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# Sport Diplomacy and Sport for Development SfD: A Discourse of Challenges and Opportunity

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## ABSTRACT

The article's aim is to illustrate the intersection of Sport Diplomacy and Sport for Development approaches. The value of exploring this relationship is to realise the potential contribution of sport diplomacy to the practitioners and policy makers within the sportscape, including those addressing Sport for Development SfD, in providing the skills and tools to critically reflect on their own practices and more effectively operate in the diplomatic realm. Sport diplomacy provides a set of navigation skills to enhance practitioner's abilities to operate across the sportscape. The practice of sport diplomacy aggregates different stakeholders and their non-aligned goals into contextually defined and aligned purposes. It recognises simultaneous relationships across several realms, and provides a principal explanatory tool for previously unrealized discourses across a network of networks. The article's analysis demonstrates the coexistence of complimentary and conflictual interests and practices: challenges arise, as well as opportunities for future alignments and complimentary practices.

## ARTICLE HISTORY


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## 1. Introduction

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; the UN agency charged with the mandate to protect refugees, stateless people and displaced communities stated in a 2018 report that 'the power of sport to achieve UNHCR's core protection and assistance mandates has, until recently, remained largely untapped' (Wilton Park, 2019). This admission, after over sixty years of operation when the agency has helped hundreds of millions of individuals, is testament to the challenge the world of sport has had in operating in the realm of diplomacy. It simultaneously highlights opportunity. The opportunity is for the world of sport, and the world of diplomacy to recognize their mutual interests and practices, and to enhance cooperation and coexistence. Importantly, this does not overlook the tensions that exist between the two realms which have caused disjuncture and mean there are not as many linkages between the two as one might suspect. Nonetheless, for the UNHCR the coexistence is evident in the adoption by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) of three

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pledges during Global Refugee Forum in December 2019 to promote sporting opportunities for refugees. Then UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, noted that they ‘clearly demonstrate that the sporting world stands with refugees’ (UNHCR, 2019). One grasped by the UNHCR on World Refugee Day in June 2020. By teaming up with Goal Click, a global media and social enterprise endeavor that greets you with a simple message speaking to the capacity of football to facilitate diplomacy: ‘Helping people understanding one another through football’ <https://www.goal-click.com/global>. (World Refugee Day: Goal Click and UNHCR on football’s global impact <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/53063087>). The opportunity for sport to make an impact on the lives of those in need would not be news to the large numbers of Sport for Development (SfD) organizations and the individuals who work within them. However, this example illustrates how the conjoining realms of sport and diplomacy in the shape of a leading UN agency have not been linked and the requirement for further explanation that this article provides.

The article’s aim is to illustrate the intersection of Sport Diplomacy and Sport for Development approaches. The value of exploring this relationship is to realise the potential contribution of sport diplomacy to the practitioners and policy makers within the sportscape, including those addressing Sport for Development SfD, in providing the skills and tools to critically reflect on their own practices and more effectively operate in the diplomatic realm. Simultaneously, sport diplomacy provides a set of navigation skills to enhance practitioner and policy-makers’ abilities to connect with and learn from different parts of the sportscape, and also offers reflection at the strategic level. In this regard, the practice of sports diplomacy aggregates different stakeholders, agencies and actors and their non-aligned goals into contextually defined and aligned purposes. It overarches existing architectures, without reinventing the wheel, recognizing simultaneous relationships across several realms, and providing a principal explanatory tool for previously unrealized discourse across a network of networks. The article’s analysis of sport diplomacy and sport for development demonstrates the coexistence of complimentary and conflictual interests and practices within both domains. Challenges arise from these different positions, as well as opportunities for future alignments and complimentary practices.

In making this contribution, alongside furthering conceptual thinking on sport diplomacy, the article addresses its practice in the framework provided by the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This produces a blended analysis which realizes the affordances of sport as a vector for comprehending twenty-first century society. The SDGs, a set of 17 goals and 169 targets unanimously adopted at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2015, provide ‘a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all’ by 2030 (UN 2016). These are manifest for sport in the Kazan Action Plan KAP (July 2017), the output of UNESCO’s 6th International Conference of Ministers Responsible for Sport and Physical Education (MINEPS VI): national representatives drawing on sport as a means of addressing sport and non-sport outcomes. Oliver Dudfield, in 2017 Head of Sport for Development and Peace at the Commonwealth Secretariat, described the Plan as ‘promoting sport in the context of the broader policy agenda for sustainable development and maximizing the economic, social and environmental development returns of investing in sport’ (Dudfield, 2017). As such the Kazan Action

Plan is in many ways itself a distillation of sports diplomacy, representing the coming together of the sporting and diplomatic realms with implications for SfD. Therefore sport for development and sport diplomacy provide the framework for this article's analysis in exploring synergies and disjuncture with the SDGs. It does so not only by focusing on the content of the seventeen SDGs themselves as they apply to education, health and equality but importantly, and innovatively, on the diplomatic practice they simultaneously reflect and contribute too, and the trajectory towards delivery for 2030.

