and interaction. Competition for power is found in social groupings such as the family, social groups, organisations, (religious) communities, etc. It should be noted that this activity categories and social groupings are not political in the strictest sense of the term; yet, politics is sometimes used to describe that struggle for power, control and decision-making. In any case, politics principally combine government-related and controversy (Fitzgerald, 2012). This means that politics is concerned about the kinds of things government does, fails to do or should do. But this understanding is somewhat incomplete because that will mean that politics does not exist without government and this might be questionable. There is politics in controversy as well and in fact we may even say that controversy is politics in itself. The opposition is acting controversy and it is into politics. When Machiavelli talks of politics, focus is on the political leader that is the government, Rousseau focused on the arms of government (legislative, judiciary and executive), and Sydney Verba and Norman Nie are concerned with society outside government and how it influences government action.

Like sport, politics is a game—some will say a game of interest. However, the difference is that while sport uses the physical ability as its primary resource, politics is more of cognitive abilities and capabilities. Sport is more concerned with using the body; politics is more about using the brain. Both of them might sometimes make use of tricks where possible to obtain success but in most cases they are governed by rules and regulations that are binding on all competitors.

2.3. Political Development

The concept of *political development* emerged in the 1960s and as a result of concern Political scientists had for political systems in developing areas of South East Asia, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Near East and Latin America (Almond and Coleman, 1960). In the quest for universalities among political systems Almond and Coleman found that there are certain properties common to all political systems namely: the presence of a political structure, the performance of same functions by these structures, the multifunctionality of the political structures, and the mixed nature of the system in terms of traditionality and modernity. However, to say that there is political development means that a political system has initiated a process by which there are structures that perform two major functions namely input functions (political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation and political communication) and output functions (rule-making, rule application and rule adjudication (Almond and Coleman, 1960:17). It is within the framework of these structures and functions that we delineate the role of sport. How significant is sport in political development? What political functions can sport perform? There is a significant contribution of sport to political development in terms of the following: control and regulation function of government, political communication function, interest aggregation and articulation function, political socialisation and recruitment function.

3. Sport and Politics in Scientific Literature

The study of sport and politics has been dominated by sociologists and political philosophers who prefer to talk more of sport and society. Even though it is difficult to locate the period when scientists indeed developed scientific interest for sport and politics, we can however, trace such origins from the earliest times with the emergence of the Olympic Games. In any case literature according to our findings examines sport and politics from three perspectives: sport for fitness and wellness, sport as political pedagogic driver and sport as political instrument.

Classical philosophers and thinkers were among the first to attempt a scientific study of sport. These include Socrates, Plato and Aristotle who were more concerned with sport and the development of personal ability—that is, how physical activity could enhance moral virtue by energizing body and soul (Carr, 2010). Hardly do they make a link between sport and politics in the strictest connection we can imagine. In *Politics* Aristotle develops an interest for sport but considers it more from a fitness and wellness perspective. In the *Republic*, Plato, unlike Aristotle offers a highly distinctive account of the value of sport in terms of its vital contribution in developing part of the soul he characterises in terms of spirit, energy and/or initiative. Socrates was virtually of the same minimalistic perspective and argued that physical activity (herein referred to as sport) produces a certain kind of mind—one that is tough and (surprisingly!) uncivilized and the absence of it produce a soft and over-sensitive mind.

Modern authors have taken a step further to try a somewhat direct connection between sport and politics. Norbert Elias and his student Eric Dunning were more interested in the role of sport in society and how it helped to develop non violent patterns of political behaviour in England and Western Europe. This pedagogic approach to sport in State politics has the advantage of providing a measure of the influence of sport on patterns of political behaviour, and in particular in comparison to other social processes such as socioeconomic status. The abundant use of sporting metaphors in politics has been recognized by Eric Dunning in his book *Sport matters*. This is an indication of the emotional and pedagogic resonance political leaders give to sport.

