

This is the accepted version of the below article which is published online 10 May 2016 by Taylor and Francis in *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol. 27 (2), 212-230. Please refer to the published version when citing: [10.1080/09592296.2016.1169785](https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2016.1169785)

Accepted Version downloaded from SOAS Research Online: <http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/22167/>

Sport and Diplomacy: A Global Diplomacy Framework

J. Simon Rofe

Abstract. The range of actors, or “players”, involved in the transactions of diplomacy occasioned by sport are manifold. In the case of the world’s “global game” – association football – they include but are not limited to individual footballers, football clubs, national leagues, national associations, football’s international governance structures, multi-national sponsors, and numerous hangers on. Importantly for this analysis, such a panoply of actors creates an architecture, replicated across other sports, which speak to the necessity of furthering the understanding of the relationship between sport and diplomacy. These two phenomena share a long-standing similarity in global affairs; both having been over-looked as means of comprehending relations between different polities otherwise centred on the nation-state. This exegesis advances our understanding in two areas. First, it addresses the parameters of the discussion of “sport and diplomacy” and problematises the discourse between the two with a note on language; and second, it utilises a framework provided by an appreciation of “global diplomacy” to explore concepts of communication, representation, and negotiation in sport and diplomacy.

At the close of the English Premier League's January 2016 transfer window, the manager of Arsenal Football Club, Arsene Wenger, observed of the influence of the Chinese Super League, "China looks to have the financial power to move the whole league of Europe to China".¹ Known and occasionally, mocked, as a "*le professeur*" for his studious manner, Wenger's remarks acknowledged the influence of a "new player" on the football landscape, adding with a wry appreciation of global affairs: "if there's a very strong political desire, we should worry". Wenger recognised the "political desire" came from China's government.

The Chinese Super League broke its transfer record three times in one week, culminating in the €50 million transfer of Brazilian midfielder Alex Teixeira from the Ukrainian team, Shakhtar Donetsk, to Jiangsu Suning, outbidding Liverpool Football Club from the English Premier League Club in the process. The total expenditure to that point in the Chinese transfer window was £199.5 million – €258.9 million – outstripping the supposedly cash-rich English Premier League's total of £175m – €227m euros. Whilst illustrating succinctly their take on how capitalism and communism can co-exist, the interest of People's Republic of China's Communist leadership in football and sport more generally is real. From the largess of hosting the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing to the support given to the Chinese Super League, the backing comes from the top. The leader of the PRC since 2013, President Xi Jinping, "is a big football fan", which has led to a "huge and unprecedented football revolution in China led by him, which has turned the game on its head".² During a state visit to Britain in late 2015, amid his other commitments, Xi visited the Manchester City Etihad Campus training ground that gave rise to a remarkable "selfie". The photograph taken by City's Argentine centre

forward, Sergio Agüero, captured himself, Xi, and British Prime Minister David Cameron, albeit squeezed in on the right hand side.³ Agüero shared this image to his 9.6 million twitter followers: “Good to hear about the China news. Remember this? I look forward to visiting soon”. Whatever the travel plans of the player, the photograph consolidated a business transaction between his team, owned by Abu Dhabi’s City Football Group, and a consortium of Chinese state-backed investment firms facilitated by their respective national governments.

From this episode, it is possible to identify a range of actors involved in the transactions of diplomacy occasioned by sport, including but not limited to individual footballers, football clubs, national leagues, national associations, football’s international governance structures, sponsors, investment firms, and the president of the world’s most populous country. Importantly for the purposes of this analysis, these insights and incidents speak to the necessity of furthering the understanding of the relationship between sport and diplomacy. These two phenomena share a longstanding similarity in global affairs; both having been overlooked as means of comprehending relations between different polities centred on the nation-state. This exegesis advances our understanding in two areas. First, it addresses the parameters of the discussion of “Sport and Diplomacy” and problematises the discourse between the two with a note on language; second, it utilises a framework provided by an appreciation of “Global Diplomacy” to explore concepts of communication, representation, and negotiation in sport and diplomacy.

The realm of sport and diplomacy have enjoyed a recent renaissance. After having long been over-looked by mainstream academic disciplines, there has a noticeable

increase in attention to these twin features of global discourse since 2013. A number of dedicated journal articles – not least those within these pages of *Diplomacy and Statecraft* – two journal special editions, a couple of recent books, and discussion in specific disciplines such as history have sought to expand the discourse.⁴ As Stuart Murray states in his seminal 2012 article, he sought to “prompt discussion and debate” with a view to producing a “more durable relationship between sports and diplomacy”.⁵ Those discussions and that debate are now well underway, to which this article now adds.

Murray’s work has sought to provide insight into “sports diplomacy”; and he does so with no little aplomb. A key point to take at the outset from Murray’s analysis is in the terminology of sports diplomacy, which he acknowledges has been victim to “oversimplification”.⁶ By referring to the subject of analysis as “sport diplomacy”, he establishes a particular relationship between “sport” and “diplomacy” where the former may appear subservient to the latter or, at least, a prefix. It also makes analysis contingent on a particular conception of diplomacy, something that itself has the capacity for change as seen in on going debates over “new diplomacy” and explored in this enquiry. Murray and Geoffrey Pigman do offer initial further steps by distinguishing between “sport-as-diplomacy”, which entails the negotiations that take place in surrounding sporting occasions, and the “international diplomacy of sport” where governments utilise sport as a means to pursue policy and national interests.⁷

Murray is, however, far from alone in using the language that makes “sport” a prefix to the subject.⁸ Other academic disciplines draw on “sport” in their own particular way: historians use “sport history”; and political science’s counterpart is “sport politics”.⁹ The journal of the North American Society for Sport History is entitled the “*Journal of*

