On 8 February 1957 representatives from Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt and South Africa attended the first meeting of the Confederation of African Football (CAF), held in Khartoum, Sudan. Before then, the development and diffusion of football across the continent ‘was clearly rooted in the colonial experience’ (Darby, 2000: 73), facilitated through missionaries, colonial armies and the colonial state. Although tied to emergent nationalism, football and CAF membership were also vehicles for pan-Africanism in postcolonial Africa. Furthermore, CAF has had a contradictory relationship with global football. With a growing number of members, CAF has become the largest voting bloc within FIFA, leading the move to expel apartheid South Africa and wielding great influence in the elections of FIFA presidents. However, Africa also remains at the margins of the global game. An African team has yet to reach the semi-final of a World Cup, despite Pele’s assertion that an African side would win the tournament before the turn of the millennium. Most domestic leagues remain underfunded and struggle to retain their best players, while fans and players regularly buy into the idea that European football is the pinnacle of the game (Poli, 2006). The 2010 World Cup in South Africa, the first on African soil, encapsulated such conflicting power relations.

### Membership and competitions

CAF currently has fifty-four full members, while the football associations of Zanzibar and Réunion are associate members but do not have FIFA recognition. It is the largest continental confederation in FIFA. The continent is split into six zones: Union of North African Football Federations (UNAF), Council for East and Central Africa Football Associations (CECAFA), Union des Fédérations de Football d’Afrique Centrale (UNIFFAC), Council of Southern Africa Football Associations (COSAFA), and the West Africa Football Union (WAFU), which was split into two zones in 2011. At international level, CAF organise the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) for national men’s teams, the African Nations Championship for national men’s teams comprised domestic-based players only, and the African Women’s Championship. CAF also organises U-20 and U-17 competitions for both men’s and women’s national sides. At club level, there is the African Champions League and the Confederation Cup for domestic cup winners. The winners from both competitions compete in a one-off match for the CAF Super Cup.
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Postcolonialism, nationalism and pan-Africanism

Sport was a tool in the armoury of Christian missionaries to ‘civilise’ the indigenous population. Missionaries believed that sport ‘would transform the “lazy” African into a disciplined man working hard in the interest of empire’ (Fair, 2004: 105). With football as the most popular sport in the British colonial army (Hill, 2010), the game spread deeper into southern Africa through a number of conflicts, including the South African War of 1899–1902. Football became used by the colonial state as a vehicle ‘for the maintenance of the colonial order’ (Darby, 2000: 73) while liberal industrialists utilised the game to counter ‘the demoralising influences of urban life on African social practices’ (Badenhorst and Mather, 1997: 473). For instance, the creation of the Johannesburg Bantu Football Association (JBFA) in 1929 by a mix of liberal white industrialists and educated black men was designed to fill the free time of mineworkers on the Rand, while simultaneously providing labourers the chance to develop new social networks to survive the ‘dislocations of urbanisation’ (Alegi, 2004: 43).

Despite being a European cultural form, football also became a site of resistance against colonial rule. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who would become Nigeria’s first president upon independence, founded Zik’s Athletic Club (ZAC) in 1938, using the ‘appeal of sports to embody African self-organisation’ (Darby, 2013: 231) and challenge colonial authority. Azikiwe used the ZAC tours of Nigeria between 1941 and 1943, which were marketed as a fundraiser for the British war effort, to make post-match anticolonial speeches in front of colonial officials (Boer, 2004: 64). In colonial Algeria, matches between Arab-Muslim and European teams often broke into violence. During these moments, ‘[t]he stadium was the space and the match was the time for the dramatization of the struggle between colonized and colonizer’ (Fates, 2004: 50). Football became a key part of independence celebrations for the decolonised nations in the 1950s and 1960s. Alegi (2010) notes that Ghana, Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya and Zambia held soccer tournaments featuring the new national teams to mark independence. In the case of Zambia, the 1964 Independence Cup featuring Zambia, Uganda, Kenya and Ghana U23 was not entirely successful as the home side failed to win a game (Cruickshank et al., 2008/2013).