The article's approach to illustrate the composite attributes of practice and concept begins by briefly considering the basic tenets of global diplomacy. It does so to demonstrate clearly the practice of diplomacy is 'at play' in consideration of the realms of sport for development and sports diplomacy. The paper then addresses the parameters provided by the existing literature on sport for development, and the linkages and tensions with sport diplomacy. It is important to say at the outset that the article demonstrates in its account absences in the relationship between the twin subjects of discussion alongside linkages, and in doing so the opportunity for meaningful knowledge exchange for policy makers and practitioners moving forward.

## 2. Global Diplomatic Practice

Diplomatic practice is omnipresent in societies: it has been since polities first interacted with each other and continues to this day as a part of our human condition. It has for the vast majority of time been overlooked. Where it is considered, 'diplomacy' is most commonly understood as the visible rituals of embassies, ambassadors and high-profile summit meetings. These are features of diplomatic practice it should be acknowledged – and after many centuries of operation were encoded in the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular relations (1961 and 1963 respectively) – but too often they are the sole focus of what constitutes diplomacy. Doyenne of diplomatists, Harald Nicolson sagely warns of 'the misuse of the word "diplomacy" to signify both foreign policy and negotiation' (Nicolson, 1961). Global Diplomacy offers a more fundamental, inclusive perspective on diplomatic practice acknowledging both its political context and broader range of activities that in turn provides a consciously intersectoral perspective.

Using this framework, global diplomacy reflects; firstly, recognition that diplomacy is not restricted too, and indeed predates, the nation state; secondly, that diplomacy can be undertaken by other actors: NGO's, the private-sector and for purposes of this article those engaged in and with sport; thirdly, that it is not bound by discussion of 'old and new' diplomacies; and 'fourthly that diplomacy has at its core not changed in its nature' over time (Holmes & Rofe, 2016, p. 11–15; Rofe, 2016). Decentralising the state and acknowledging other actors has been part of a relatively recent turn in the study of diplomacy with Brian Hocking capturing 'multistakholder diplomacy' (Hocking, 2006), and Geoff Wiseman articulating 'polylateralism' (1999). Complementing and contributing to this broader analysis has been the work of political geographers such as Fiona McConnell and Jason Dittmer, and particularly the latter's recent work drawing on geopolitical assemblages, which point to the material context in shaping diplomacy in biological,

environmental and emotional terms (McConnell et al., 2012; Dittmer, 2017, p. 2). The link between these analyses in the SDGs and sport, separately and together, form a key seam of potential future research which this article seeks to contribute to. What this means is the global diplomacy approach rests within an assemblage of its own derived from a consideration of global society and community that is multi-layered and multi-directional: ‘a network of networks’ to use a phrase that the article will return to.

The practice of global diplomacy rests on three key characteristics: Communication, Representation and Negotiation. Diplomacy is where these three intersect. The communicative power of sport is easy to observe in any school playground or bar: people will readily begin talking about sport, some will never move beyond it. Sport provides unique opportunities for representation: uniforms/kits, badges, flags, architecture, songs and anthems, all contribute to representing everything from the individual to the nation state. Negotiation too is a vital dimension of the sporting experience whether it is a multi-million dollar sponsorship deal, or the length of a match: ‘next score wins’ or ‘until its dark’. Whatever the gravity of the outcome Nicolson reminds diplomats that there has to be agreement – diplomatic vernacular to signal mutual recognition – that it is in the ‘players’ interests to respect mutually agreed outcomes; as he recognises ‘the rules of any game need to be ‘negotiated’ and respected by all the participants.’ (Rofe, 2016, p. 216).