Sport History”, for example; the British Society of Sports History’s journal is “*Sport in History*” – formerly “*The Sports Historian*” and then the “*International Journal of the History of Sport*”. Jonathan Grix’s recent book, *Sport Politics: An Introduction*, stands along side Lincoln Allison’s well-regarded *The Politics of Sport* and subsequent *The Changing Politics of Sport*.¹⁰ Indeed, a particular dimension of the sporting topography, albeit a domineering one in the Olympic Games, has spawned “Olympic politics” and “Olympic history”. Christopher Hill’s book *Olympic Politics* speaks to it specifically, and Aaron Beacom to Olympic diplomacy in his excellent 2012 study, “*International Diplomacy and the Olympic Movement – The New Mediators*”.¹¹

It is necessary, therefore, to tie “sport” and “diplomacy” together into “sport and diplomacy”: to see these two facets of contemporary global society as equally valuable lenses that reflect the contributions of the other. The placement of a conjunction “and” may seem a semantic matter; but the point is that there is an increased value in understanding the subject in broadening the context by using two-way reflection from one realm in the other. The precision needed will avoid conflating distinct areas of study. David Black and Byron Peacock, whilst entitling their contribution to the *Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, “Sport and Diplomacy”, in fact use “sport diplomacy” as a synonym. They refer to the “politico-diplomatic nature of international sport” and sport conforming to “traditional ‘club’ diplomacy” of the old variety and, in doing so, conflate the realms of politics and diplomacy even if that was not their intention.¹² The argument here in contrast is that by seeking to explore sport and diplomacy, it is more useful to treat the two as separate but equal realms rather as one subservient to the other.

To illustrate the necessity for precision, one needs to dwell momentarily upon the

much-used adage that “sport and politics don’t mix”. The notion has been successfully deconstructed in Lincoln Allison’s 1986 term, the “myth of autonomy”, and is nonsensical when given more than a moment’s thought.¹³ “Sport and politics cannot be mutually isolated”, Trevor Taylor succinctly wrote.¹⁴ Indeed the examples that are readily used to associate sport and politics have become cliché. In terms of the Olympics, for instance, Adolf Hitler’s “Nazi” games of 1936, the “Black Power” salute of American athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, in 1968 at Mexico City, and the tit-for-tat Cold War boycotts of 1980 and 1984. There were also the sporting boycotts of South Africa that seemed to culminate in the image of then President Nelson Mandela passing South African captain, François Pienaar, the 1995 World Rugby Cup winner’s trophy whilst wearing a Springbok jersey.¹⁵ These examples, nee caricatures, suffer from use as a “short-hand” that fails to acknowledge the detail of each episode, whilst also supposing a conflation of the “political” experience of sport that these episodes do not share. Perhaps the most egregious example that mystifies the casual observer is of “Ping-Pong” diplomacy that “opened up” Sino-American relations in the early 1970.¹⁶ Despite, or perhaps because, of Nicholas Griffin’s engaging and well-researched popular 2014 book, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy: The Secret History Behind the Game that Changed the World*, the episode has acquired a mythical status as the example beyond all others that “sport” can influence diplomacy.¹⁷ The reality in this analysis, alongside the others in this special issue and those elsewhere, is a more complex and inter-woven narrative than these familiar episodes suggest.

A final point in setting out the parameters to sport and diplomacy is to delimit the scope of diplomacy and politics. It is not a straightforward task; the delimitation is

limited, the difference blurred, but it is nevertheless a worthwhile endeavour because to enhance the understanding of sport and diplomacy, diplomacy needs to be distinct from politics. The latter, politics, concerns the *message*; the former, diplomacy, the *mode* of the message. They are inter-related – intimately at times and not mutually exclusive. When Erich Honecker, the future leader of the German Democratic Republic and, in 1948, chairman of the Free German Youth Movement, stated that “sport is not an end in itself, but the means to an end”, he was more accurately identifying sports’ diplomatic qualities than its political ones.¹⁸ There is accordingly value in comprehending the particular art and practices of diplomacy.

Definitions, discussions, and reflections on diplomacy abound. Two inter-related examples provide foundation to this on-going discussion. First, Geoff Berridge aligns diplomacy to the nature state, before turning to its capacity for co-operation and compromise in stating: “The chief purpose of diplomacy has always been to enable states to secure the objectives of their foreign policies without resort to force, propaganda, or law – in short, by lobbying and negotiation”.¹⁹ In some contrast, Harold Nicolson, doyenne of diplomatists, reflected in a 1961 article in *Foreign Affairs* on the “old principle” of diplomacy: “the art of negotiation depends on reliability and confidence is an eternal principle, however much one's antagonists may profit by temporary tricks”. Nicolson continued, “I have frequently written that good diplomacy is akin to sound banking and depends on credit. Even if your opponent scores a trick or two by sharp practice, you should yourself abide by the rules of the game”.²⁰ It is perhaps telling that Nicolson ends by reminding his reader of the need to abide by “the rules of the game”, not because of any foretelling of the synergy of the phrase with this article, but because it

reveals his appreciation that the rules of any game need to be “negotiated” and respected by all the participants. This forms a pleasing parallel between sport and diplomacy as the mutual acceptance of agreed rules governs so much of diplomacy.

The edges to the *field* of sport and diplomacy are not yet marked; but as anyone who has ever played or observed pick-up soccer, basketball, cricket, or any other sport for that matter, one does not need fixed lines on the field of play for the sport to play out. The accepted protocols of sport transcend the responsibilities of nation-states, and international sporting federations and at lower levels are ungoverned except by the participants: the goalposts are jumpers, the footpath one boundary, the school wall another, and the “next goal wins”.