The link between football and establishing national sovereignty in postcolonial Africa extended to club football. The creation of national football leagues in Egypt (1948–9), and Tunisia and Morocco in 1956 were also bound up in ‘the production of nationhood’ (Alegi, 2010: 57). The Ghanaian president, Kwame Nkrumah, saw football as a valuable vehicle for the production of national unity. He created Real Republicans, a club formed in 1961 to bring Ghana’s best players together in regular competition, which would strengthen the national team. According to Darby, the government were involved in selecting the two best players from each team in the domestic league (2013: 239) to play for the ‘super club’ (Alegi, 2010: 58). While they won the league in the 1962–3 season, and the national team won the Africa Cup of Nations in 1963 and 1965, Republicans also challenged the football nationalism. Darby argues that the autocratic nature of poaching the best players in the country meant that it ‘was illustrative of Nkrumah’s broader centrist tendencies’ (2013: 240).

The formation of new national football teams as a signifier of nationhood was geographically uneven across the continent. The settler colonies in the south, especially South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) did not experience independence/democracy until much later (1994 and 1980 respectively), which ‘precluded the building of new and inclusive nations and developing the nation–football nexus’ (Alegi, 2010: 62). This is reflected in the fact that teams from the COSAFA region have rarely won African competitions. Only South Africa (1996) and Zambia (2012) have won the Africa Cup of Nations, while only Orlando Pirates from South Africa have won the CAF Champions League in 1995. Player migration also
threatened to undermine the nation–football nexus. Before decolonisation, French club sides transferred players from French colonies, especially Morocco and Algeria (Poli, 2006). Such players sometimes featured for European national teams, such as the Moroccan player Larbi Ben Barek (France) in 1938, and the Mozambican-born forward Eusebio (Portugal). Poli describes this period as ‘characterized by a policy of assimilation’ (2006: 396). With the emergence of football as a vehicle to promote national unity, the new nations responded to assimilation through policies of keeping the best players at home. CAF banned players who plied their trade abroad from competing in the Africa Cup of Nations. Given the importance placed on the nation–football nexus, new nations worked to retain the best players domestically. A policy of keeping the best players in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained into the 1980s (Poli, 2006: 396).

While the nation–football nexus was being established on the continent, divisions in CAF emerged, approximately along colonial lines; an Arab bloc in the north, a francophone bloc in the west and central areas and an anglophone bloc in the east and south. Such tensions were in contrast to what Nkrumah had envisaged for African football. Key to his vision of what a postcolonial African man should be was a sense of pan-Africanism, which ‘was to function as the bed-rock of liberation across the continent and the subsequent promotion of African interests’ (Darby, 2013: 232). Such pan-African sentiment was clearly articulated through the organisation of the first All Africa Games in 1965, where football was the most popular sport (Alegi, 2010). As decolonisation in the 1960s swelled the ranks of CAF from its original four members, a postcolonial, pan-African identity was crystallised in the fight against apartheid in South African football.

**CAF and apartheid in South African football**

In 1956, the Minister of the Interior of apartheid South Africa, T. E. Dönges, declared that ‘sport within the borders of South Africa had to be practiced in accordance with the principles of separate development’ (quoted in Alegi, 2004: 113). This was the first substantial move from the ruling National Party that made ‘explicit the state’s commitment to the separate organisation of sports’ (Desai and Veriava, 2010: 18). However, segregation in South African sport had existed long before the declaration. The whites-only South African Football Association (SAFA, but not to be confused with the present-day, non-racial SAFA) was founded back in 1892. Subsequently founded were the South African Indian Football Association (SAIFA), the South African Coloured Football Association (SACFA), and the black-run organisations of the South Africa African Football Association (SAAFA) and South African Bantu Football Association (SABFA).

