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Alternative paths to peace:

The role of sport in promoting peace and mutual understanding-
perspectives drawn from cases from the late 20th and early 21st
centuries

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This paper discusses the role of sport in promoting peace and mutual understanding in a variety of contexts in the modern world. It introduces four cases of historical sporting success taken from different countries and the sport-related activities supported and implemented by major international actors such as the United Nations. Through an analysis of these phenomena, it examines the potential avenues that sport can provide to facilitate peaceful interactions between people of different nationalities, ethnicities and religions and thereby forge positive links between them, particularly in environments that have been scarred by long periods of conflict and violence.

1. Lofty ideals and imperfect reality

Outside of their normal working lives, there are few things that excite, inspire and sometimes inflame the hearts and minds of large numbers of people more than participating in or watching competitive sport. Around the world the manifestations of this phenomenon are innumerable. From participating in games and matches of a myriad of types, from children to adults and from the amateur to professional level, or watching the same either on a pitch, in a stadium, in a social club, bar or one's own home, sport provides countless opportunities for both anticipation and excitement, enjoyment and comradeship, sometimes joy and elation or frustration and despair. Away from offices, factories or classrooms, the enjoyment of sport represents a

significant part of the lives of a very large number of human beings.

In this context it has long been held that the many manifestations of this predominately shared activity provide valuable opportunities to promote peace and mutual understanding between people of different nationalities, races and beliefs. In keeping with the oft-cited example from the Ancient World of the Olympic Truce or *ekecheiria*, where athletes and spectators from rival Greek city states were able for the duration of the games to travel to and from Olympus where the various sporting feats were being performed without fear of harassment or attack, in many cases sporting events both large and small have been seen as occasions where people can put aside their differences and join in highly competitive but fundamentally respectful physical activity. Phrases such as ‘in a spirit of fair play’ and ‘in the spirit of the Olympics’ encapsulate a mentality in which an individual or a team strives as hard as possible to win a race or defeat an opponent, but this endeavour is carried out with a clear understanding that an opponent’s corresponding efforts and desires deserve respect. Moreover, in the event that a sporting endeavour produces an undesirable outcome, it is further understood that this situation should not serve as a trigger for discord, resentment or violence between the competitors.

This mentality represents one of the philosophical foundations of the modern Olympic movement which was reconstituted by the French nobleman Baron Pierre de Coubertin towards the end of the 19th century, and which is held in similarly high esteem today. The International Olympic Committee promulgates three core values which lie at the heart of the movement, those of Excellence, Friendship and Respect. The second of these is described thus: “Friendship: Men and women are at the centre of the Olympic Movement’s focus encouraging the links and mutual understanding between people. This value broadly refers to building a peaceful and better world through solidarity, team spirit, joy and optimism in sport. The Olympic Games inspire humanity to overcome political, economic, gender, racial or religious differences and forge friendships in spite of those differences. The athletes express this value by

forming life-long bonds with their team-mates, as well as their opponents.”⁽¹⁾ It can be argued that a great many other sporting endeavours both large and small seek to promulgate similar ideals to a comparable extent. Principally, at the core of such activities is a desire to promote exacting but fair sporting competition where excellence in performance and ultimate victory is sought by the participants, but where respect for one’s opponents and the norms and rules of the game are seen as holding equal importance.

In this discussion on the one side it is not difficult to discern the lofty ideals which underpin sporting competition and achievement. However, on the other it is similarly not difficult to uncover the distressing realities of a sporting world which to a significant extent has and continues to be tainted by a number of decidedly unsavoury behaviours perpetrated by both participants and spectators. This latter condition does not solely represent a modern phenomenon, as revealed by a famous article submitted to the *Tribune* magazine in 1945 by the English novelist and journalist George Orwell who articulated a severe critique of the large-scale spectator sport that he had witnessed in a number of countries. Orwell described what he had seen on sporting pitches and spectator terraces as anything but admirable and honourable behaviour:

I am always amazed when I hear people saying that sport creates goodwill between the nations, and that if only the common peoples of the world could meet one another at football or cricket, they would have no inclination to meet on the battlefield. Even if one didn’t know from concrete examples (the 1936 Olympic Games, for instance) that international sporting contests lead to orgies of hatred, one could deduce it from general principles. [...] As soon as strong feelings of rivalry are aroused [between competitors and supporters], the notion of playing the game according to the rules always vanishes. People want to see one side on top and the