Contestably too, Norbert Elias also finds that politics plays a pedagogic role in sport. Sport rules were influenced by the emergence and conduct of parliamentary forms of political struggles in 18 century England—what Elias calls the parliamentarization of political conflict. This process marked a crucial stage in the English civilizing and state formation processes. Dunning (1999:56) writes:

'It was in the context of an increasingly pacified society subject to more effective forms of parliamentary rule that recognizably modern forms of sport based upon written rules first began to emerge. That there was a strong connection between these two developments is suggested by the fact that there were close parallels between the emergent party rituals of parliament and the emergent rituals of modern sport. Both, as they came to develop in eighteenth-century England, began to involve less violent ways of conducting struggles than had previously prevailed.'

Elias calls this the 'civilizing spurt'. If sport and politics emerged in parallel which between the two of them must have first influenced the other is what we may want to know. Which between sport and politics is the independent variable? Elias attempts an answer to this puzzle when he writes that the 'parliamentarization' of the landed classes of England had its counterpart in the 'sportization' of their pastimes. This sounds contradictory! If we assume as Norbert Elias does that sport rules influenced parliamentary forms of political struggles and that the self-same parliamentary practices are a product of leisure sporting, then, there is a contradiction. If we have to consider this assertion, then, it will mean that between sport and politics, sport, at least, leisure sport (as was practised by English landed classes) first emerged to influence political attitudes and not the opposite. Perhaps we may draw the conclusion that leisure sport developed parliamentary rules and parliamentary rules in turn influenced the development of modern sporting rules. In any case, this debate has a source—most probably in the sociological consideration of sport and politics. In *Sport matters* Eric Dunning explains that although sociology has been entrapped in political struggles sport is still relevant as a subject of study in sociology. In fact he finds that the political has substantially downgraded sport in sociology. Comparatively, sport is not posing a serious sociological challenge as politics. The reason Dunning provides is that compared to politics, sport is considered and perceived as a leisure activity and its physical character is not engaging with the supposedly higher mental and aesthetic functions (see the wellness approach of classical authors above). Perhaps that is the reason why Norbert Elias first saw the primacy of parliamentary influence over sport rules. Sport being a leisure activity was not overtly seen as influencing politics.

Indeed, it is difficult to draw a conclusion on whether sport directly correlates with political participation as Verba and his colleagues do with regards to socioeconomic status (SES). Certainly, under particular contexts and circumstances sport is a driver of political action but we cannot conclude that it is a substantial and overarching independent variable. It is our contention in this paper that in addition to the pedagogic support sport provides to political systems, sport also contributes to the development of political institutions and the promotion of symbolic political values.

Another category of literature has been interested in what we can call the political instrumentalization of sport—the process by which sport is used as a political instrument. Lin, Chien-Yu, Lee, Pin-Chao and Nai, Hui-Fang, (2009) describe how this started in Greek and Roman city states. The government of the city-states in ancient Greece used sport to enhance the fitness of their citizens for war and to demonstrate their superiority over other city-states. In the early part of the Roman era, sport was used for military fitness; in the later years the ruling elites produced sport-like events to entertain and thereby control the masses. 18th and 19th century States used sport to promote love for the fatherland (patriotism), nationhood and national integration and also to demonstrate political supremacy. This seems to be the central argument of Lin and his colleagues. They try to discover explanations to State intervention in sporting matters and use it as a theoretical basis to analyse the connection between sport and politics. In that attempt they find that hegemony theory is the most suitable to explain the correlation between sport and politics. In their conclusion therefore, we can deduce that sport is an instrument of power and domination. Thus, if the question is asked of why government intervenes in sport, the answer according to Lin and colleagues will undoubtedly be for reasons of power and domination. Here, typically, State governmental intervention in the regulation of sport is an extension of State monopoly in the authoritative allocation of values. The instrumental reasons for State interventionism however, include: to develop the physical fitness and health of the citizen for national defence; to maintain public order; to promote national prestige; to promote social solidarity; to promote political ideology; to increase and maintain the legitimacy of the government and to promote public moral status as a part of welfare provision or to achieve its foreign policy objectives.