It is this troika of communication, representation and negotiation that provides the analytical framework to consider the SDGs, and their relationship to sport for development and sport diplomacy. The diplomatic practice is both the object and the subject of our research enquiry: the diplomatic *means* that sees progress towards the SDGs, and the diplomatic *ends* – the balance of opportunity and risk – that provide for the next step (or fixture). Recognising this framework allows for the identification and consideration of both the grand and the minutiae. Diplomatic practice provides the overarching link from the universalising grandeur of the UN’s SDGs to the grassroots activities of SfD in the banlieue or favela where an individual intervention made a ‘difference’. Equally the framework allows for consideration of the temporal dimension – time – in regard to diplomacy as being both long-term and instant; the inbuilt tension between Richelieu’s ‘*négociation continuelle*’ – the perennial character of a week-in week-out season; and Gucciardini’s ‘ripe moment’ – peaking at the ‘right’ moment every four years, or the last-minute winner. As such the troika allows for the exploration of the diplomatic practice of sport for development *and* sport diplomacy. It is to the state of the field in those two endeavours that this article turns.

### **3. Sport for Development: State of the Field<sup>1</sup>**

Exploring the literature on sport for development is a challenging task. The scope of what one could include is daunting due to size and scope. The assignment with respect to literature on sport diplomacy is, by comparison, small in volume, but has grown quickly during the 2010s. The purpose of this section is to explore the linkages, areas of alignment between sport for development and sport diplomacy; and importantly to facilitate understanding of areas of disjuncture and silences in

the relationship. The underpinning question here is, how can the study and practice of one inform the other? The shorthand answer is sport for development provides a longer and more established body of work, a good deal of case study material, and connectivity to the grassroots; sports diplomacy provides a framework for understanding conceptually and practically the network of networks that facilitate the intersection of the realms of sport and diplomacy including development. The article explores further this answer from here on.

Sport for development SfD has gained significant traction in policy and academic circles since the 1990s and particularly in the twenty-first century. Bruce Kidd has described sport for development as an ‘international movement’ of and for social change (Kidd, 2008). Sport for development is about ‘providing opportunities for individuals and communities to engage and grow in different types of physical activity’ (Schulenkof et al., 2016). It is a contested space nonetheless, with outcomes and purposes debated (see for example Darnell, 2012; Coalter, 2013; Schulenkorf et al., 2014; Cohen et al., 2020). The United Nations Organization has been a key vector for the consolidation and evolution of the practice and its study. There are plenty of platitudes from UN officials, particularly during Kofi Annan’s term as Secretary General (1997–2006), on the value of sport. As an example, Annan said in 2005: Sport’s ‘values – fitness, fairplay, teamwork, the pursuit of excellence – are universal. It can be a powerful force for good in the lives of people devastated by war or poverty.’ (UN, 2005, p. x). The relationship between sport and the UN has earlier antecedents that Annan’s term. The origins of UN engagement can be traced back to the founding article of the 1978 UNESCO *International Charter of Physical Education and Sport* that states ‘the practice of physical education and sport is a fundamental right for all’ (UNESCO [http://www.unesco.org/education/nfsunesco/pdr/SPORT\\_E.PDF](http://www.unesco.org/education/nfsunesco/pdr/SPORT_E.PDF)). After the turn of the millennia efforts increased, and since 2001 the UN has had an explicit mandate for sport. Annan oversaw the founding of the UN Office for Sport, Development and Peace (UNOSDP) in Geneva, before it was closed by his successor Ban Ki Moon, and its mandate passed on to the IOC in 2017 amid criticism of the decision (see <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/news-and-views/call-articles/closure-unosdp>). Nonetheless, in the early days of the mandate UNGA adopted Resolution 58/5 2003 which recognised that ‘sport has been a prominent and increasingly powerful tool for development in the international community’. The first report of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, sought to clarify the mission by defining sport in the context of development and peace as ‘all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organised or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games’. A decade later UNGA designated April 6<sup>th</sup> as *International Day for Sport for Development and Peace*. Importantly for the purposes of this article, the UN, with all of its Funds, Agencies and Programmes is both a key diplomatic actor in itself, and a forum for diplomacy between different actors. It has a unique convening power in global affairs, which not only facilitates, but shapes the diplomacy it practices such as in development policies like the SDGs and SfD. The UN is also problematic in many regards as others have shown (Acharya & Plesch, 2020; Weiss, 2016); not least that it requires statehood as a passport to access. Nonetheless, the realm of sport has helped to

challenge this notion from within the UN system with the IOC being granted observer status at the UN in 2009; with then Secretary General Moon pledging that ‘Olympic Principles are United Nations Principles’ (<https://www.olympic.org/cooperation-with-the-un>). There is tension here though, indicated by the closing of the UNOSDP, and which the article’s engagement with global diplomacy seeks to mitigate, between sport and its place in the high politics of international affairs.