(1) The Olympic Museum Educational and Cultural Services, (2013), *Olympism and the Olympic Movement*, p.3; https://stillmed.olympic.org/Documents/Reports/EN/en_report_670.pdf

other side humiliated, and they forget that victory gained through cheating or through the intervention of the crowd is meaningless. Even when the spectators don't intervene physically they try to influence the game by cheering their own side and 'rattling' opposing players with boos and insults. Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence: in other words it is war minus the shooting.⁽²⁾

Orwell was primarily speaking of what he had witnessed at sporting arenas containing large numbers of spectators in the years running up to 1945⁽³⁾, but it is clear that the dark side of the world of sport unfortunately extends beyond both these locations and the period in question. In the modern era, as is widely known and frequently reported in the media, the sporting world has been and continues to be rife with episodes of ill-faith, cheating and corruption at a variety of levels which serve not only to thoroughly undermine the ideals of sporting pioneers such as Coubertin and his modern counterparts⁽⁴⁾, but also the faith of great numbers of viewers and supporters in many countries.⁽⁵⁾ Scandals related to issues such as exorbitant salaries demanded by top athletes in a number of sports, secret gifts or illegal funds channelled to officials who decide the location of future major sporting events, underhand tactics used to gain advantages over opponents both on and off the field, and most recently, widespread evidence of illegal doping taking place in sports such as cycling and athletics.

With regard to the nature of the sporting world in the 21st century, the author denies

(2) Orwell, G., (1945), *The Sporting Spirit*, Tribune magazine, London;
http://www.orwell.ru/library/articles/spirit/english/e_spirit

(3) Although Orwell also made the assertion that similar sentiments could be found at sporting events that take place on a far smaller scale.

(4) For example, Nelson Mandela of South Africa; see below in section 2.

(5) Many of the most egregious cases of such behaviour are to be found in the world of football (soccer) where bitter rivalries between groups of supporters frequently lead to outbreaks of violence and hooliganism, as well as disreputable on-field behaviour perpetrated by professional football players who try to seek unfair advantages in matches by diving, feigning injury and abusing or harassing match officials.

the existence of none of these shameful episodes and is under no illusions about the dark side of competitive sport, especially that which is played at the highest level by elite athletes. However, at the same time he is of the opinion that sporting activity does create circumstances where people's hopes and emotions can be galvanised and inspired in a positive way by on the field achievements which lead to historic success, and furthermore that such phenomena can have beneficial results both within a particular region or nation and beyond. In addition, the author holds that straightforward activities such as becoming a member of a sports team, training for a specific event and participating in a match with opponents from different regions and walks of life can provide a wide variety of benefits for the people concerned, which can ultimately contribute towards the promotion of peace and understanding both within nations and between people of different nations, as the examples described in the following section will illustrate.

2. Inspired by sporting success - four cases

The following section describes four cases in which success achieved on the sports field served to capture the hearts and minds of both supporters of the teams in question and also large sections of the wider public, and which in turn provided encouragement and energy that could be utilised to address challenges beyond the realm of sport. In such a discussion it is not straightforward to define or quantify precisely how such a positive result provided benefits vis-à-vis other aspects of life - for example, in a statistically measurable form such as an increase in economic activity or a reduction in levels of crime. However, the author holds that in each case the sporting success provided a significant morale boost to the communities or societies in question, it generated a tangible 'feel-good factor' for a period of time, which had the effect of enabling people to address other challenges with greater energy and optimism. Moreover, in terms of a longer lasting effect, subsequent generations of sportsmen and women are able to draw upon these successes as inspiring examples to emulate, and

ordinary people can reflect upon gratifying past events that continue to provide encouragement.

Case 1 - Hiroshima Toyo Carp

The first case relates to the Hiroshima Toyo Carp professional baseball team which has played in the Japanese Central League since 1949. Following the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in August 1945 the residents of the city faced enormous difficulties in coming to terms with the task of rebuilding their lives and their devastated city. In the years after 1945 a number of initiatives were launched at both the local and national levels to promote reconstruction which had made considerable progress by the end of the 1940s.⁽⁶⁾ Significant among these initiatives was the passing of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Act by the national government in 1949 which secured large scale central funding to support the reconstruction of the city; this situation came about as a result of the 91% approval rate expressed by the Japanese people in favour of the Act in the country's first national referendum.⁽⁷⁾ In addition to efforts aimed at reconstructing homes, businesses and infrastructure, an additional major initiative was launched with the aim of providing a focus for the leisure interests of the city's residents, in effect to provide an alternative source of entertainment away from the home or place of employment, which led to the creation of the Hiroshima Carp baseball team in 1949.