To add to that, there is a pedagogic motive of State interventionism driven by the belief that sport imbues the populace with the right type of values and norms – of obedience, self-discipline, and team-work. The study of Sugden and Bairner shows that in Northern Ireland there was an extensive program of investment in public sport and recreational facilities aimed at bridging the gap between the Catholic/Nationalist and Protestant/Unionist communities.

If attempts at the political instrumentalization of sport were successful in some States, in others, it met with challenges. Football for example is still to produce sustainable nationalism in Argentina particularly in times of conservative neopopulism (Pablo Alabarces & María Graciela Rodríguez, 1999). Although sport is popular in Cameroon, and its development largely led by central government (Joanne Clarke and John Sunday Ojo, 2017), identity politics is present in football Vidacs (1999). These examples suggest that sport is not an absolute instrument in the production of political values. However, sport is a less coercive method modern States could use to maintain social control and of course political order in multiethnic and divided States no matter how fragile it might be.

The above literature review suggests that the 'why' do States intervene in sport question has been given wide attention whereas 'how' effectively states do intervene and/or 'how' sport effectively influence the political development of modern States still remains ambiguous. We thought that the 'how' question deserves much attention and it is partly the intention of this paper to fill the gap.

4. A Theoretical and Developmental Approach to Sport in State Politics

International development organisations have increasingly begun to look to sport as an instrument for reaching development goals, including the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There are now high expectations of sport, with large development potential ascribed to it. Sport is considered to be beneficial in developing social and emotional competencies by nurturing individual traits including self-esteem and communication skills, as well as instilling values such as fair play, teamwork and tolerance. Sport is being applied to address various issues, including: overcoming trauma of civil war or natural disasters; integrating marginalised groups; creating health awareness; promoting peace and/or conflict transformation; and fostering education and gender equity. Beyond all of these is the fact that sport has also influenced the development of political institutions.

4.1. Sport as Driver of Nonviolent Action: A Lesson for The Political

The scientific legitimacy of sport in the social sciences in general and political science in particular is weak. There is a theoretical deficiency linked to sport as object of study in political sciences. Norbert Elias is however, one of the first well known political scientists to attempt a connection between sport and politics.² In *Quest for Excitement (1986)*, *Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process (1992)*, Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning explain how sport is a driver of non violent action and a mechanism of civilization (Elias and Dunning, 1994). Sport therefore has the ability to reduce conflict, and promote greater understanding and dialogue through positive values such as mutual respect, comity, discipline, tolerance, and compassion. Sporting competitions and political (electoral) competitions are both emotionally charged. The practice of fairplay in sport is a value that can also be instrumental in politics. Learning to concede defeat unopposed or even if it was to be challenged, doing so without the use of unlawful violence is a practice common in the world of international sporting competitions. Sport can be instrumental in the process of political socialisation and in this case, induction into the process of accepting electoral defeat unopposed or opposing it using legal and legitimate means.

In the world of sporting competition, the opponent is considered an adversary and this is sometimes different from the consideration given to a political opponent in the world of politics. Adversaries in any kind of competition are meant to be defeated using the legal means provided by the rules and regulations governing a particular game. Enemies could be conceived as being meant to be eliminated and this is always through the use of unlawful and violent means. If the world of politics could consider opponents as adversaries rather than enemies, then, it is most likely violence resulting from contestation of election results could be somewhat minimized. The use of violence to lay claim on electoral victories is common among political entrepreneurs in developing States of Africa, particularly among losers in politics. In Kenya for example, since the return of multi-party politics the results of three out of four general elections have been contested by losers even if common among the factors is electoral fraud (Maupau, 2008). Losers in politics (potential and actual) also resort to violence³ because they do not only consider their challengers as adversaries but perceive them as enemies, and find in violence the last resort to eliminate them. The global incidence of electoral contention and violence between 1990 and 2012 indicates that the largest number of such events took place in Asia (36%), followed by Africa (26%), the Middle East (20%), Eastern Europe (15%) and Latin America (8%) (Dazecte, 2015). Growing incidents of political violence could be lessened if political actors develop a sense of fairplay common among professional sportsmen and women. This is not to say that the world of sport is void of violence.⁴ However, violence occurs most of the time in politics than in sport. We do not also mean that politics is void of nonviolence. Indeed, well known political figures like Mohamed Ghandi, Martin Luther King and others have used nonviolence to meet political ends. And even here, Martin Luther King, just to cite this example, who made use of nonviolence paradoxically ended up being assassinated.⁵ Whatever the case, empirical evidence of nonviolence in politics is not as alarming as violent incidents that have occurred in State politics. We strongly believe that sport has a pedagogic political function.