Nicolson, further warns of the danger of “the misuse of the word “diplomacy” to signify both foreign policy and negotiation”, which serves to re-enforce the point made regarding the distinction between diplomacy and politics – the outcome of which is foreign policy. In discussing change in diplomacy, and particularly the notion of “new diplomacy”, returning to Nicolson is useful.²¹ Nicolson’s 1953 lectures at Oxford University, published as *The Evolution of Diplomacy*, argue not to discount the “old diplomacy” encompassing ancient Greek, Italian, and French diplomacy in considering what is new. He stated that these regimes should be considered “objectively and with some realisation” as “infinitely more efficient” than the methods of new, “open” diplomacy when writing in 1953.²² Whether they were or not is moot, the point being that in debating the parameters of sport and diplomacy, there is value in looking to previous work, and beyond an immediate focus on what is in the line of sight. What this point also suggests is that the *nature* of diplomacy does not change: its *character* does. It

is in this regard that the application of practice becomes important, not least to ensure that the discourse of sport and diplomacy recognises the role of practice and practitioners – players, administrators, businesses, and spectators.

Sport and diplomacy sits at the intersection of sport and particular academic disciplines, given the underpinning qualities of diplomacy to social, political, and economic relations between and amongst individuals, organisations, and, of course, nation-states in global affairs. It is to the global dimension that this analysis now turns.

To think of sport as global phenomena is self-evident in the twenty-first century. Sporting contests taking place in any arena on the planet connects an audience in a shared experience provided by media outlets that are themselves global corporations. Yet sport is more than a function of the much-debated term “globalisation”. Recounting various definitions of globalisation is beyond the scope of this analysis, but two are apt here. First is Iver Neuman’s observation on the value of perspective and time: “What is new about globalization and what is relevant to diplomacy depends on your time perspective”.²³ Second, Paul Martin’s account of the tension evident within the phenomena is apt. He states that because of the inter-dependence of nations, globalisation has acquired “significant contradictory characteristics – one of great hope, anchored in the benefit of states working together, and one of great fear, based on the seeming inevitability of contagion across borders”.²⁴ Sport sits within this space, thus the case for employing a global diplomacy framework to consider sport and diplomacy.²⁵ It requires re-examining the much-maligned but resilient central character to international relations – the nation-state – before considering the implications for the fundamentals of diplomacy: communication, representation, and negotiation.

In considering issues of sport and international politics, Murray, Grix, Allison, and others self-consciously limit their analyses in a number of notable regards that require further elucidation in understanding sport and diplomacy. For example, Murray's work thus far focuses on international sport and its relationship to national governments. There is a clear emphasis on the nation-state. He clearly delimits his work in stating, "neither the relationships between domestic sport and diplomacy nor those existing between non-state actors and sport are examined".²⁶ The challenge is given succinct expression by Maclean and Field in identifying a

taken-for-granted association between sport and nation and between nation and state to the extent that much of academic discussion of sport and nation conflates them as if they are synonyms, otherwise fails to make the distinction between nation and state or accepts that in hegemonic or other dominant discourses the state is the proper political vessel for the nation.²⁷

What follows outlines a more nuanced understanding of the role of state and nation in sport that facilitates diplomatic practice leading to a networked understanding of sport and diplomacy reflecting the panoply of domestic, international, and transnational actors involved.

Amid various models of contemporary diplomacy, two are particularly relevant in helping to understand the multiplicity of those involved sport and diplomacy: Geoff Wiseman's identification of polyilateralism and Brian Hocking's work on multi-stakeholder diplomacy. Wiseman identified polyilateralism at the turn of the twenty-first century as

The conduct of relations between official entities (such as a state, several states acting together, or a state-based international organization) and at least one unofficial, nonstate entity in which there is a reasonable expectation of systematic relationships, involving some form of reporting, communication, negotiation, and representation, but not involving mutual recognition as sovereign, equivalent entities.²⁸

He later described polyilateralism as “Diplomacy’s Third Dimension” in capturing state to non-state diplomacy.²⁹ Hocking argues for a conception of multi-stakeholder diplomacy that sees diplomacy as “concerned with the creation of networks, embracing a range of state and non-state actors focusing on the management of issues that demand resources over which no single participant possesses a monopoly”.³⁰ Both have salient elements for sport and diplomacy in recognising distinct actors involved in the diplomacy operating at different levels and conducting relations as part of a network.

The politics with representative qualities may easily translate to the realm of sport, where individual sportsmen and sportswomen, administrative bodies, business interests including sponsors, and spectators operate beyond the state as transnational civil society actors. Jan Melissen argues that transnationalism is more probable “on low politics . . . than on high political issues such as security”, and that “long-term transnational relations are more likely to produce success in diplomacy than short-term campaigns”.³¹ As already acknowledged, “sport” in itself is not a panacea to the gravest of issues in global affairs; but that transnational relationships are fostered and maintained through sporting endeavours helps to explain for example the resilience and longevity of international sporting federations and transnational sporting rivalries. So whilst Tom

Zeiler sagely observes that transnationalism is “fashionable and an increasingly transformative trend” in recounting Nicolson’s point about the value in observing the antecedents of current topography, David Reynolds stresses that transnational thinking is not new.³² In reflecting on a turn from “transatlantic” to “transnational”, he quotes Arnold Wolfers from 1962 stating that corporations’ and organisations’ ‘ability to operate as international or transnational actors may be traced to the fact that men identify themselves and their interests with corporate bodies other than the nation-state.’³³ In doing so, they create a network of transnational relations that serve a range of individual identities in what Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye went on to identify as ‘complex interdependence’.³⁴ Pigman succinctly summarises the impact of such thinking in arguing for a ‘new diplomatic studies paradigm’, where it is necessary to put to one side “traditionally assumed separations between the domestic and the international, the public and the private, the political and the economic, the social and cultural”.³⁵ It is onto this intellectual playing field that global diplomacy steps out.