During the early years of its existence, in a situation which in many ways mirrored aspects of life in the city of Hiroshima as a whole, the Carp faced great difficulties in terms of securing funding for the team, gathering and providing adequate facilities for its players and delivering any degree of success on the field. The Carp continually

(6) Hiroshima Prefectural Government (2015), Hiroshima's Path to Reconstruction;
<https://www.pref.hiroshima.lg.jp/uploaded/attachment/188742.pdf>

(7) Hiroshima Peace Media Centre (2005), Record of Hiroshima - reconstruction after the atomic bombing;
http://www.hiroshimapeacemedia.jp/?gallery=20110609154958385_en

finished the season in last place in the division and due to the lack of a major sponsor during the early 1950s was at risk of being disbanded altogether. This situation forced the club to solicit individual cash donations from its supporters and Hiroshima residents in order to survive. In 1968 the Mazda Corporation took the decision to sponsor the team which placed its finances on a firmer foundation. This development led to a period of greater success on the field, which ultimately culminated in the team winning the national championship, the Japan Series, for the first time in 1979.⁽⁸⁾ This sporting victory achieved on a national level sparked great celebrations in Hiroshima and was seen as a historic step for a city which had succeeded in overcoming the enormous challenge of reconstructing itself in the aftermath of the atomic bombing. The city's residents expressed pride in the fact that they could now state that in the closing decades of the 20th century the city was no longer solely synonymous with one of the greatest tragedies of the Second World War.

Case 2 - The Rugby World Cup of 1995

The second case relates to the victory of the South African rugby team in the 1995 Rugby World Cup. During much of the apartheid era in South Africa which lasted from 1948 until 1991, to a large extent sporting links with other nations were almost entirely severed. Except for a few isolated occasions, the teams of the country's most popular sports of football, rugby and cricket were prevented from playing matches against any foreign opposition.⁽⁹⁾ Following the release from prison of the leader of the formerly-banned African National Congress (ANC) Nelson Mandela in 1990, and the subsequent rescinding of the laws which underpinned the apartheid system in 1991 by President F. W. de Klerk, South African teams were swiftly readmitted into the

(8) Two further Japan Series championships were to follow for the Carp in 1980 and 1984.

(9) As a result of South Africa's apartheid system, the country was suspended by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) in 1963; South Africa was not invited to the Olympic Games of 1964 and 1968, and was formally expelled from the International Olympic Committee in 1970.

international sporting community. The country's formerly powerful rugby team, the Springboks, had been prevented from participating in the inaugural Rugby World Cup (RWC) of 1987 and in the subsequent tournament that took place in 1991.⁽¹⁰⁾ However, as a result of the dismantling of apartheid, South Africa was selected to host the third RWC in 1995 which was considered a major honour for a country that was just starting to emerge from a period of several decades in the sporting wilderness. The event took place a little over a year after Nelson Mandela had been elected president of the country in its first multi-racial elections which were held on April 27th 1994.

Both inside and outside the country significant trepidation surrounded the opening of the tournament due to the fear that large numbers of black South Africans would boycott the event due to the fact that rugby had traditionally been viewed as an exclusive sport played only by whites.⁽¹¹⁾ However, as the tournament progressed the national team won a succession of victories and gained increasing support from both communities; ultimately, it succeeded in advancing to the final where it faced the powerful New Zealand All Blacks team. Prior to the start of the tournament, Mandela had stated that he hoped the national team would represent a new multi-racial South Africa, under the slogan of 'One team, one country'.⁽¹²⁾ On the day of the final, Mandela personified that wish when he put on a Springbok uniform to greet the players of both teams on the pitch prior to the start of the match. This gesture not only succeeded in uniting both black and white South Africans behind the team, which was then to emerge victorious in a very close contest, but at the same time gave an important boost to wider race relations in post-apartheid South Africa.

(10) The inaugural Rugby World Cup of 1987 was co-hosted by two of the strongest rugby playing nations in the southern hemisphere, Australia and New Zealand; the 1991 tournament was co-hosted by five of their powerful counterparts in the northern hemisphere, England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and France.

(11) The sport that had been traditionally popular with the majority black population was football.