4.2. Sport as Diplomatic Tool or A Camouflage of Political Irregularities

As a diplomatic tool sport has been used as political identity and trademark of certain countries abroad. It offers opportunities for reaping support from the general public in a foreign country. It can therefore bring together people of different citizenships and when this happens, diplomatic tensions can be eased. From this perspective sport appears as a means to influence not only diplomatic, but also socio-cultural and political relations in the international scene. The Olympic Games has been used as a major connection of sport to politics and diplomacy. One of the fundamental constructs of the Olympic and according to its founders Pierre de Coubertin and Avery Brundage was that sport surmounts racial, religious and political prejudices and enhances social cohesion and integration.⁶ Countries that have successfully hosted the Olympic competition earned international reputation and respect as examples of States in which differences were transcended and peoples from different backgrounds were brought together. In Apartheid South Africa, sport was

²Elias Norbert, « Sport et violence », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, n°6, V. 2, pp. 2-21.

³Violence related to elections or electoral violence is understood as all sorts of demonstrations, riots, lootings, political assassinations, party clashes, arson, thuggery, kidnappings, among others, spontaneous or not, which occur during, before and after elections, meant to change or influence by force the behaviour of political actors or possibly reverse electoral outcomes and decisions in favour of a particular individual, group or political party. See Ogunidiya, I.S (2003) *Electoral Violence and the Democratization Project: The Nigerian Experience*.

⁴For example the hooligans in England Olympic games have recorded cases violence

⁵Apparently, the seventies were recorded as a period of crisis in American politics and democracy following the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy. Some were quick to draw the conclusion that violence was becoming an American way of life. See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. *The Crisis of confidence*, pp. 1-9, 1969.

⁶See Guttmann, A., (1984). *The Game Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement*, Columbia University Press, New York.

used to isolate South Africa and bring about significant changes in the structure of the State.⁷ In the 1970s and 1980s, the anti-apartheid movement recognised the South African Council on Sport (SACOS) as its domestic sport wing only after this sporting establishment, which, initially promoted apartheid in sport, decided to reverse its position and used sport against Apartheid. This recognition was also influenced by pressure from the international community, particularly other African States, who threatened to boycott the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City if Apartheid SACOS's invitation is not withdrawn and position changed to non-racial discrimination in sports. In addition, the 1995 Rugby world cup (the first major sporting event that held in South Africa), was taken by President Nelson Mandela as an opportunity to bring all South Africans together under the 'one team, one nation mantra' and prove to the world that the era of Apartheid South Africa was over. It was interpreted as a symbol of forgiveness and unification among South Africans who all stood behind the team and supported the rugby players together as one people. These transformations meant that sport was effectively used as a political weapon against racism and other socio-political injustices. They also reveal the extent to which sport has been instrumental in winning international credibility.