The anti-apartheid South African Soccer Federation (SASF) applied for FIFA membership in 1954, arguing that the white-run SAFA did not represent South African football. A FIFA emergency committee in the following year agreed with this view, while a FIFA-authorised commission to the country in 1956 also supported this, although it also stated that racial segregation in South African football was a traditional practice. Alegi highlights that SAFA, in ‘an attempt to create confusion while remaining indifferent to apartheid in soccer’ (2004: 113), changed their name to the Football Association of South Africa (FASA) and removed aspects of their constitution that were racially discriminatory. While CAF included FASA in the founding meeting of the confederation in 1957, apartheid was a fundamental stumbling block in the build-up to the inaugural Africa Cup of Nations that year. CAF insisted that South Africa had to send a racially integrated team to the competition in Sudan but SAFA/FASA rebuffed the demand (Alegi, 2010: 67). While it is questionable whether SAFA withdrew or
CAF expelled South Africa from the tournament, fighting apartheid became part of the pan-African identity of the confederation. During the 1960 FIFA Congress in Rome, FASA received an ultimatum: end apartheid in football within one year, or face expulsion. In the following year, FASA was suspended.

The formation of CAF proved to be an outlet through which African football federations could ‘root their struggle against the world body’s European bias’ (Darby, 2003: 4). Elected as FIFA president in 1961, Sir Stanley Rous epitomised such Eurocentricity, especially when he consistently sided with FASA. Despite FIFA adopting an anti-discriminatory stance, stating that ‘a National Association must be open to all who practice football in that country whether amateur, “non-amateur” or professional, and without any racial, religious or political discrimination’ (quoted in Alegi, 2010: 73), the election of Rous signalled the continued support of apartheid football. He was sympathetic to FASA and ‘publicly accused the non-white lobby of seeking to abuse sport to further its own political ends’ (Darby, 2003: 6). Such an approach led to FIFA reinstating FASA. In contrast to Rous and FIFA’s reluctance to permanently expel FASA, CAF expelled the South African association in 1960. Responding to FASA’s readmittance to FIFA, CAF garnered support from the USSR and Asian associations to expel FASA. Although not expelled outright, FASA was suspended once more at the FIFA Congress in 1964. Despite a second suspension, Rous seemed ‘to have been resistant to face up to the actualities of the apartheid system’ (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1997: 17). For instance, in the year before he was deposed, Rous was still lobbying FIFA members for FASA readmission.

The executive committee of FIFA granted South Africa special dispensation to invite amateur representative teams from England, West Germany and Brazil to the 1973 South African Games (see Booth, 1998). While the FAs of England and West Germany withdrew their teams after pressure from their respective governments, it was CAF pressure on the head of the Brazilian FA, João Havelange, who was challenging Rous for the FIFA Presidency, which led to the withdrawal of the Brazilian team. The role of CAF, the pressing issue of apartheid, and the election of future FIFA presidents emphasised CAF’s growing presence in global football, yet conversely, Africa still remained on the margins.

**Marginalised but central**

The issue of apartheid saw the growing significance of CAF as a power bloc within FIFA. Up until the early 1970s, FIFA had only European presidents, who were seen by the non-European nations at preserving the Eurocentric status quo. As such, CAF were central to the election of the Brazilian, João Havelange, to FIFA’s highest office in 1974. The election of Havelange signalled a sea change for the conservative Eurocentricity of FIFA, stating ‘a commitment to globalize and commercialize the game’ (Darby, 2008: 259), while demonstrating the emerging power of the African block within FIFA. When CAF expelled SAFA/FASA from the AFCON after refusing to send a racially integrated team, a confederation of three nations had little political clout within FIFA, yet with African decolonisation in the 1960s, CAF had grown to over thirty members by the middle of the decade. This was in contrast to the fact that there was no guaranteed African berth at the 1966 World Cup in England (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1997: 16). CAF threatened to boycott the 1966 competition but FIFA’s response, to fine the confederation 5,000 Swiss francs, exacerbated the situation and CAF pulled out. Four years later, Africa finally had one place, which was filled by Morocco.