(12) Carlin, J. (2003), *One team, one country*, The Guardian newspaper, London;
<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2003/oct/05/rugbyworldcup2003.rugbyunion3>

Case 3 - The Afghanistan Football Team

The third case relates to the victory of the Afghanistan Football Team at the 2013 South Asian Football Federation Championships. During the period of Taliban rule in Afghanistan between 1996 — 2001, a very strict form of Islamic government was established in the country and many of the rights and freedoms that Afghan citizens, particularly women, had formerly enjoyed were either removed or severely curtailed. For example, under the Taliban government girls were not permitted to attend school, women were not permitted to work outside the home, many forms of music and other expressive entertainment were banned and all adult men were forced to grow beards. Sporting activities were also severely restricted: football and cricket had hitherto been the most popular sports in Afghanistan and whilst the playing of the latter remained relatively unaffected, the playing and watching of football was deemed by the Taliban to be un-Islamic and consequently suffered a steep decline across the country. The national football stadium, the Ghazi Stadium located in the east of the capital Kabul, which had been severely damaged in the many conflicts that culminated in the Taliban gaining power, witnessed some of the worst excesses of the ultra-orthodox Islamic movement's violent regime as it became a site for the holding of public executions.

Despite these harsh restrictions however, football remained very popular in Afghanistan and following the collapse of the Taliban regime in December 2001 the playing of the sport quickly resumed across many parts of the country. Subsequently, in the following year Afghanistan was able once again to field a team at an international competition. In its first post-Taliban foray at an international tournament which took place at the 2002 Asian Games in Pusan, South Korea the national team's results revealed the poor state of Afghan football as the team finished last out of 24 nations following comprehensive defeats of 10-0, 11-0 and 11-0 at the hands of Iran, Qatar and Lebanon respectively. Nevertheless, eleven years after this chastening experience, a considerably stronger national team, which in the intervening years had received significant support from a variety of external actors including football's international

governing body FIFA⁽¹³⁾, succeeded in advancing to the final of the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championships held in Kathmandu, Nepal where it defeated India 2-0 to claim the championship. This result sparked celebrations across Afghanistan and turned the members of the team into instant national heroes. On returning to the country on 13th September 2013 the players were greeted at Kabul Airport by the President Hamid Karzai and members of the cabinet and were then escorted along crowd-lined streets to a celebration rally held at Ghazi Stadium attended by 40, 000 jubilant supporters. In relation to the team's success which had come about against a backdrop of political turmoil and more than three decades of violent conflict in the country, the national coach Mohammed Yousuf Kargar paid tribute to the willpower of the Afghan people: "Nothing can serve you better than your own willpower. So it's our strong morale that has won our team major successes in international matches. If we compare ourselves with regional and international teams in terms of facilities, [in comparison] we have just five per cent of these facilities. But despite that we have been advancing well. We came across a number of challenges during the past decade, but what we have today in the field of football is no less than a miracle."⁽¹⁴⁾

Case 4 - The English Premier League of 2016

The fourth case differs from the previous three in that the event in question did not occur in the aftermath of an undeniably dark period in the history of a particular region which was caused by devastating war damage, institutionalised racism or widespread

(13) Through its 'Goal Project', the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) invested US\$1.5 million in the construction of an Afghanistan Football Federation headquarters and the installation of a new pitch at the complex.

(14) Mohammed Yousuf Kargar quoted in Rizvi, A., *Football in Afghanistan is thriving in the face of adversity*, The National newspaper UAE, 2nd August 2014;
<http://www.thenational.ae/sport/football-in-afghanistan-is-thriving-in-the-face-of-adversity>

oppression perpetrated by a fundamentalist regime. However, the author is of the opinion that the circumstances of the case are comparably noteworthy due to the unexpectedness of what occurred and the widespread interest that it inspired in many parts of the world.

This case concerns the victory of the Leicester City football team in the English Premier League title race of 2016. Since its founding in 1992, the highest division in English professional football the Premier League has been largely dominated by four clubs, unofficially known as the 'Big Four', which have in recent years been joined by an additional two clubs.⁽¹⁵⁾ These clubs have consistently possessed the greatest financial resources and have leveraged these resources to attract the most accomplished players to their teams. (In the last decade and a half this phenomenon has been particularly discernible with regard to the Chelsea and Manchester City clubs which since 2003 and 2008 respectively have been owned by billionaire businessmen.⁽¹⁶⁾) The strength of these teams led to consistent success on the pitch and as a result, except for only one occasion⁽¹⁷⁾, between 1992-2015 the championship has been shared between four of these elite teams.⁽¹⁸⁾ However, during the 2015-2016 season this hierarchy of English football success was overturned when Leicester City, a club with vastly smaller resources and which at the start of the season had been identified as being the club most likely to be relegated from the Premier League, won the title in spectacular fashion and at the same time captured news headlines and the hearts and minds of

(15) The original 'Big Four' Premier League clubs were Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester United; since 2009 this group has been joined by the Manchester City and Tottenham Hotspur clubs.