Flowing from this, and though it has clearly acted as a totem, the UN has not been alone in shaping sport for development movement and its literature. According to a 2017 account, the sport for development landscape is populated by approximately 1000 grassroots organisations operating globally (Svensson & Woods, 2017). Within this large number there is a huge degree of variety in scope, aims and resources with some of the most well-known coordinating contributions including Play the Game <https://playthegame.org/> and Beyond Sport <https://www.beyondsport.org/>. Nonetheless, a number of broader generalisations can be made: a majority of these organisations are located, staffed and funded from the global north and seek to have broad development goals in the global south. While many organisations work with local partners at a grassroots level, the overwhelming transactions here are from north to south and further research is needed to address the issue of decolonisation of sport for development, as it is within education, diplomatic, legal and other realms. Amongst the large number of organisations, two warrant particularly attention in shaping sport for development: Sport and Dev [www.sportanddev.org](http://www.sportanddev.org) and The Commonwealth Secretariat. Sportanddev.org has become established as the ‘go-to’ source and clearing house for best practice and news on sport for development. In these regards it achieves its mission of being ‘the leading hub for the sport and development community to share knowledge, build good practice, coordinate with others and create partnerships’ ([sportanddev.org](http://sportanddev.org)). Equally, the Commonwealth Secretariat has emerged in the 2010s as a global thought leader in this realm not least in a coordinating role with ‘international intergovernmental organisations and the Commonwealth sports movement, as well as business, academia, non-government groups and civil society.’ (*Sport for Development and Peace*, Commonwealth Secretariat <https://thecommonwealth.org/sport-development-and-peace>) The importance of highlighting these two organisations is in recognising their capacity, along with others such as PlaytheGame, in establishing the evolving parameters of sport for development. This quality, reflexive in its application, was and is often underappreciated by those engaged in sport for development, particularly within practitioner circles. Thus, it is important to note work by Simon Darnell (2012) and Fred Coalter (2013) in providing a revisionist critique by exploring underpinning power relationships, and displacement respectively, through careful analysis of a range of impacts of SfD programmes. These perspectives were significant in moving from an overly positivist view of SfD, and recognising the nuance needed to read sports’ impact on the lives of those engaged in sport for development programmes (Mwaanga & Kola, 2020).

In analyzing the actors and architecture of sport for development there is a further challenge in addressing the dilemma posed by a plethora of different terminology. Sport for development as a field may be said to suffer from ‘conceptual confusion’ with overlapping nomenclature that leads to an ‘alphabet soup’ which can obscure both understanding and the opportunities to impact lives. Sport for

Development, perhaps the most recognised terminology has twin abbreviations in 'SFD' and 'S4D', there is also Sport *and* Development, and increasingly Sport Development 'SD'. The distinction between SFD and sport development is one of emphasis, the former focusing on development through sport, and the latter the development of sport (Schulenkorf, 2017). Additionally, terms that are often used within the realm of sport for development include Sport for Change (SFC), Sport for Peace (SFP), Sport for Development and Peace (SDP), and Sports and Human Rights (SHR). Some are shorthand, some meaningful conceptual delineations, but the migration of terminology is significant. It can be illustrated succinctly in the way sportanddev.org describe 'Sport and Development'. Posing the question themselves: 'What is Sport and Development?', they suggest it is 'the use of sport as a tool for development and peace' (sportanddev.org). The inclusion, or exclusion, of the word 'peace' is significant as it has often proved to be the most contentious part of the claims made by sport. (Giulianotti, 2012). Equally, it also serves to demonstrate linkages and tensions with sport diplomacy as this article will return too. A 2020 Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (SDPIWG) report 'Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace', places peace on the same level as development in stating 'Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) refers to the intentional use of sport, physical activity and play to attain specific development and peace objectives.' Furthermore, the simple statement by sportanddev.org contends with other interpretations from contributory actors amongst the NGOs, international governmental organizations, scholars, charities and other advocacy groups engaged in the broad sport for development realm.