In proposing global diplomacy, the aim is to lay out a concept “that recognizes the role of diplomacy as an ancient institution separate, but arguably parallel to the idea of the form of governance and constantly evolving to reflect shifts in structure and power”.³⁶ The recognition of there being a heritage to diplomatic practice, along with a relationship to power held beyond the state, illustrates the value of this framework to comprehending sport and diplomacy.³⁷ The centrality of the nation-state to diplomatic studies, and to the broader International Relations literature requires no further elucidation than to point to John Agnew’s statement that the field “has been defined by the notion of a world divided up into mutually exclusive territorial states”.³⁸ To recount clearly, the designation global

diplomacy deploys on four counts that serve to consolidate the analysis of sport and diplomacy. First, it reflects discussion of diplomacy that goes beyond the state and, indeed, pre-dated 1648; second, it seeks to overarch discussion of “old” and “new” diplomacies; next, it argues for the development of the state and consequently the diplomacy, or diplomacies, that flow from it; and last, that diplomacy has at its core not changed in its nature.³⁹ Such a conception positions this analysis between the state-based approach of Murray and the others, and the “expansive” understanding of diplomacy put forward by the likes of Jason Dittmer, who sees diplomacy as “any interactions between peoples or entities in which those peoples and entities are representative of a broader category or polity”.⁴⁰ The reflective dimension to sport and diplomacy takes into account communication, representation, and negotiation as a two-way dialogue giving scope for greater understanding. As Zeiler acknowledges in his conclusion to *Diplomatic Games*, the discussion of sport and diplomacy has long since moved “past the fact that sport is global to the converse: the idea that the global is closely related to play arenas”.⁴¹ In other words, the transactions of sport and diplomacy go both ways.

Addressing sport and communications as a facet of global diplomacy raises two points: one relates to public diplomacy and the other to technology. Linked, both concern the audience for sport. Communication is critical to diplomacy’s practice: “Being able to communicate in technical terms through appropriate language and symbols, and emotionally with fellow human beings, is vital to ensure messages are conveyed in the way they are intended”.⁴² It does not always happen of course: either by mistake or design by one of the participants. However, as Pigman argues, the “act of competing in sport internationally is at its core about communicating to the public”.⁴³ Sport has a

powerful capacity to touch individuals and societies around the world in ways that traditional forms of diplomacy and diplomats rarely can, particular those practiced by the state. Sporting competition always carries social and political messages for these audiences; at times these are simple even vulgar, at times complex, subtle, and mixed. Whatever the delivered message, manner, or mode, it is important to a desired outcome. In this regard, modern information communication technologies have a role to play in the narrative of contemporary sport.

Technology and diplomatic practice have a long-standing relationship. Thinking about advances in technology recurrently emerge as providing a silver bullet to the challenges of diplomacy. The printing press, radio, telegraph, and then telephone, jet-travel, and now the so-called “digital” revolution suggest marking out step-changes for diplomacy. Whether they had the supposed impact on diplomacy is another matter but, similarly, each of these pieces of technology has had an impact on sport. The printing press and subsequent telecommunications advances allowed for the development of media and then the reporting of sport to a broader public; the jet-engine drastically reduced travel times for athletes and spectators, meaning journey’s that had previously taken weeks were now a matter of hours, such as travel between Britain and Australia for cricket’s bi-annual Ashes’ series. In the past twenty-five years, advances in digital technologies have allowed for huge increases in the breadth of coverage and its simultaneous consumption of sports wherever they may be taking place on the planet. Importantly, technology has not just had an impact on the coverage of sport, but the sport itself. “Hawkeye” tracking technology in tennis and cricket, for example, materially affects the result of the sporting contest. In turn, technologies have influenced sports’

communicative quality as spectators and athletes can re-live their lived experience after the event. It is little surprise, therefore, that technology and sport go hand-in-hand, underpinned by business interests from corporations; an instance is Sky Plc, the European network, and its efforts to secure sporting broadcast rights, particularly the continent's favourite sport – football. As such, the communicative power of sport via new technologies has, as Pigman notes, “in effect made international sport a primary communication channel in a contemporary environment in which diplomacy increasingly involves communication with the global public”.⁴⁴ Put another way, “International sport today is a uniquely well-suited global platform for diplomatic representation of and communication between global publics”, and it is representation that needs consideration.⁴⁵

The concept of representation in sport might need little analysis at first glance. Eric Hobsbawm famously stated, “the imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people”.⁴⁶ Like diplomats, athletes and spectators often have clear symbols as to whom they are representing through the badges on their kit or simply the colour of their shirts. This fact, however, overlooks the multiple identities that all of the actors in contemporary sport possess. For their part, athletes have identities that may include their club – in many sports, something that change quickly with at transfer or trade. Players' nationality is again something that can change as a number of athletes have represented more than one country although that does tend to take a little time. For sponsors, they can be individual to the athlete or associated with their club or country, or any non-governmental organisations or charities with which they are involved, not least their own. Last, their race or religion may be relevant. In each case, player identities will

be a blend, evolving and reforming simultaneously in relation to their experience that, as Manuel Castells puts it in his seminal work *The Power of Identity*, is central to identity.⁴⁷ Castells stresses the importance of “shared experience” in forming identity, suggesting anything not born out of experience is fantasy.⁴⁸ It applies equally to participants, spurred on by the presence and enthusiasm of a crowd, as to spectators. In the case of spectators at sporting events, it is the shared experience of being there to see a world record or their team lift the cup that is a large part of the attraction of sport. Contemporary social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook allow for a shared experience of sport in the absence of being physically present.

