

**FOOTBALL DIPLOMACY IN AFRICA:
ANALYSIS OF THE FOOTBALL RELATIONSHIP
FIFA – MEMBER ASSOCIATION – GOVERNMENT
(FROM INTERFERENCE TO COLLABORATION)**

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ABSTRACT: The relationship between sport and politics is an age-old and enthralling one. Sport vis-à-vis international relations has been analysed and travestied as “war minus the shooting” (G. Orwell). The internationalisation of sport has also displayed the latter as an essential tool for development, social awareness, and peacebuilding. However, a much lesser attention has been given to the means of these exchanges: sport diplomacy. The concept of sport diplomacy at present may be grasped as “the conscious, strategic, and ongoing use of sport, sportspeople, and sporting events by state and non-state actors to advance policy, trade, development, education, image, reputation, brand, and people-to-people links”.¹ Amongst African states, most of them seem not to have yet mastered fully how to apply sport to build political power and influence regionally and globally.

This thesis hence focuses on analysing the emerging concept of African football diplomacy. It will especially revolve around the tripartite relationship between FIFA, its 54 African member federations and respective government. In football, general experience on the spot has revealed that such a relationship lacks collaborative bound and joint effort. Instead, the relationship maladroitly relies upon seemingly absolute written, the interpretation of which may create at times thorny situations.

As per the Golden Circle theory of Simon Sinek, the ‘Why’ of this study is embodied by a genuine motivation to bring the beautiful game to its highest level on the motherland, as

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¹ S. MURRAY, “*Sports Diplomacy: origins, theory and practice*”, 2018, abstract page.

this is long overdue. 'How' to do this? It shall start with the building and the wide spread of a coordinated diplomatic action in football, preferably tackling the whole African continent. Such a plan shall essentially revolve around a continuously nurtured virtuous tripartite collaboration inspired by best practices in other areas and globally. The research is based on a systematic review of academic, sport governing bodies and governmental documents, as well as a series of structured interviews conducted with senior representatives of European and African institutions, national governments, sports organisations and think tank. This analysis is an essential preliminary step to be undertaken for football governing bodies to deliver final projects sustainably and accurately in a near future.

Keywords: *FIFA – football diplomacy – African football – autonomy of sport – government interference.*

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction – 2. Current state of play of the tripartite relationship – 2.1 Regulatory inventory within the sport movement – 2.2 Government's role: glancing angle of national sports law – 2.3 From justified governmental intervention to undue political interference: a hazy border in practice – 3. (R)Evolutionary approach of football diplomacy in Africa – 3.1 Towards a tripartite collaborative relationship: necessary emergence of a virtuous triangle – 3.2 Towards a sustainable diplomatic strategy – 3.3 Towards an African football diplomacy stimulated by the world – 4. Conclusion – Bibliography