The Commonwealth Secretariat sees Sport for Development as 'the intentional use of sport as a tool in advancing sustainable development and strengthening governance, gender equality and the protection and promotion of human rights.' (*Sport for Development and Peace*, Commonwealth Secretariat <https://thecommonwealth.org/sport-development-and-peace>) Such a definition ties in development with governance, gender and human rights. Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the German Federal Development Agency, have a marginally different emphasis. In a 2015 report entitled 'Shaping the Sport for Development Agenda post 2015' considers 'Sport for Development (S4D) [to] represent an approach to proactively and effectively harnessing the power of sport for this purpose and represents a scalable route to increasing active participation levels in both sport and physical activity.' This shares an expansive understanding of sport focused on 'activity' to address the 21<sup>st</sup> century global inactivity crisis. (Damien Hatton, Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 2015). Sported, a UK charitable organization that aggregates local community sports groups, considers sport for development as 'the intentional use of sport and physical activity as a tool to bring about positive change in the lives of people and communities.' ([www.sported.org.uk](http://www.sported.org.uk)). The migration in terminology across these three contemporaneous examples from an international organization, to a national agency to an individual charity indicate the difficulty of agreeing on a universal definition. Scholars have attempted to address this, with Hartmann and Kwauk offering a 'dominant vision' which sees sport as social relations, and an 'interventionist' approach which sees it as a vector for change and transformation (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011).



However, this highlights the tension of seeking to address program level practice without the appropriate global context and in doing so the absence of common understanding between sport diplomacy and SfD. So, while many would agree that ‘the combination of sport and development is extremely hard to argue against’ (Grujoska & Carlsson, 2007, p. 3), the difficulties in speaking and writing about the two leave us with an ‘abundance of terms that are used vaguely, loosely, and interchangeably’. To move beyond what Ang et al. (2015) call a ‘semantic constellation’ reflecting the absence of agreement on both what sport for development precisely constitutes, and thus the challenge of clearly defining the relationship with sport diplomacy. In seeking to provide further clarification the article now offers an analytical review of sports diplomacy.

#### **4. Sports Diplomacy: First Principles**

Sport diplomacy is a new field of academic study having emerged over the last decade. It is in its simplest form the explanatory overlay to the network of evolving networks within the worlds of sport and diplomacy: ‘the intersection of realms’. Sport diplomacy offers, under the premise of the three core characteristics of diplomacy: representation, negotiation, and communication, a conceptual understanding of sport that 1) navigate the skills for practitioners to connect with and learn from different parts of the sportscape; and 2) helps provide critical reflection for policy makers and practitioners, and scholars, to enhance their practice in these overlapping and conjoined spaces. (Rofe, 2019). As a piece of terminology, sport diplomacy is a new term for an established practice: it adds conceptual depth to a custom with centuries of precedence both in sport and diplomacy. (Murray, 2018) In offering new lexicon in sports diplomacy, it is important to acknowledge that the word ‘diplomacy’ has the capacity to confuse, especially those from the world of sports and this is why the global diplomacy framework is important. Diplomacy is often seen as a word associated exclusively with the government profession and the anarchic sphere of sovereign nation states. This interpretation, often caricatured in popular understandings of diplomacy, overlooks the multi-dimensional character of diplomatic practice where the key elements of negotiation, communication and representation operate at multiple different levels and between a range of different actors. This includes dimensions such as people to people diplomacy, citizen diplomacy, and demonstrate the coexistence of diplomacy and politics, with the latter more concerned with manifestations of power operating within societies at local, national and global levels. So while Kenneth Weisbrode sagely argues that since the beginning of the twentieth century ‘the lines between politics and diplomacy have blurred considerably’ (Weisbrode, 2016), as a shorthand politics can be seen as more about the ends; diplomacy more about the means. The inclusive understanding of diplomacy that the global diplomacy framework provides enhances our understanding of the realms of sport and diplomacy with its added analytical coherence and rigor in scholarly and pragmatic terms.

A quorum of literature on sport diplomacy seeks to address the challenge, not least by acknowledging its place within other fields of study. Stuart Murray’s work on Sport Diplomacy is important and instructive in capturing the first phase of the

field's existence. His 2018 book *Sport Diplomacy: Origins, Theory and Practice*, offers a fourfold conceptual framework:

1. Traditional – The ad hoc co-opting of sport by nation states in the national interest
2. Sport-as-diplomacy – the diplomacy of making international sport possible, including the subset of politics of non-state actors engaged in sport.
3. Networked sports diplomacy – reciprocal partnerships amongst sport, states and non-state actors
4. Sport Anti-Diplomacy – abuse of sport for immoral, unethical or intentionally divisive ends. (Murray, 2018).