Castells positing of three types of identity in legitimising, resistance, and project allows for a further degree of granularity in the analysis of representation and sport and diplomacy. He sees legitimising identity as the order “introduced and propagated” by establishment power structures, such as the state in traditional diplomacy or the “authorities” of a governing body. He second identifies resistance identity that forms in opposition to ruling norms and it forms communities of resistance given expression in the football chant; “no one likes us, we don’t care”, and the way managers of sports teams build an “us against the world” mantra as a means of extracting a competitive advantage. In diplomatic terms, resistance identities may emerge in support of national causes and by taking a stand in a multi-stakeholder environment. Finally, Castells calls for a project identity that he argues is a constructed one with transformational goals. In sport, the transformation of Manchester City Football Club from Manchester’s second team to membership in global elite has been one of representation and communication, as well as achievement on the field supported by millions of pounds of Abu Dhabi’s money. The

European “project” in diplomatic terms is one that has been part of the dialogue of international affairs for a century, with the European Union and its bureaucracy spawning its own diplomacy in the past quarter century. The parallels in the evolution of diplomacy and sport warrant further attention.

As prelude to addressing sport as negotiation, it is worth noting that the focus of Pigman and others including Murray on “international sport” serves to restrict the scope of sport and diplomacy. Sport’s communicative or representative attributes are not restricted the national boundaries of “international sport” as far as it involves competitors donning international jerseys and competing for their nation against other nations. Beyond George Orwell’s concern that international sport gives rise to the unsavoury aspects of nationalism, contemporary sport does not fit into clearly demarcated national and international categorisations.⁴⁹ Such is the case of football despite apparently clear “international” and “domestic” competitions, such as the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* [FIFA] World Cup or the English Premier League. There is a bleeding of jurisdictions, or sovereignty to use a term familiar to traditional forms of diplomacy, between and amongst individuals, clubs, national football associations, and regional federations such as the Union of European Football Associations, Europe’s the governing football body.

Sport is organised by international federations of national associations, played at the same stadia, sponsored by broadly the same companies, and, crucially to a global audience, involving the same players. Cristiano Ronaldo does not stop being a Real Madrid CF player whilst wearing his national Portuguese kit or *vice versa*. Nor importantly does he stop being the recipient of endorsement dollars from multi-national

corporations and promoting his own brand, “CR7”. Seemingly, domestic leagues have transnational identities because of their multi-national cast of players and global corporations that sponsor and broadcast the spectacle, not least because of their matches sometimes played in other countries. Since 2007, the American National Football League [NFL], the league with the greatest revenue by some margin at over €13 million, has played regular season games outside the United States in London and, in October 2005, in Mexico City, the first NFL game played outside the United States.⁵⁰ The English Premier League toyed with the idea of a “39th game” in 2008 to add an international fixture to its 38-game season. The rationale here is straightforward: the global public audience for sport whether domestic or international is vast and drives the associated business.

Further, sport has a heritage in the past century and one-half in imperial projects as a tool of nation building, and consequently the relevance of nation-state. One can look to plentiful examples and associated literature such as Kidambi’s account of the 1911 tour of an all-Indian cricket team, 36 years before India became independent.⁵¹ All of this is to say that representation of identities matters in sport, and hence to the relationship between sport and diplomacy.

The third dimension to further the understanding of sport and diplomacy through the global diplomacy framework is to consider sport as negotiation. In this realm, two related aspects exist; one is the way in which international sporting federations [ISFs] operate; the other is the way that sport inter-acts with the state through its federations and through its business partners. The operation of ISFs has drawn a great deal of popular attention in the past in the past two decades. Scandal has rocked the two organisations –

the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and FIFA – that organise the biggest sporting events, the quadrennial Summer Olympic Games and Football World Cup, which has questioned their existential longevity. Former England striker and now media pundit, Gary Leneker, stated in the May 2015 that FIFA was a “revolting organisation”, and that “if any other organisation of the planet was found to be as corrupt as FIFA, then the man at the top would go”.⁵² It is not the purpose of this article to recount the scandals surrounding the award of the 2002 Winter Olympic Games to Salt Lake City or the protracted demise of Sepp Blatter’s leadership regime in FIFA; suffice it to say for the purposes of this analysis that the case of the former illustrates that redemption is possible.⁵³ What is of note here is the way in which both organisations, as the pre-eminent multi-sport and pre-eminent single sport, have operated and negotiated in diplomatic circles.

The development of the modern Olympic movement and FIFA parallel in many ways the evolution of international organisations of nation-states since the mid-late nineteenth century. They have been subject to the impact of global wars, the process of decolonisation and birth of new states, and have acted as talisman to the other developments of other sporting bodies both for individual and multi-sport events. Beyond these parallels, nonetheless, lies a more nuanced “mimicking” of diplomatic behaviours. McConnell, Moreau and Dittmer have brought Homi Bhabha’s notion of mimicry into the diplomatic field, here extended in two regards.⁵⁴ These are the lead taken by sports’ organisations from international politics writ large, and the way other ISFs have looked to FIFA and the IOC particularly and adopted their practices. Coming with it, a number of their problems have been found out in recent times, for instance, by the *Union Cycliste*

Internationale, cycling's world body, and the International Association of Athletics Federations, athletics' worldwide governing organisation.

To have survived and grown, FIFA and the IOC have had to negotiate internally and with external polities.⁵⁵ Internal negotiations took place over the logistics and organisation of sport – the “rules of the game”. Determining these seemingly fixed aspects of sport – the size of the pitch, the scoring system, or the length of a race – occurs in negotiated agreements between the stakeholders in sport at various times facilitated by these kind of organisations as forums of negotiation. External negotiations have always been part of sports organisations to gain what business analysts would call “market share” of participation, audience, and revenue, which have been part of sports mantra since the mid-late nineteenth century. More recently though, it is accurate to say both have established considerable financial and commercial dimensions as brokers of sponsorship and media deals worth billions of dollars.