Nonetheless, diplomatic victories derived from sport can be masks of the political reality in some States. There is yet to be conviction that sport is an effective driver of local development owing to the indifference some people have whenever an attempt is made to link sports to development. Sport victories might come with the diplomatic honour that a country can have abroad but how does it make a difference in the life of the people. Those who think that sport does nothing for development argue that sport-related victories benefit only those directly concerned—the players and their family, State officials and sport officials. This is indeed a vertical approach to viewing the nexus between sport and general interest. Others do believe that the political has more responsibility of caring and developing the welfare of the general interest than sport. No one can truly measure what general interest has gained from sport-related victories if not of the diplomatic show and international recognition. Others think that sport-generated victories only bring spontaneous joy and happiness among the people after which they return to the reality of their daily life. For this category, one will think that sport victories are a way of sinking/consoling/comforting the hardship and stress of daily life. When one is drunk by victory of sport, troubles/problems are instantly submerged, so it is believed.

Diplomatic victories engineered by sport can sometimes be used as cover for the abuse of human rights back at home or to subsume hegemonic power enjoyed by a group of political leaders. Evidence seems to indicate that sport loving countries of Africa have the worse records of human rights abuse. Although this cannot be directly connected to sport, sport victories could lessen efforts to protect human rights. Furthermore, sport has been perceived by the governed as an instrument sometimes used by politicians to distract the people from the real issues affecting their welfare and livelihood. Efforts by government to organise international sporting competitions by putting in money to build mega sports structures might sometimes be viewed as waste of tax payer's money and the common wealth of the nation, and as a strategic digression from caring about long term development issues that affect the life of the governed.

5. Sport and Political Development: Some Measures and Evidences

5.1. Sports as Driver of Political Socialization and Recruitment

Sport can provide a pedagogic political and recruitment function. Sportsmen and women have been recruited into political roles in society owing to some popularity generated by sport. Sport has also been found to play a role of induction into citizenship roles and orientation in political systems. Sporting associations and clubs in schools and neighbourhoods initiate young people for example in pre-political citizenship experiences. Members of such clubs and groups learn new patterns of participation, respect of rules and regulations, respect of authority/hierarchy, learn to accept and accommodate the other, learn to accept defeat or to oppose it using legal means, and of course that they influence one another there is obvious. A typical example in Cameroon is the military where sport is compulsory activity in which respect of hierarchy is almost sacred. To become an executive of a sporting federation such as the Cameroon Football Federation (FECAFOOT), elections are organized to that effect and in the process, induction into electioneering takes place. Politicians need popularity to win political support during elections or at least to become well known political figures. Sport can provide such popularity. Sport generates popularity which can be later transformed into political gain. Even though, the popularity acquired in sport could be said to be non-political one, and so may not be used for direct political gain, we have had cases where sport-generated popularity successfully penetrated the political. Georges Manneh Opong Weah, the 25th president of Liberia and one time football star is an example.⁸ Sport played a fundamental role in his political career by at least providing him the popularity politicians need. But the issue is also to know whether these sportsperson-politicians really owe their political success to sport. We may also wonder why some sport stars may not take the decision to play politics. Roger Milla of Cameroon for example, can be contrasted with George Weah in the sense that he has never overtly opted to become a professional politician even after retiring from professional sport. However, he was appointed Roving Ambassador by a Presidential decree, certainly, as compensation for the diplomatic glory he brought to Cameroon.⁹ While it is difficult to establish a clear link, statistics reveals that a good number of professional sportspersons became politicians and vice versa. The UK is the country with the highest number of sportsperson-politicians and with MP as dominant political position for most of them. In the USA, the professional body builder, Arnold

⁷See Booth, Douglas, "The South African Council on Sport and the Political Antinomies of the Sports Boycott" *Journal of South African Studies*, Vol.23, No1, March 1997: 51-66. Taylor and Francis.

⁸He was FIFA World Player of the Year 1996, Ballon d'Or 1995, CAF Legend Award 2005, Arthur Ache Courage Award 2004, CAF Platinum Award 2018, CAF Award for Best Ten Players of the Last 50 years, among others.

⁹It is unclear to most Cameroonians what really the position of Roving Ambassador means. Many believe that it is not a position of influence per se, and that is why they see it more from a compensatory lens.

Schwarzenegger became governor of California State between 2003 and 2011, though he was also popular as an action movie actor. In any case, the position of politician varies from local political activist through to mayor, MP, Senator, professional politician, government official (minister or so) to statesman (chief executive).