(16) In 2003 the Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich purchased Chelsea football club for 140 million pounds; in 2008 the United Arab Emirates billionaire Sheikh Mansour purchased Manchester City football club for 210 million pounds.

(17) During the 1994-1995 season the Premier League title was won by a far less prestigious team, Blackburn Rovers.

(18) English Premier League championship teams from 1992-2016; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_English_football_champions#Premier_League_.281992.E2.80.93present.29

millions of both sporting and non-sporting fans around the world.

During the Premier League era, Leicester City had played a number of seasons in the elite tier of English football, but between 2004–2014 had fallen outside the top division, falling as low as the third tier, League One, in 2008-2009. Considering its relative financial weakness in comparison to the top clubs, leading to a concomitant dearth of star players, and its absence from the Premier League for what amounted to a whole decade, Leicester City's championship victory in May 2016 represented a remarkable achievement. During the winning campaign, under the guidance of Italian manager Claudio Ranieri, Leicester's team of hard-working, journeyman players consistently defeated the top clubs both at home and away, and in so doing generated great interest and support from an increasing army of supporters around the world. The team's achievement has been variously described as 'the greatest David versus Goliath victory in the history of competitive sport' and 'the ultimate example of the triumph of the underdog against overwhelming odds'.⁽¹⁹⁾ The success of the football team gave a boost of energy and pride to the 300, 000 residents of the city of Leicester, a majority of whom participated in the team's victory celebrations which took place on May 16th 2016 with an estimated crowd of 240, 000 people.^{(20) (21)}

3. Promoting peace and mutual understanding through sport - approaches of major international actors

The aforementioned cases have described four specific historical events in which

(19) Hayward, P., *Leicester City's football fairy tale touches us all*, The Telegraph newspaper, London, 3rd May 2016; <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/football/2016/05/03/leicester-citys-football-fairy-tale-touches-us-all/>; Harris, R., *Ultimate underdog: Leicester triumph will inspire for years*, Salon online newspaper, San Francisco, 3rd May 2016; http://www.salon.com/2016/05/02/ultimate_underdog_leicester_triumph_will_inspire_for_years/

(20) Cooper, B., *11 amazing pictures of Leicester City's parade from the air*, Leicester Mercury newspaper, 17th May 2016; <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/11-amazing-pictures-leicester-city-s-parade-air/story-29282635-detail/story.html>

major sporting success of a variety of types has caught the attention of the public, sustained considerable interest, provided genuine pleasure and inspired people to engage with the challenges and difficulties that they experience in their daily lives with a level of renewed energy and determination. In the final section of this paper the discussion will examine what lessons can be learned from the consequences of unique events such as these for the broader goal of promoting peace and mutual understanding. The current section will discuss the wide variety of activities related to sport that major international actors such as the United Nations have been carrying out in many parts of the world that are aimed at achieving similar goals.

Within the United Nations family of organisations, in 2001 the incumbent Secretary-General Kofi Annan oversaw the creation of a new body which has the mandate of promoting peace and development through the medium of sport. The United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP) began operations in 2001

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- (21) A comparable case of amazing unexpected sporting success can be seen in the victory of the Japanese national rugby team, known as the 'Cherry Blossoms', over the previously mentioned powerful Springboks of South Africa during the opening weekend of the 2015 Rugby World Cup which took place in England. Prior to the match, Japan were given almost no chance of defeating one of the elite teams in world rugby, but in the match played at the Brighton Community Stadium on England's south coast on September 19th 2015, the Japanese team produced an outstanding performance which gave them the victory with a score of 34–32. In terms of a single international match played in any of the world's major spectator sports, this victory has been described as "one of the greatest sporting upsets of all time" and the "most incredible result in Rugby World Cup history". Differing from the achievement of Leicester City in that it was the result of only one match, albeit a match played at the international level, this result similarly captured news headlines across the sporting realm and beyond, and also attracted many new fans to the Japanese team both within and outside the country. Moreover, it gave a significant boost to the sport of rugby as a whole within Japan, which will be the host country for the next Rugby World Cup to be held in 2019.