Both organisations have mimicked each other in establishing and maintaining relationships with the United Nations [UN]. FIFA has prominently displayed its association with the UN since 1999 when then Secretary General Kofi Annan and Blatter agreed to share common values. The IOC received the endorsement of Annan's successor, Ban Ki Moon, in 2009 when he stated, “Olympic principles are United Nations principles”; it came at the same time as the IOC gained Observer Status at the UN – a first for a non-state actor.⁵⁶ Black and Peacock have noted the IOC “formally. . . often portrayed itself as the United Nations of global sport”. They go on to say that in “many ways the IOC has constructed a parallel universe of global power . . . that shadows the political realities of international diplomacy”.⁵⁷ The constituent members of the IOC and

FIFA have predominantly been national bodies over the past century with interests that reflect national and then regional interests. As such, it should be of little surprise that they behave in a manner that nation-states have done in structures akin to the “club diplomacy” mentality that maintained the pre-eminence of the state in international politics. In focusing upon FIFA and the IOC, it is important not to over-stress the parallels and overlook the notable distinguishing between the two organisations and between the multitude of other ISFs that constitute important and heterogeneous actors in multi-stakeholder diplomacy.

The second related aspect of sport and negotiation is to analyse the relationship between sport and the other “stakeholders” operating in global diplomacy. Here it is important to stress the that the relationship is multi-direction or networked, that it flows from the athletes, clubs, events, or organisations to other constituent parts such as national governments, media corporations, or international organisations and back. Jonathan Grix focuses in sport politics upon how governments have sought to manipulate sport to their own ends and calls on his previous work on East Germany to illustrate it. The example provided by Hitler’s 1936 Olympic Games is perhaps the most egregious attempt, but no event on that scale – a mega-event – escapes such attention.⁵⁸ As written previously, “International sporting competition is perceived increasingly as an ideal channel for nations, regions and cities to share their identities, their merits and “brands” with the rest of the world”.⁵⁹ The first decade of the twenty-first century saw great deal of negotiation – some far from open – over the hosting of mega-events in cities around the globe involving every conceivable stakeholder. Whilst financial imperatives drive much of this effort, sport offers an avenue for the “pursuit of status or prestige [and] is an

under-appreciated objective of much international diplomatic activity”.⁶⁰ This notion is prevalent in varying degrees across three reports that came out in Britain in 2014 from, respectively, the House of Lords, the British Council, and the British Academy.⁶¹

On the other hand, when negotiation begins with sport, it has the opportunity to influence government on at least two fronts. The first is because of the access that sport provides to publics at home and overseas. According to Tim Vine, head of Public Affairs at the English Premier League, “I think we provide government with opportunities to get into parts of the country they cannot reach through other sports or means”. Vine goes on, “Football does have an attraction that goes beyond any other”.⁶² As the global game, and has the head of a league considered “the most competitive and cosmopolitan in the world”, Vine’s remarks have resonance.⁶³ The second dimension is of sport as enabler of government diplomacy; again, according to Vine, “UK Trade and Industry and the Foreign Office have woken up to the opportunities we provide them certainly over the course of I think this last five years”. To that extent, the British government “really have done well off the back of that [opportunity]”. In this regard, the nation-state is benefitting from the enabling diplomacy of sport.

The counterpart is when sport shapes policy of governments or other diplomatic actors through their diplomatic negotiation. To return to the IOC and FIFA in awarding their quadrennial jamborees, they make particular requirements mandatory such as temporary changes to tax regimes, which in other lights would be a noticeable infringement of national sovereignty. Equally, if more obliquely, these organisations’ exacting bid-requirements mean governments have to make resource decisions that may well stimulate a diplomatic outcome as was seen in the anti-government protests in Brazil

in 2013 preceding the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympic games. The impact of these protests was to add a different perspective to the 2014 event although the football would pass off without any great incident.

“Politicians love sports, and gets them in the papers a lot quicker than anything other than a horrific mistake”.⁶⁴ Politicians are not alone in loving sports of course, and most with an interest in sport are more likely to want to read about sport in their newspapers rather than worry about being in print. What these remarks suggest is there is clearly a relationship between sport and politics. However, there is also one between sport and diplomacy; until recent times, it has received only parsimonious attention in academia and elsewhere. As noted in this analysis, the initial work in this field has focused on “sport diplomacy” that has necessitated a distinctly state-based focus; but it is self-consciously limited. By considering sport in direct relation to the three fundamental attributes of global diplomacy – communications, representation, and negotiation – it is possible to de-centre the state, and a more nuanced appreciate of the practice of sport and diplomacy emerges. In other words, consideration of sport and diplomacy provides another opportunity for the recasting of the centrality of state and the leakage of diplomatic practices to other polities. Therefore it is little surprise to hear the likes of Vine looking beyond the state when he says that when English Premier League undertakes overseas tours, “not only are you representing the sport more broadly on behalf of the country, you are actually representing the sport and its development in that country”.⁶⁵

Beyond these considerations, this analysis has shown that considering sport and diplomacy in light of a global diplomacy framework raises a number of the issues that

require further attention. Just one example: naming the South Stand at their Old Trafford ground the “Sir Bobby Charlton Stand” from April 2016, Manchester United described their former player as a “diplomat” and that “he represents everything that is good about football and Manchester United”. In doing so, it gives rise to the opportunity to explore the role of individual sportspeople as diplomats and ambassadors, including some content analysis of sporting organisations that have “ambassadors” or organisations that use sporting stars as “ambassadors”.⁶⁶

Notes

Acknowledgements. I would like to thank the reviewers of this article, and particular Professor Brian McKercher for his patience. Any errors that remain are needless to say my own.

¹ Arsene Wenger has a BA in Economics from the University of Strasbourg; a university education being a rarity amongst football players and managers.

² “Alex Teixeira: Shakhtar midfielder in 50m euro move to China”, BBC: [h\(ttp://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/35500020\)](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/35500020).

³ Sergio Kun Agüero@aguerosergiokun (2 December 2015). Agüero’s Official Twitter account wished his followers “Happy Monkey Year #ChineseNewYear” (8 February 2016).