While Murray's contribution is on its way to becoming seminal, in beginning the exploration of sport diplomacy a literature review was a limited exercise. Nonetheless, in that there was opportunity as it meant that to conceptualize sport diplomacy one had to look to a range of disciplinary backgrounds for inspiration and to carve out the parameters of the enquiry (Rofe, 2016, pp. 213–214). So, while sport diplomacy as concept and terminology is relatively new, it has a number of touchpoints to pre-existing fields of study. In the fields of history, management and politics, sociology for example there has been excellent work done by the likes of Peter Beck, Barbara Keys, Martin Polley, Grant Jarvie, and Alan Tomlinson. In books such as Peter J. Beck's, *Scoring for Britain: international football and international politics, 1900-1939* (1999), and Barbara Keys' *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (2006), and Lincoln Allison's dual tomes: *The Politics of Sport* (1986) and *The Changing Politics of Sport* (1993), sports diplomacy is considered implicitly. What is also true to say is that the academic fields from which these books emerge, has seen the study of sport as marginal, even trivial. These difficult scholarly antecedents are important to acknowledge as they themselves shape the field and explain the interdisciplinary nature of sports diplomacy, while also echoing the coexistence of diplomacy and politics in practice. As such, the emergence of the 'subfield' of sports diplomacy has bridged Diplomatic Studies, itself a constituent field of International Studies, to other areas of academic enquiry not least through its relationship with practice.

Furthermore, sport diplomacy is not just about sport as a peacemaking tool. Diplomacy is often glibly considered as a pseudonym for peace. Equally glib claims have been made in the past about sport solving some of the most intransigent conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century in the likes of Palestine, in Northern Ireland and the Balkans. This has led some to eulogize about the opportunities sport provides. One prominent member of the francophone media recently suggested 'we can see that dialogue doesn't always work that well, and sports, as we all know, have no limit, no gender, no borders, no race, nothing of that. Using this amazing tool ... I call it a tool, it is something that is easy, that helps.' (Ouldyaasia, 2020) Sport does possess some wonderful opportunities but as Richard Giulianotti and others such as John Sugden have grappled with in the context of sport, peace is highly problematic. Writing for sportanddev.org in David Thibodeau, states '[i]ncreased development will lead to increased peace.' (2020). His view underplays the other

factors that have shaped both the broad development agenda and what constitutes peace (Rofe, 2014). Sport diplomacy recognizes this challenge: it has a breadth of perspective that overarches SfD and peace, and allows the latter's endeavors, positive and negative, to be translated to the strategic level – and as Ouldyassia states – to 'help'. Sport diplomacy adds value by being able to consistently oscillate from micro to meta facilitating hitherto unrecognized or underutilized linkages and in doing so provides context and awareness of its own evolving parameters.

A further dimension to understanding sport diplomacy, and the relationship with SfD can be found amongst the bricolage of four related concepts and practices. Cultural Relations, Cultural Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy and Soft Power are distinct areas of study and enterprise; but to varying degrees have important implications for sport diplomacy. To some, such as Shaun Riordan and Stuart Macdonald, sport diplomacy is a subset of one or more of these; to others such as this author and Murray, and a growing group of scholars, sport diplomacy is a distinct body of scholarship and practice which provides a framework for enabling and enhancing sport policy – including sport for development (Zintz & Parrish, 2019). It is telling also that the US State Department uses the term Public Diplomacy Envoys to describe likes of Michelle Kwan – World Champion figure skater, and Baseball Hall of Famers Cal Ripken Jr and Ken Griffey Jr, who they employ as sporting diplomats to engage in a range of activities including sport for development (Sports Envoy Program <https://eca.state.gov/sports-diplomacy/sports-envoy>). This serves to further emphasise the link between sport diplomacy and the public diplomacy given it sits with a structure entitled the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The focus of this article does not allow for a comprehensive account of each of the four concepts, suffice to say that sport diplomacy is relational to them all and enhanced by acknowledging the linkages and the overlapping interests.

Practitioners of sport diplomacy, come from every sector of society and every socio-economic group. It is diplomacy of the people, by the people; what has been termed 'people-to-people' diplomacy P2P (Kadir Jun Ayhan, 2020). A high-profile group of people playing out the role as diplomats are the athletes themselves: 'diplomats in tracksuits' (Strenk, 1980). Murray and Price ask if athletes 'represent their country on the pitch, [then] [w]hy not off it too?' (British Council Wales, 2019). The answer to the question is that many athletes already are undertaking such activities to represent both their countries and their causes in a form of athlete advocacy. Whether that is through official channels such as the Sports and Public Diplomacy Envoys at the US State Department (full list available here <https://eca.state.gov/programs-initiatives/initiatives/sports-diplomacy/sports-envoys-and-sports-visitors/envoy-list>), or individual initiatives such as the Didier Drogba Foundation (<https://www.didierdrogbafoundation.org/fr>), these ambassadors in tracksuits are often to be found undertaking a range of sport for development activities. It is here that we can see an explicit acknowledgement of the links between sport for development and the practice of sport diplomacy.