Gallagher, P., *Rugby World Cup opens with biggest shock in game's history*, The Guardian newspaper, London, 19th September 2015;

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2015/sep/19/rugby-world-cup-biggest-shock-japan-south-africa>

Eurosport, *Japan beat South Africa in most incredible result in Rugby World Cup history*, online sporting news service, 19th September 2015;

http://www.eurosport.com/rugby/world-cup/2015/south-africa-v-japan-live_sto4917836/story.shtml

with its main office located at the UN Office in Geneva and a liaison office at UN Headquarters in New York. The principal responsibility of this body is to coordinate the efforts undertaken by the UN in promoting sport in a systematic way in order to contribute to the achievement of development and peace. In its explanatory literature, the rationale behind the creation of the UNOSDP is stated as follows:

Sport as a universal language can be a powerful tool to promote peace, tolerance and understanding by bringing people together across boundaries, cultures and religions. Its intrinsic values such as teamwork, fairness, discipline, respect for the opponent and the rules of the game are understood all over the world and can be harnessed in the advancement of solidarity, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. Sport programmes permit encounters on neutral territory and in an environment where aggression can be controlled, regulated and transformed and hence facilitates rapprochement and reconciliation between opposing parties.⁽²²⁾

The main tenet of the argument in favour of utilising sport as a means to bring people together, and in so doing gradually overcome feelings of hostility and distrust which may exist between them, is that at its most fundamental level sport represents a human activity that is largely separate from the world of politics. In this context, sporting activity provides an arena in which people can come into close contact with one another merely as individuals or as competitors, rather than members of groups who may have greatly differing political, ethnic, religious or cultural identities which could potentially be the cause of significant discord. Within the UN's many spheres of operation, in relation to the utilisation of sport as a mechanism to forge links between formerly hostile groups, the rationale states:

Many UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies have used and continue to use sport programmes to achieve their objectives. In post-conflict situations, sport

(22) The United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP), *Sport and Peace*, n.d.; <https://www.un.org/sport/content/why-sport/sport-and-peace>

programmes are systematically used by UN peacekeeping operations and UN country teams as a “door opener” to rebuild trust by bringing together former opponents, and to re-integrate child soldiers and ex-combatants into the civil communities. Although sport alone cannot stop or solve an acute conflict, it represents a flexible and cost-effective medium for post-conflict relief work and peace building as well as conflict prevention.⁽²³⁾

In a wide-ranging discussion of sporting activities carried out by major international actors such as the UN, Cárdenas (2013) examines the variety of the activities themselves and the philosophical justification behind their utilisation. In keeping with the mandate of the UNOSDP, which in itself encapsulates much of the vision promulgated by Baron Pierre de Coubertin in his drive to re-establish the Olympic Movement a little over a century earlier, Cárdenas highlights the strategic movement begun in 2008 involving the UN, FIFA, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and a number of other international development agencies which is cooperating under the banner of Sport for Development and Peace.

Working together with non-governmental organizations, sport federations, and the private sector under a strategy referred to as Sport for Development and Peace (SDP), [the aforementioned international actors] have become supportive of the idea that sport is indeed valuable when addressing issues related to human justice and equality. As a social intervention strategy, Sport for Development and Peace proposes the use of games, physical activity and sport to address explicit peace and development objectives including, most notably, the Millennium Development Goals.... [The aims of this approach] are to tackle a wide range of social issues including: gender equality; peace building and conflict resolution; social inclusion; crime and violence; racism; social inequality; health education. SDP projects are being carried out both in developed and developing nations, with

(23) UNOSDP website, *op. cit.*, n.d.

a significant number of interventions taking place in regions with particularly high levels of violence, poverty and conflict.⁽²⁴⁾

With regard to the philosophical justification that underlies efforts to address serious social issues through the medium of sport, Cárdenas identifies five intrinsic features of sporting activity which mitigate strongly in favour of its utilisation for this purpose, a number of which have been alluded to indirectly in the discussion in previous sections of this paper⁽²⁵⁾: i) The universality of sport; ii) its ability to connect people; iii) its potential to inspire and motivate; iv) its capacity to divert violent behaviour; and v) its capacity to foster peace building.⁽²⁶⁾ The underlying argument put forward is that sporting activity represents a highly recommendable physical milieu in which people can interact with one another within a framework that emphasizes cooperation, respect and also enjoyment, which at the same time promotes good health, and in which barriers between individuals and groups can be slowly broken down in incremental steps. Furthermore, within this thinking it is held that the utilisation of this approach can be seen as being particularly effective in post-conflict environments, meaning those that have suffered the consequences of protracted periods of conflict and violence.