We also have cases where running a sport team as president or coach could have the propensity of producing political leadership. Fru Ndi, leader of the main opposition party in Cameroon partly became popular as a result of his being the Chairman of the PWD Bamenda Football Club—the most powerful football club in English speaking Cameroon at the time. Running a football team can provide a foundation for the acquisition of leadership skills. The emotional character of sporting competition and players help sport managers develop skills of managing emotions which is also necessary for dealing with emotions in politics.

Sportsmen and women are free to access the political because generally speaking there are no institutional barriers to the political, or what Verba and his colleagues call a *ceiling* on participation and engagement.¹⁰ Access to the political particularly as a professional politician requires the development of an interest for politics and a decision to become politically active. Sportsmen and women who want to have indeed taken advantage of this opportunity. The political is an open access and 'free' portal in most States. That is why the political is also able to recruit sport when sportsmen and women decide to find their way in there.

5.2. Sport as a Political Interest Articulation Structure

Sport associations and clubs are also a kind of associational interest group that promote and defend the interest of its members and/or other groups in society. Apartheid South Africa is an example of the use of sport structure to articulate the interest of black South Africans in the struggle against Apartheid. In a similar dimension, sporting stars and figures have been used to articulate the interest of vulnerable groups in society through a public policy framework of sensitization and campaigns. International sporting competitions are also forums in which anomic actions such as riots and demonstrations can take place. In some cases these may be transformed into input demands in the system. Sport demonstrations and riots can alter the statutes of the game (rule-making function), lead to freeing of prisoners or rescinding a bureaucratic decision (rule application) and most especially, publicizing a protest (political communication function).

5.3. Sport function of political interest aggregation

The domain of interest aggregation in political systems is not only the preserve of traditional political institutions such as parties, legislatures, and executives. The structure of sport in modern political systems can perform the political function of interest aggregation. Political personnel have been recruited to control sporting activity. The interest of doing so lies in the desire by the State to regulate and control sport out of anomic paths. Public policy of sport is also a product of State interventionism. And if that be the case, then, sport has an authoritative value—another way of saying that sport policies are somewhat coercively binding on all sport stakeholders. It is the political executive that is principally in charge of developing public policy related to sport. However, typical sporting bodies also aggregate and articulate the interest of specific sporting expectations that can and do culminate into a public policy of sport. The introduction of sport and physical education as subjects in public schools is a case in point. In summary, structures that influence public policy of sport are: sport federations, media of communication, legislative bodies, executives/presidencies, among others.

Indeed, if well known structures of interest aggregation are political parties (and this will depend on the party system) (Almond and Coleman, 1960: 41), in Cameroon, political parties have not been directly involved in the aggregation of sport interest that could culminate in a public policy of sport. In the manifestos of political parties, including that of the national ruling party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), sport as an issue is far from being a strong advocacy discourse in the policy program of the party. However, party officials occasionally cite sport successes and failures more or less on a particularistic basis than a general policy of the party. This can certainly be as a result of the belief that sport is quite apart from politics. For example the CPDM considers sport as part of its social and cultural development policy. In this regards, the party's emphasis is on 'the social development and wellbeing of Cameroonians by the construction of health, educational and sports infrastructures'.¹¹ The Social Democratic Front (SDF) as the opposition also regards sport essentially from a social and cultural lens.

5.4. The Political Communication Function of Sport

Sport plays a fundamental role in political communication. Sport clubs, federations and stakeholders articulate their sport interest by way of communicating their demands—so that legislators and executives enact laws on the basis of such information. At one point, in the heart of an international football tournament, the President of the Republic of Cameroon took the decision that a football player who was on the reserve bench be brought to the pitch following spectator outcry and resistance from the team coach of the Indomitable Lions of team Cameroon. This implies that recruitment into the national football team can sometimes be influenced by the executive even if it is through some discretion. It is well known in Cameroon that the recruitment of a coach to lead the national football team is a preserve of FECAFOOT in collaboration with the Ministry of Sport officials.