The growing power of CAF within FIFA (see Table 36.1) concerned the European nations, many of whom believed that Europe and UEFA should have a greater say in the running of the global game. In 1962, Hans Wach, the president of the Austrian Football Association, argued
Table 36.1 FIFA membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>1975</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe (UEFA)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America (CONMEBOL)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
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<td>North and Central America (CONCACAF)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>Asia (AFC)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania (OFC)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa (CAF)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Darby (2005: 884); www.fifa.com

that ‘the new states in Asia and Africa create new problems on which settlement the big and important European associations of Great Britain, Germany, Italy, France, USSR and Spain must have their good, constructive and sporting influence’ (quoted in Sugden and Tomlinson, 1997: 5). Such a statement cast a decolonised Africa as inferior and needing the benevolent paternalism and expertise of Europe in order to flourish. CAF’s support of Havelange meant that he won the 1974 election in the second ballot, 68 votes to Rous’s 52. The balance of power shifted away from Europe. The World Cup was expanded from 16 to 24 teams to increase the number of places for Africa, Asia and North America, while African places went from one in 1970 to five in 1998. The introduction of the youth tournaments (the Under-20 and Under-17 World Cups) with a fairer, less Eurocentric allocation of places has seen African nations achieve global success. Nigeria have won the U-17 tournament three times, the last being fairly recently in 2007, while Ghana have won the competition twice in 1991 and 1995 but have also won the U-20 edition in 2009. The Olympic U-23 tournament has also produced notable African triumphs as Nigeria and Cameroon won the 1996 and 2000 tournaments respectively. Conversely, African success in the women’s global game still remains elusive. Women’s football has developed unevenly across the continent. Nigeria is dominant at the elite level, winning eight of the ten African Women’s Championships since the tournament’s inception in 1991, while South Africa has finished as runners-up four times. The strength of these teams can be in part attributed to both countries having access to a large pool of players. Oil revenues in Nigeria and industrialised South Africa generate commercial sponsorship for women’s leagues (Saavedra, 2003: 247). However, outside of a small number of nations, the ‘political and economic realities for women in Africa’ have restricted the growth of women’s football on the continent (Agergaard and Botelho, 2014: 524). While it remains that men’s football ‘in even a very poor African country will garner huge effort and resources on the part of both government and the private sector’ (Saavedra, 2003: 248), the women’s game in Africa looks set to be continually overlooked and under-resourced.

Subsequent FIFA presidential elections have been heavily influence by CAF. The 1998 election became a key battleground where ‘the interests of Africa’s football associations had to be incorporated in a central way into any European strategy aimed at reclaiming the FIFA presidency’ (Darby, 2003: 8). UEFA’s Vision proposals in 1995 ‘recognised the progress of all the continental confederations and considered them as equal partners’ (quoted in Darby, 2003: 14). The CAF executive endorsed UEFA’s presidential candidate, Lennart Johansson but CAF’s membership were more reticent in supporting him. Havelange’s preferred successor, Joseph ‘Sepp’ Blatter from Switzerland, marketed himself as a champion of African football and ‘a continuity candidate’ (Darby, 2003: 11). Blatter persuaded enough African members to support
him and won the 1998 election, albeit amidst accusations of corruption made by UEFA. CAF became kingmaker yet again in 2002, with many members choosing to support Blatter once more, but this time against the president of CAF, Issa Hayatou. As before, Blatter’s opponent had the support of CAF’s executive committee but the members were free to vote for whom they chose. This ended in a convincing 139–59 win for Blatter.