With regard to the fifth feature of sporting activity which relates to the capacity of sport to foster peace building, Cárdenas draws attention to the thesis promulgated by one of the principal architects of the field of Peace and Conflict Studies, the Norwegian sociologist and mathematician Johan Galtung, in his 1998 work *Peace by Peaceful Means* which describes the '3 R's for peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts'; these 3 R's are reconstruction, reconciliation and resolution.⁽²⁷⁾ Galtung opines that in terms of an

(24) Cárdenas, A. (2013), *Peace Building Through Sport? An Introduction to Sport for Development and Peace*, Journal of Conflictology, Volume 4, Issue 1, p.24–25.

(25) These features of sporting activity are alluded to in sections 1 and 2.

(26) Cárdenas, A. (2013), op. cit. p.26–7.

(27) Galtung, J. (1998), *Peace by Peaceful Means: peace and conflict, development and civilization*, New York: Sage, p.8.

overall reconstruction strategy in post-conflict environments, in order for communities and broader societies to recover successfully from the debilitating consequences of protracted periods of conflict and violence, a holistic policy approach which addresses these 3 R's represents an essential strategy to pursue. In specific terms, Galtung emphasises the importance of the reconstruction of peoples and places, the reconciliation of parties that were formerly in conflict, and the resolution of animosities that may exist between them.⁽²⁸⁾

Applying Galtung's thesis to a variety of post-conflict scenarios, Cárdenas describes how sport-related activities have contributed towards achieving these 3 R's in a number of highly beneficial ways. For example, regarding reconstruction, the provision of funds by international sporting bodies such as FIFA has facilitated the rebuilding of key sports facilities at both the community and national levels, such as in the case of a bomb-damaged football pitch in Gaza and the aforementioned Ghazi football stadium in Kabul, Afghanistan. Regarding reconciliation, in a precursor to the multi-racial team which participated in the 1995 Rugby World Cup, a team of both black and white athletes participated on behalf of South Africa at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Spain, an achievement which represented the country's first participation in the Olympic Games since its exclusion in 1964. An additional example of reconciliation can be seen in the use of sport in military demobilization and integration processes in Sierra Leone where the rehabilitation of child soldiers has been in part facilitated through the playing of games of football in refugee camps. Regarding resolution, the international non-governmental organisation Football for Peace that was established in London in 2013 with backing from the UNOSDP is facilitating a number of projects in Israel, Jordan, Northern Ireland and Colombia, utilising sport to encourage social contact across community boundaries, at the same time as teaching participants about peaceful coexistence and the resolution of conflicts.⁽²⁹⁾

(28) Galtung, J. (1998), *op. cit.*

4. Sport as a path towards peace - an approach to be handled with care

In the introduction to this paper the author quoted Orwell's famous statement that large scale sport represents little more than "war minus the shooting." Considering the almost continuous stream of disheartening stories about disreputable sportsmen and women, their supporters and 'enablers' of various descriptions that fill the back (and sometimes front) pages of broadsheet newspapers, television broadcasts and internet news feeds around the world, in many respects it is hard to challenge this opinion. In fact the author holds that at its worst, the world of sport can indeed be seen as Orwell did. With regard to one major international sporting organisation which has been referenced several times in this paper, the international governing body of football FIFA, in recent years this organisation itself has been seen as embodying many of the serious vices and flaws frequently associated with sport at the highest level - bribery, corruption, unaccountability and nepotism, among others. Yet as the aforementioned positive references to FIFA also reveal, this disparaging description of the organisation does not represent the whole story of its activities in a variety of contexts, and therefore the author holds that it can be viewed as a touchstone for much of the wider sporting world. Ergo, that an unsavoury dark side undeniably exists within it, but at the same time it represents a unique medium through which a significant amount of good can be achieved and therefore it should continue to be supported and utilised for that purpose.

In this discussion, it can be argued that the question of scale of activities is highly significant. The largest sporting events which take place around the world at regular intervals of four years are the Summer and Winter Olympics and Paralympics and the Football World Cup. In the run-up to and during these events, great media attention is focused on the various preparations, the selection of athletes, the opening and closing

(29) Cárdenas, A. (2013), *op. cit.* p.27-8.

ceremonies, and of course the actual sporting competitions themselves. The author regards these phenomena as by no means strange or unwelcome: the media attention surrounding these events clearly reflects the huge interest that they inspire among the viewing public in many parts of the world. In a similar way, when major scandals occur in the sporting world frequently a comparable level of popular interest follows the news of the story, information about the individuals involved and the malfeasances they are accused of committing. In the light of the high profile that these events and the athletes who compete in them hold, it is held that this phenomenon can also be seen as quite reasonable. However, with regard to the central issue addressed in this paper - that of the role of sport in the promotion of peace and mutual understanding - in the author's opinion it is not on the macro scale of huge international sporting festivals such as the Olympics or the World Cup (along with the major scandals which frequently occur that are related to them) that the most significant progress towards these goals is being made, but contrastingly on the smaller micro scale, such as through the variety of sporting initiatives identified by researchers like Cárdenas.