That notwithstanding, we may want to question if sport federations do have specialized communication agencies or structures with government. It is not quite obvious to find a special communication unit devoted to exchange with the State of Cameroon through its government. However, FECAFOOT do have a unit of communication with sport

¹⁰Verba, S, Nie, N.H and Kim, J-O, (1978), *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven-Nation Comparison*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

¹¹See Article 24 (2) of the Basic Texts of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement—CPDM, 2012 edition.

stakeholders. Given that the government is also a sport stakeholder, we can conclude that within the sport realm communication structures exist that fulfil, somewhat, implicitly, the function of political communication, through press releases and conferences.

Sport media also play a political communication function—acting as relay between sport lovers and government. They communicate sport society expectations to government and government sport policy weakness and failures to sport society. This also means that sport media could act as watchdog of government action particularly towards sport, just like the opposition acts like watchdog of government. Some sport TV channels devote full-length programs to dissect government attitude and behaviour toward sports and in the interest of sport society. When the right to host the 2019 AFCON was withdrawn from Cameroon, the Cameroon government became a victim of public opprobrium expressed on audiovisual media. However, although, there are several sport TV channels, both national and international, secular TV channels do communicate news and events about sport occasionally. The State TV media has recently established a sport and entertainment TV channel—an indication of State interest to use sport to penetrate the public and to enable the public know about the degree of State responsiveness. This also informs us on the degree to which governmental authorities are responsive to sport-generated demands through various communication outlets.

5.5. Sport Control and Regulation as a Function of State Government

How does government intervene to regulate sport? Government creates structures to govern sport, makes rules that govern sport although this is not an exclusive task, oversees the implementation of sporting rules and regulations, creates sport infrastructures to host sporting activities and events, and guarantees the security of spectators and players during sporting events.

States have been able to design political institutions with sport-oriented functions. In the case of Cameroon, this kind of institution is called Ministry of Sports and Physical education. This ministry is a manifest product of the States' willingness to regulate sporting activities within the State although this is sometimes in collaboration with national and international sporting federations. It is worthy to note that the Ministry of Sports is placed under the direct control of the chief executive.

This institutional design regulates sport by performing the following functions: elaborate draft text on the sport and physical education sector; design development strategies and plans for sports and physical education; design programmes for the promotion of elite sport and the technical and tactical enhancement of sports men and women; develop and promote the Olympic spirit and culture within the society; decide on physical education or sports teaching programmes in public and private primary and secondary schools as well as higher institutions of learning and monitor their execution; monitor the execution of the preparatory programmes of sportsmen and women in collaboration with the various sporting Federations; supervise athletes participating in international competitions; monitor the supervision of top-level athletes; ensure the control of facilities for the training of sportsmen and women; design training and contribute in research on sports medicine and science in collaboration with the Relevant ministries; oversee the building of sports infrastructure in collaboration with the Relevant ministries; promote and supervise major international competitions in collaboration with the bodies concerned; technically supervise public structures functioning in the area of sports or physical education as well as training structures in physical education and sports business; among others.

The above is an indication that the Ministry of Sport is at the centre of the design and implementation of sport public policy in Cameroon. This is not to say that decisions of this institution clash with other sport institutions such as national and international sport federations though it has sometimes happened, or that there is an attempt by the political to interfere in sport. In any case though, the existence of national sport federation which are expected to be answerable to continental and international sport federation, alongside a political institution such as the Ministry of sport, expected to be answerable to the State, makes the regulation of sport and its public appreciation somewhat complex. The ministry of sport has sometimes come under criticism for failing to live up to some sporting expectations. When Cameroon lost the hosting of the 2019 African cup of Nations (AFCON), there was a critical opprobrium generated by the failure of the Minister of Sport and Physical education and the Presidency for not having the sporting infrastructure ready by the deadline established by AFCON/CAF. The fault was not seen to be that of the national football federation (FECAFOOT), a specialised sporting organisation expected to be independent from government. Setting the blame on governmental officials simply indicates that collective perception sees in sport an activity that is primarily to be in the hands of the political. In apportioning blame first and foremost on the political, public perception is confirming the primacy of the political in sport and indeed, the very nexus between sport and politics. The belief here is partly that, since it is the political that is the main appropriator of sport related victories, it is also obviously the one who takes the blame for any sport shortcoming. Another explanation is that it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Sport to oversee the building of sport infrastructure and when this fails it is somewhat natural for it to take the blame.