⁴ Special editions include Stuart Murray, ed., “Sports Diplomacy”, *Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 8/3-4(2013) and J. Simon Rofe and Geoffrey A. Pigman, eds., *Sport in Society*, 17/9(2014). A couple of books of note that are relevant: Heather L. Dichter and

Andrew L. Johns, eds., *Diplomatic Games: Sport, Statecraft, and International Relations since 1945* (Lexington, KY, 2014) and Aaron Beacom, *International Diplomacy and the Olympic Movement – The New Mediators*, (Basingstoke 2012). Heather Dichter also contributed a fine essay to the H-Diplo discussion network: Heather L. Dichter, “Sport history and diplomatic history”, *H-Diplo Essay* No. 122 (17 December 2014): <https://networks.h-net.org/system/files/contributed-files/e122.pdf>. It in turn followed the discourse prompted by Amy Bass, “State of the Field: Sports History and the Cultural Turn”, *Journal of American History*, 101/1(2014). There are other previous examples of fine scholarship in the academic canon that have drawn links between sport and diplomacy; these include Barbara Keys, *Globalising Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (Cambridge MA, 2006) and Peter J. Beck, *Scoring for Britain: International Football and International Politics, 1900-1939* (London, 1999). These are notable as exceptionally worthwhile contributions to a barren landscape.

⁵ Stuart Murray, “The Two Halves of Sports-Diplomacy”, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 23/3(2012), 576-92.

⁶ Stuart Murray, “Sports diplomacy: traditions, version 2.0 and the diplomacy of sport”, in Costas Constantinou, Pauline Kerr, and Paul Sharp, eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy* (Thousand Oaks, ca, 2016).

⁷ Stuart Murray and Geoffrey a. Pigman, “Mapping the relationship between international sport and diplomacy”, *Sport in Society*, 17/9(2014), 1098-18. Pigman develops his analysis in making the case for international diplomacy and sport and public diplomacy in Geoffrey A. Pigman, “International Sport and Diplomacy's Public Dimension: Governments, Sporting Federations and the Global Audience”, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*,

25/1(2014), 94-114.

⁸ Sport has been a locus of study in disciplines such as Sociology, Management, and Development Studies, Media Studies, and Anthropology. For example, the former discipline has the following specific journals: *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, *International Review of Sports Sociology*, and *Sociology of Sport Journal*.

⁹ See Martin Polley, *Sports History: A Practical Guide* (Basingstoke, 2007); Jeffrey Hill, *Sport in History: An Introduction* (Basingstoke, 2011); idem., “Introduction: Sport and Politics”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38/3(2003), 355-61.

¹⁰ Jonathan Grix, *Sports Politics: An Introduction* (London, 2016); Lincoln Allison, ed., *The Politics of Sport* (Manchester, 1986); idem., ed., *The Changing Politics of Sport* (Manchester, 1993).

¹¹ Christopher Hill, *Olympic Politics Athens to Atlanta* (Manchester, 1996); Beacom, *International Diplomacy and the Olympic Movement*. Preceding both was David B. Kanin, *Political History of the Olympic Games* (Boulder CO., 1981).

¹² David Black and Byron Peacock, “Sport and Diplomacy”, in Andrew F. Cooper, Jorge Heine, and Ramesh Thakur, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* (Oxford, 2013), 708-14.

¹³ Allison, *Politics of Sport*, 17-20.

¹⁴ Trevor Taylor, “Sport and International Relations: A Case of Mutual Neglect”, in Ibid., 29.

¹⁵ Literature on each of these episode abounds; a useful anthology can be found in Steven Pope and John Nauright, eds., *Routledge Companion to Sports History* (Abingdon, 2010), particularly Barbara Key’s helpful chapter, “International Relations”.

¹⁶ The historical antecedents of the “Ping-Pong” diplomacy of the early 1970s are in Mayumi Itoh, *The Origin of Ping-Pong Diplomacy*, (NY, 2011).

¹⁷ Nicholas Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy: The Secret History Behind the Game that Changed the World* (NY, 2014). Griffin’s overwhelmingly positive reviews come from *The NY Times*, *Washington Post*, *Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, and *The New York Review of Books*. It indicates not the petty jealousy of the academician but an indication that sport and diplomacy have yet to receive anything more than sporadic academic scrutiny.

¹⁸ Erich Honecker, quoted in Mike Dennis and Jonathan Grix, *Sport under Communism: Behind the East German “Miracle”* (Basingstoke, 2012), 18; Grix, *Sport Politics*, 35.

¹⁹ Geoff Berridge, “Why We Need Diplomats”, *Five Books* (4 July 2010): <http://fivebooks.com/interview/geoff-berridge-on-why-we-need-diplomats/>. See also Geoff Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, fifth edition (Basingstoke, 2015).

²⁰ Harold Nicolson, “Diplomacy: Then and Now”, *Foreign Affairs*, 40/1(1961), 39-49.

²¹ The cyclical return to the discourse of “new” and “old” remains matched only by the proclivity for different prefixes in diplomatic literature. It is perhaps the hope rather than expectation that the study of sport and diplomacy might avoid becoming “New Sport Diplomacy”, and then “Old Sport and Diplomacy”. Of the more useful expositions of new diplomacy, see John Robert Kelley, “The New Diplomacy: Evolution of a Revolution”, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 21/2(2010), 286-305.

²² Harold Nicolson, “The Evolution of Diplomatic Method”, delivered at the Chichele Lectures at the University of Oxford in November 1953, *Diplomatic Studies Programme, University of Leicester* (Leicester, 2001), 73.

²³ Iver B. Neumann, “Globalisation and Diplomacy”, in Andrew F. Cooper, Brian Hocking and William Maley, eds., *Global Governance and Diplomacy* (Basingstoke, 2008), 15.

²⁴ Paul Martin, “The G20: From Global Crisis Responder to Steering Committee”, in Pope and Naurigh, *Sports History*, 742-43.