However, for all of CAF’s political power in FIFA, Africa remains marginalised in world football. Aside from the uneven allocation of World Cup places, the globalisation and commercialisation of world football in the last twenty-five years has led to an uneven development. While the cream of African players emigrate to play in the European leagues, the ‘flow back to Africa is largely “experts” – coaches and technical experts like the functionaries of the World Bank’ (Desai, 2010: 318). Some European coaches plying their trade on the African continent have been successful, such as Philippe Troussier and Stuart Baxter, who have won league titles in Cote d’Ivoire and South Africa respectively. However, there is the perception on the continent that these coaches have jobs purely because they are European. In 2006, the Nigerian-born coach, Stephen Keshi, led the Togolese team to qualification for the World Cup for the first time in the country’s history. However, shortly before the tournament began, Keshi was removed by the Togolese Football Federation (FTF) and replaced by the German coach, Otto Pfister. Togo proceeded to lose their three group games, much to the ignominy of Togolese fans (Fletcher, 2006). At the 2013 Africa Cup of Nations, Keshi, as coach of eventual winners Nigeria, criticised the influx of European coaches, saying, ‘[t]he white guys are coming to Africa just for the money. They are not doing anything that we cannot do. I am not racist but that’s just the way it is’ (BBC, 2013a). Some national and club sides on the continent persist on hiring European coaches, which reinforces a continued colonial mentality that what Europeans do is better (Fletcher, 2010). Kaizer Chiefs, the largest supported club in South Africa, have not had a domestic permanent head coach since 2003, while the club has claimed that there are currently no suitably qualified South African coaches (City Press, 2012).

Although there are ‘pockets of professionalism’ (Darby et al., 2007: 146) in North Africa, especially in Egypt where thirteen of the forty-eight CAF Champions League winners have emanated from, African domestic leagues cannot compete with the financial power of European teams. Despite being the wealthiest domestic league in the region, clubs in the South African Premier Soccer League (PSL) are often prepared to sell their players to European clubs in middle-ranking leagues such as Sweden and Israel. West African leagues have suffered from ‘the precarious socioeconomic and political climate’, which ‘has wreaked havoc on domestic football infrastructures’ (Darby et al., 2007: 146). With little hope of a decent salary at home, Europe becomes the dream where riches can be made. The proliferation of satellite television on the continent and the increased global coverage of European football have meant that African football fans can easily follow and support European clubs, sometimes to the detriment of domestic fandom. Edensor and Augustin note that in Mauritius, domestic and national fixtures are routinely postponed if they clash with these televised [European] games’, while the parliament will sometimes finish early for major European fixtures (2001: 100). As Desai argues, the growth of the global popularity of the UEFA Champions League has meant that ‘many fans across the globe are choosing to follow Real Madrid or Manchester United rather than their national teams’ (2010: 325).

A combination of the wealth and glamour of major European sides has seen many African players migrate to Europe in search of footballing success. The Bosman ruling in Europe, which relaxed the numerous foreign player quotas in the European leagues acted ‘as a lubricant, greatly easing the movement of players’ (Magee and Sugden, 2002: 425), thus allowing players from Africa, ‘where the ratio between quality and the cost of players is particularly favourable’ (Poli,
greater career opportunities. As such, some European clubs have partnerships with their African counterparts. In South Africa, Ajax Amsterdam has a controlling stake in Ajax Cape Town, while Bloemfontein Celtic teamed with Sporting Clube de Portugal to set up a youth academy. The cultural aspects of such player migration further reinforce a postcolonial power imbalance in global football. African media fuels the idea of European football as aspirational by contributing to ‘a partial image of reality and thus function[s] as a deforming prism’ (Poli, 2006: 407), focusing primarily on the success stories. For example, the Ivorian press focuses on the global stars of Didier Drogba and Emmanuel Eboue (currently at Turkish side Galatasaray), Kolo Toure (Liverpool) and Yaya Toure (Manchester City) (Poli, 2006), while Armstrong (2007) notes the former AC Milan striker George Weah’s popularity in his homeland of Liberia. Maybe the most marginalised in world football are millions of aspirant young players who buy into ‘the illusion of facility’ (Poli, 2006: 411), that success is automatic after reaching Europe. Many players who do not succeed are unwilling to return home as their families expect them to return with money, thus becoming illegal immigrants. There have been instances of these young players turning to child prostitution (see Darby et al., 2007: 148). Furthermore, even the successful African players inhabit marginal positions in world football through the process of the naturalisation of the African athlete. These athletes are deemed by commentators and journalists to have natural power and ability but are ill-disciplined. Bale (2004) points to the 1990 World Cup, where the Cameroonian team were described as ‘wild’ and ‘irrational’. African footballers and football teams are seen as ‘unfairly enhanced as a result of their supposed innate ability, something that Adolf Hitler recognized as a reason for banning “the Negro” from the Olympic Games’ (Bale, 2004: 245).