The role of the chief executive in sport control and regulation cannot be over emphasised here. In Cameroon, the chief executive (President of the Republic and Head of State) is perceived as an embodiment of all sporting activities. After all according to the Constitution he is the first sportsman of the Republic. Therefore public expectation from such a political figure is undoubtedly high. He designs the sport vision for the State, oversees its implementation, and does this with the help of collaborators he appoints. He represents the country (when he can) in international sporting competitions and events with team Cameroon. Beyond expectation, the chief executive can influence a sporting competition through the decisions he takes. For example, chief executives can take a decision to bring in a player, to nominate a team coach and other officials of sporting federations. However, this is sometimes done in informal ways and discretions so that opinion will not see an undue interference of the executive in an 'extra-political' domain.

5.6. Sports and the Mitigation of Political Instability Linked to Multiethnicity

Multiethnic States are divided in terms of ethno-tribal-regional, linguistic, historical, cultural and religious polarities. This polarity is a potential source of political fragility. Bringing the various groups together to accept and embrace a common national discourse is indeed a daunting political task. However, uniting around a football victory can lessen the potential of fragmentation and cracks within the State although this should be considered alongside with other factors of integration and national unity.

The uneven distribution of sport infrastructure in Cameroon has not been an issue of public contemplation among the diverse groups that make up the political community. Chief towns of the Anglophone regions are not host to mega sports infrastructure (with the exception perhaps of Limbe, in the South West Region which has a multipurpose sport complex), yet this unequal distribution of sport infrastructure has not been instrumentalised against the main State. In international sporting teams, such as football, there are more players from some groups than others yet what counts for most Cameroonians is the victory at the end of any encounter. This is evidence that sport can be found to be positive for social cohesion in multiethnic and divided societies.

In parts of the Middle East, sport has been used to accommodate difference between Arabs and Jews, particularly among children. Sport has been particularly instrumental in post conflict situations. A study by Langer and colleagues reveal that children view their experiences positively when they connect with each other through sport and games. For example, an NGO in Kabul, Skateistan, has been able to reconnect children and restore community through skateboard tuition and a shared space (Thorpe & Rinehard, 2013). In the Galilee region of northern Israel, a program known as 'Football for Peace' was run for Jewish and Arab youths (Sugden, 2006). The above studies which were conducted with the help of interviews shows that peaceful coexistence can be achieved through sport.

6. Conclusion

Our objective in this paper was not to challenge existing literature on sport and politics. Rather, we aimed at showing how sport has emerged as major factor of political participation and indeed the development of political institutions, political attitudes and behaviours through the political functions of interest aggregation and articulation, political socialization and recruitment, political communication, control and regulation and mitigation of political instability, it provides as inputs and outputs demand and support into the political system. The connection between sport and politics is no longer limited to particularistic expressions and feelings, instrumentalist's ideologies and quest for hegemony. Sport penetration into the political fabric is embracing an irreversible institutional pattern. If international development organisations are increasingly looking up to sport as an instrument for reaching development goals, including the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), there is no reason why political systems and in particular multiethnic and vulnerable ones will not reinvent it for political development purposes. Today, everywhere we find sport, we find the political. If we go to the field as spectator to watch a football match, we find the police and the police are an element of State-government used to maintain peace and order in society. The connection between sport and politics is not only inevitable but also almost unavoidable. It is therefore the appeal of this paper to invite social science researchers and political scientists in particular to further investigate sport as factor of political participation and engagement.

7. References

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