During the course of the research carried out for this paper the author came to the conclusion that his own earlier scepticism relating to the value of seeking to promote peace and mutual understanding through the medium of sport was to a large extent misplaced. Major structural developments such as the creation of the UNOSDP under the UN umbrella of organisations in 2001, coupled with the establishment of the multi-actor cooperative framework of Sport for Development and Peace in 2008, highlight the significant commitment which exists towards endeavours of this nature on the part of large international actors such as the UN, FIFA and the IOC. Furthermore, the initiatives identified by Cárdenas illustrate the variety of contexts in which smaller scale sporting projects are contributing towards the breaking down of barriers and forging of links between people who formerly felt considerable hostility towards one another, particularly in post-conflict environments. On the strength of these phenomena, the author holds that in all likelihood it is in environments such as refugee

camps in Sierra Leone, football pitches in Gaza and Afghanistan, and a variety of sporting facilities in countries such as Northern Ireland, Israel and Colombia that sport-related activities are contributing most meaningfully towards the promotion of peace and mutual understanding around the world. Moreover, with regard to the author's former employer, the Hiroshima Office of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), since 2015 this organisation has for the first time initiated a sport-related training programme, the beneficiaries of which come from a post-conflict society - the UNITAR Hiroshima Leadership and Communication Training Programme for the Afghanistan Women's Football Team.⁽³⁰⁾ Therefore, to employ a legal metaphor, with regard to the question of whether sporting activity can contribute meaningfully to the promotion of peace and mutual understanding in a variety of contexts, it can be argued that the jury is no longer out: significant valuable contributions can be made and consequently their continuation should be supported. However, as the title of this section of the paper suggests, considering the undeniable and widely publicised dark side of the sporting world, meaning how visible such reprehensible conduct is in the eyes of potential donors large and small and of course the wider public, this development strategy represents one that must be carried out with the highest standards of integrity and accountability.

With regard to the four cases described in section 2, these cases represent unique occasions when historical sporting success facilitated positive changes in a wider context, bringing unexpected benefits to large numbers of people within and also to a certain extent beyond the specific geographical locations in which they occurred. The enthusiasm, energy and 'feel-good factor' generated by these events are not in doubt. However, in spite of this, from a historical perspective the events themselves clearly represent 'one-offs' or once in a generation sporting miracles, and so unfortunately it is

(30) The first cycle of this initiative took place in September 2015 and the second in March 2017. It is the author's intention to conduct a detailed analysis of this new training programme in a forthcoming paper.

<http://www.unitar.org/unitar-launches-training-programme-afghanistan-womens-football-team>

next to impossible to replicate them in other contexts. Yet with that said, the fact that such outpourings of interest and energy did actually occur reveals the great potential that such sporting events have to capture and inspire the hearts and minds of people from many walks of life. Therefore in terms of one lesson that can potentially be learned from the cases of Hiroshima, South Africa, Afghanistan and Leicester, it is that people's energies can undoubtedly be inspired in this way and so should similar events occur in future, they should certainly be seized upon in order to facilitate the maximum benefit for all concerned.

The final words relating to the potential of sport to contribute towards peace and mutual understanding in this paper will be left to President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, delivered in a famous speech in Monaco on May 25th 2000 on the occasion of the inauguration of the brilliant Brazilian footballer Edson Arantes do Nascimento, also known as Pelé, into the World Sports Academy of Fame.

I am happy to be with you tonight at the first Laureus World Sports Award. Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination. The heroes standing with me are examples of this power. They are valiant not only in the playing field, but also in the community, both local and international. They are champions and they deserve the world's recognition. Together they represent an active, vigorous Hall of Fame. A Hall of Fame that goes out into the world, spreading help, inspiration and hope. Their legacy will be an international community where the rules of the game are the same for everyone, and behaviour is guided by fair play and good sportsmanship.

(31) Speech by President Nelson Mandela at the Inaugural Laureus Lifetime Achievement Award, Monaco, 25th May 2000; http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub_view.asp?pg=item&ItemID=NMS1148

I ask you now to rise and join me in commending the original inductees into the World Sports Academy Hall of Fame.⁽³¹⁾

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