Still, to portray African football purely as victim of neo-colonial talent extraction would be erroneous. The flow of African players into the South African PSL and National First Division (NFD) has established the South African league as a regional hub for player migration. Beginning at the start of the 2012/13 season, the five-year television rights deal with Supersport International, a major player in the broadcasting of global sport on the continent, was in excess of R2 billion (Kick Off.com, 2011). Combined with sponsorship deals with various banks and cell-phone network providers, the South African league provides relative wealth for African players. Migration to South Africa is not limited to Africa. For instance, Jose Torrelba (Venezuela), Luis Boa Morte (Portugal) and Giorgi Nergadze (Georgia) have competed in the PSL. While the flow of other African and overseas players into South Africa challenges the narrative of African football subjected to neo-colonial exploitation, the South African league ‘is seldom accused of contributing to the deskilling of the migrant’s home leagues’ (Cornelissen and Solberg, 2007: 311).

Africa’s World Cup?
The 2010 FIFA World Cup hosted in South Africa encapsulated the continuing central, yet marginal relationship that Africa has with world football. On the face of it, the first World Cup on African soil was hugely significant. Africa had five places in the tournament plus South Africa as hosts. The 2010 edition of the tournament was only the fourth time it had been held outside of the football powerhouses of Europe and South America. Sepp Blatter had been ‘unstinting’ in his support for South Africa’s 2006 bid (Darby, 2003: 13), making accusations of malpractice when Germany narrowly beat South Africa 12 votes to 11 in dubious circumstances when the New Zealand delegate Charles Dempsey controversially abstained from the final round of voting (Alegi, 2001). Consequently, a continental rotation system was introduced for future bid processes; Africa was scheduled for the 2010 tournament. As such,
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the pan-Africanist sentiment surrounding postcolonial African football could be seen in South Africa’s bids to host the 2006 and 2010 World Cups, marketing it as ‘Africa’s turn’ (Cornelissen, 2004; van der Merwe, 2010). Thabo Mbeki, then president of South Africa, framed a South African World Cup in terms of his idea of the African Renaissance, which argued for ‘the need for Africa’s revival and South Africa’s desire to promote the African Renaissance’ (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 405).