The experience of 2020 bears out the opportunity for athletes. Sport had a central place in the response to the crisis of COVID19 both as a means of physical and mental well-being and the return of elite sports; and as a platform for addressing the cause of Black Lives Matter #BLM globally. Motor racing driver Lewis Hamilton's

advocacy in his sport, where his talents have made him a seven-time world champion; and Naomi Osaka who won her third Grand Slam title at the US Open in the Arthur Ashe Stadium – named after the first African American to win the Wimbledon title, are just two elite athletes who took the opportunity to demonstrate their capacity to represent themselves and their causes while excelling in their chosen sports. The case for utilizing sport diplomacy as a means of explaining future athlete activism, and the opportunities to work with SfD, will be a key seam of future research.

Importantly we can see that sporting diplomats are not limited to those with official, or state-based accreditation. Equally they are not always those with athletic prowess or public profile. They can be administrators, coaches, and other protagonists. The case of Sir Stanley Rous at the 1966 World Cup is explored by Rofe and Tomlinson (2019), and builds from the work of Giles Scott-Smith, who considers the role of the individual, private diplomat (Scott-Smith, 2014); and Noe Cornago's contribution of paradiplomacy which recognises a plurality of substate actors (Cornago, 2018). Will Mbiakop, Senior Director Africa NBA, identified one group of sport diplomats who aren't primarily athletes in a pan-African cohort of community leaders;

they are critical to the success of sports diplomacy on the continent. Obviously, they need help, they need to be structured better, they need to learn the rules of engagement. Those are the people I really praise because if they teach the game the right way, there's so many great values attached to diplomacy that you will develop. Tolerance, learning from each other, discipline, respect, all of those things.

Mbiakop stressed importance of this community in recognizing their qualities beyond their coaching skills: 'those people to me are critical'. (Mbiakop, 2020)

The practice of sport diplomacy reflects plurality of actors engaged, and the breadth of issues that it underpins, which like sport for development, can be linked to the SDGs. These include a blend of issues often thought of as development ones: healthcare (3), education (4), gender equality (5), and also other elements that are considered more diplomatic; good governance (9, 16), legal dimensions (17), trade and commercial rights particularly around freedom of movement and the media (8). In relation to explaining sport diplomacy here it is important to point to the impact on these 'non-sport outcomes' of sport diplomacy. It is in this regard that the network of networks intrinsic to sport diplomacy impacts most clearly. The links to the SDGs themselves are straightforward on the one hand but require nuanced understanding on the other. Sport diplomacy recognizes the contribution of non-state actors as participants and therefore goes beyond SDG17's partnerships in looking not just at the private sector as business and institutions but recognizes people to people enterprises and relationships shaped by the three underpinning diplomatic practices. This enterprise can be seen in the inauguration of the Basketball Africa League (BAL) in 2020. Although the competition, a pan-African sporting contest, was postponed due to the COVID19 pandemic it represents an example of sport diplomacy in practice. It does so by extending beyond the scope of sport for development, the purely commercial interests of the National Basketball Association NBA, NBA Africa, the individual interests of 12 host cities across the African continent, or those of the US State Department; to include an expanded understanding of the

SDGs in the African Context. Amadou Gallo Fall, BAL's Managing Director and Founder SEED Project, recognised the relationship between sport diplomacy and the SDGs in his practitioner experience. Observing the temporal quality of diplomacy, Fall notes 'this is something that you realize much later, that you are actually exercising diplomacy without realizing it.' In discussion of the SDGs' with the UN's Under Secretary General, Fall 'As I look at the goals, I realized, okay we have been through this. I think we have been ticking all these boxes. Now it is conceptualized, it is defined.' Fall was clearly enthused by the SDGs recognising that it is 'caring about something beyond your own individual self-interest.' (Fall, 2020).