At one level, the 2010 World Cup fixed the world’s gaze on South Africa and the continent as a whole. In the stands, the tournament brought South Africans of different races and ethnicities together in the same spaces, a far cry from the domestic soccer landscape that often is constructed as a black African cultural space (Fletcher, 2010, 2012). However, the focus on the continent reinforced Africa’s marginality in world football. The dominant discourse in South Africa’s bid was one of ‘showing the West we are world class’ instead of taking advantage of ‘a unique opportunity to open up the debate on how to confront Africa’s peripheral status in world football’ (Desai, 2010: 329). Central to the portrayal of an ‘African’ World Cup was the vuvuzela. A plastic horn, 1-metre long, which is commonplace at South African league matches, the instrument became a controversial item. While some expressed fears for public health having spectators subjected to ear-splitting noise (Waliaula, 2013), many television broadcasters and viewers complained that the horns produced an irritating drone that masked the commentary. The organisers defended allowing vuvuzelas into the game with Blatter arguing that calls to ban the instrument were tantamount to the Europeanisation of what was supposed to be Africa’s World Cup. He declared that the vuvuzela ‘is what African and South African football is all about: noise, excitement, dancing, shouting and enjoyment’ (quoted in Waliaula, 2013: 71). Blatter’s reduction of African football fandom to one of blowing horns obscured the myriad of African fan subcultures, while vuvuzelas feature little outside of South Africa. Doyle wryly observed that ‘[l]ike many football artefacts, these vuvuzelas were manufactured in China; the people in the stands of the South African World Cup did not reflect South African football culture’ (2013: 67). High ticket prices prevented the majority of the country’s domestic football fandom from attending. At R140, even the cheapest tickets for the group stages were far beyond the R20–30 for PSL games. Instead, games were attended by foreign tourists and wealthy South Africans, many of whom had little knowledge of South African football (Bolsmann, 2013; Fletcher, 2013).

Overseas media representation of South Africa and its football often focused on negative images. For instance, in the UK, such representations ‘undoubtedly perpetuated perceptions/images of South Africa(ns) rooted in the colonial hangover: as inferior, savage, dangerous and pre-modern/under-developed’ (Hamnett, 2011: 70). Tourists were instructed by the British press that they would be caught up in a race war, following the murder of white supremacist Eugene Terre’blanche in April 2010. The concept of Africa as inept, corrupt and unable to deliver a World Cup was reinforced by the South African press, which focused on the problems of crime and xenophobia (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 402). Before the tournament, Mbembe (2010) dryly suggested:

‘Africa, the cradle of humankind’ will be the dominant theme of the 2010 Soccer World Cup. On the world scene, such platitudes will only further relegate the continent to the realm of folklore. Not only does such a theme smack of nativism, it does not say anything meaningful about who we are, who we want to be, and what our proposition for the world is.
With the hosts crashing out in the first round, Ghana became ‘the African flag-bearer’ (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 406). Yet, with the Black Stars’ controversial exit in the last eight, Africa once more failed to achieve global success, while the African identity of the competition was rooted in colonial, naturalised stereotypes.

**Conclusion**

The hosting of the World Cup in South Africa made Africa the central focus of world football, while also marking a wider trend of sport mega-events ‘shift[ing] gradually towards the global south’ (Cornelissen, 2011: 526), with Brazil hosting the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 summer Olympic Games. Africa remains central to the political machinations of FIFA and future presidential hopefuls will need to get the continent’s backing. As Darby argues, the African game, ‘has continued to constitute a central theme around which the governance of the world game is conducted’ (2000: 84).

This was reified in comments by both Blatter and the then president of UEFA, Michel Platini. Both stated they want to increase World Cup places for African nations, as well as Asia (BBC, 2013b). Yet Africa continues to play a marginal role in global football. Player migration as neo-colonial exploitation is a view encapsulated by Issa Hayatou, who claimed that ‘[a]fter the flight of brains Africa is confronted with the muscle exodus’, which ‘creates a situation of dependence’ (quoted in Darby et al., 2007: 157). Africa continues to export its talent to Europe and Asia while few players travel in the opposite direction, although the South African case does challenge this narrative. Still, Desai and Vahed paint a gloomy picture, arguing that the current corporate model of global football ‘serves particular interests and reinforces existing power relations’ (2010: 163). While the UEFA Champions League attracts global sponsorship and fans alike, the player exodus from Africa means that it remains unlikely that the financial investment needed for African competitions to retain their players will materialise. It is in essence a vicious circle where the most popular Champions League competition in Africa will be UEFA’s version, not CAF’s, and Africa still awaits its first World Cup winner.

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