In concluding this precis of sport diplomacy, it is important to reflect on the field's evolution. The evolution has itself been important in advancing conceptual and pragmatic considerations towards a clearer of the opportunities for sport diplomacy, and including amongst them the up to this point unrealized capacity to enhance SfD in diplomatic practice. Addressing what sport diplomacy is 'for' allows for further appreciation of the intersection with sport for development and the SDGs. Outlining an answer to the question: 'what can sports diplomacy achieve?' places a focus on the framework's diplomatic antecedents: the communication, representation, and negotiation; and the facilitation of a range of practitioners' contributions and reflections. Outlining sport diplomacy's achievements also, importantly, highlights associated risk: sports diplomacy is not a 'silver bullet' solution, it carries risk. George Orwell's 1945 'The Sporting Spirit' reminds us 'you do make things worse by sending forth a team of eleven men, labelled as national champions, to do battle against some rival team, and allowing it to be felt on all sides that whichever nation is defeated will "lose face"' (Orwell, 1945). Orwell's remarks speak to the crossover of sporting competition with diplomacy, particularly in representation at a national level, in communication with rivals and in the importance of negotiation to avoid loss of 'face'. Orwell's words also serve to illustrate that 'diplomacy and sport can separately be "Janus-faced", meaning [they] can be good and bad, open and secret, heroic and tragic, all at the same time.' These dualities reflect a reality that an idealised version of sport fails to engage with. Instead, sport diplomacy acknowledges and embraces tensions between different interests, while also allowing for the alignment of parallel purposes to realise policy objectives.

## 5. Conclusions

Goal Click's marriage of visual imagery provided by those playing the game with the UNHCR's Refugee Day in 2020 demonstrates the breadth of stakeholders playing on the sport diplomacy field. Equally, it simultaneously acknowledges implicitly that the issues faced by the global refugee community require diplomacy to address their predicament. To return to Goal Click's overarching mantra - 'Helping people understanding one another through football' - the article has suggested that rather than solely football; the function of sport diplomacy has been to help people understanding one another better through sport as a whole. It does so by simultaneously acknowledging and accessing the diplomatic architecture through sports' participatory and narrative capacities; and in doing it shares common antecedents and trajectories with SfD.

Sport diplomacy offers a comprehensive theoretical insight into sport's role as a site of communication, representation and negotiation. Sport diplomacy is an enabler: adding value in recognizing that these three features allow practitioners to enhance their own performance, relationships and networks while acknowledging the liminal spaces in which this takes place. As such it compliments, and at times overarches existing SfD practice and concepts. Herein lies a particular intersection between sport diplomacy and the realm of sport for development worthy of further investigation: those engaged as practitioners having a role as 'diplomats for sport'. They are joined in making up this *team* by those with official diplomatic credentials from nation states, and those from national governing bodies, international sporting federations, athletes themselves, the coaching community, spectators, the media and businesses; and potentially other *players*, nee stakeholders. It is perhaps unsurprising that there have been factions within such a team as different interests play out. What this means is that sport has not had a seat at the negotiating table of diplomacy for much of the past two hundred years. When sport has been considered it has been largely as tool between national rivals such as the tit-for-tat Cold War Olympic boycotts of 1980 and 1984 (Hill, 1996). Equally, despite the plethora of inspirational grassroots projects and the enthusiasm on the one hand, sport has been seen as peripheral to the 'real' business of diplomacy. Traditionally diplomats have made their names in securing peace treaties, or armistice deals, and not in a 'fixture list' or participation figures. Yet the latter can be even more impactful to millions around the globe and it is here that opportunity lies.

As such, as sport diplomacy blends practice and concept it is therefore not the preserve, or indeed reserve, of scholars. Practitioners of sport diplomacy are vital to its evolution in practice and the study of it. In complimentary fashion sport for development is replete with practitioners who see the positivist, almost universalist, qualities of sport for 'good'. These individuals and organizations are intertwined with values and institutionalized at local, regional and national levels with many millions of individuals having been touched by their endeavor. This is testament to the belief that sport has a unique capacity for positive change, can provide a common point of interest for many different types of international actors and, as such, can 'transcend acrimony in political relationships' (Murray, 2018). Sport diplomacy offers an explanatory tool to bring sport to the negotiating table; enabling a multidirectional dialogue with increased accessibility to a range of stakeholders, and via the SDGs there is a framework that can allow for hitherto unsaid conversations to take place.

## Note

1. Portions of this section are derived from a UNESCO Paper by Stuart Murray, J Simon Rofe and Brianna Salvatore, 'Sport for development AND diplomacy: theory, practice and a UNESCO case study', January 2020.

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest has to be reported.

## Notes on Contributor

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