²⁵ For further discussion of sport and globalisation, see George H. Sage, *Globalizing Sport: How Organizations, Corporations, Media and Politics are Changing Sports* (Boulder CO, 2010).

²⁶ Murray, “Sports-Diplomacy”, 577. Murray acknowledges, “these are fecund areas of intellectual and practical endeavour”, that is, ripe for further study.

²⁷ Malcolm MacLean and Russell Field, “Performing nations, disrupting states: sporting identities in nations without states”, *National Identities*, 16/4(2014). 283-89.

²⁸ Geoff Wiseman, “‘Polylateralism’ and New Modes of Global Dialogue”, Discussion Paper No. 59, Leicester Diplomatic Studies Programme, 1999. Republished as “‘Polylateralism’ and New Modes of Global Dialogue”, in Christer Jönsson and Richard Langhorne, eds., *Diplomacy*, Volume III (London, 2004).

²⁹ Geoff Wiseman, “‘Polylateralism’: Diplomacy’s Third Dimension”, *Public Diplomacy Magazine*, 1(Summer 2010), 24-39.

³⁰ Brian Hocking, “Multistakeholder Diplomacy: Forms, Functions, and Frustrations”, in Jovan Kurbalija and Valentin Katrandjiev, eds., *Multistakeholder Diplomacy: Challenges and Opportunities* (Malta, Geneva, 2006), 13.

³¹ Jan Melissen, *Beyond the New Public Diplomacy*, Clingendael Papers No.3 (The Hague, 2011), 3: http://www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/20111014_cdsp_paper_jmelissen.pdf

³² Thomas Zeiler, “Fields of Dreams and Diplomacy”, in Dichter and Johns, *Diplomatic Games*, 437.

³³ David Reynolds, “From the Transatlantic to the Transnational: Reflections on the Changing Shape of International History”, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 24/1(2013), 138. Arnold Wolfers, “The Actors in International Politics”, in idem., *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore, MD, 1962), 23.

³⁴ Before becoming synonymous with “soft power”, Joseph Nye along with Robert Keohane authored the influential *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Cambridge, MA, 1973) and *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston, MA, 1977).

³⁵ Pigman, “International Sport”, 95.

³⁶ Alison Holmes with J. Simon Rofe, *Global Diplomacy: Theories, Types and Models* (Boulder, CO, 2016), 8.

³⁷ Building upon Taylor’s suggestion that sport and politics are not restricted to the relationship to the state, Grix’s recent work acknowledges that “sport politics” is about more than the state. Taylor, “Sport and International Relations”, 30; Grix, *Sports Politics*, 35.

³⁸ John Agnew, “The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory”, *Review of International Political Economy*, 1/1(1994), 53-80.

³⁹ Holmes, *Global Diplomacy*, 11-15.

⁴⁰ Author Interview with Professor Jason Dittmer, University College, University of London, London, 23 November 2015.

⁴¹ Zeiler, “Fields of Dreams”, 431.

⁴² Holmes, *Global Diplomacy*, 20.

⁴³ Pigman, “International Sport”, 96.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁴⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1790: Programme, Myth, Reality*, second edition (Cambridge, 1990), 142.

⁴⁷ Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, Volume 2 (Oxford, 1998).

⁴⁸ Manuel Castells, “Globalisation, Identity and the State”, *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies*, 26/1(2001), 6-7.

⁴⁹ George Orwell. “The Sporting Spirit”, *Tribune* (December 1945).

⁵⁰ Mike Ozanian, “The Most Valuable Teams in the NFL”, *Forbes* (14 September 2015): <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikeozanian/2015/09/14/the-most-valuable-teams-in-the-nfl/#3c9a32a3326f>.

⁵¹ See Prashant Kidambi, “Sport and the Imperial Bond: The 1911 ‘All-India’ Cricket Tour of Great Britain”, *Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 8/3-4(2013), 261–85.

⁵² Twitter Gary Lineker@GaryLineker (27 May 2015).

⁵³ There is already a good deal of literature on both subjects centred on Blatter’s leadership of FIFA. See, respectively, Heather Dichter and Bruce Kidd, eds., *Olympic Reform Ten Years After* (London, 2012); Alan Tomlinson, “The supreme leader sails on: leadership, ethics and governance in FIFA”, *Sport in Society*, 17/9(2014), 1-15; *idem.*,

FIFA: The Men, the Money and the Myths (London:, 2014).

⁵⁴ Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Men The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse”, *Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis*, 28(1984), 125-33; Fiona McConnell, Terri Moreau, and Jason Dittmer, “Mimicking State Diplomacy: The Legitimising Strategies of Unofficial Diplomacies”, *Geoforum*, 43/4(2012), 804–14: <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1334910/1/1334910.pdf>.

⁵⁵ The modern Olympics was founded in 1894, and FIFA in 1904; many reckon that the first ISF was the International Rugby Board founded in 1886, although the first national organisation was that for baseball in 1857. See a very useful table in Beacom, *International Diplomacy and the Olympic Movement*, 32.

⁵⁶ FIFA and the UN: 12 Years of Fruitful Collaboration, 25 January 2011: <http://www.fifa.com/sustainability/news/y=2011/m=1/news=fifa-and-the-years-fruitful-collaboration-1371013.html>. See Resolution to 69th Session of UN General Assembly, “Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace” (16 October 2014), 9 A/69/L.5: www.un.org/ga/search/voew_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/L.5. “IOC and UN Collaboration: Tapping the Full Potential of Sport” (October 2014): <http://www.olympic.org/content/olympism-in-action/idsdp/cooperation-with-the-un/>; “IOC News and UN Secretariat agree historic deal to work together to use sport to build a better world” (28 April 2014): <http://www.olympic.org/news/ioc-and-un-secretariat-agree-historic-deal/230542>.

⁵⁷ Black and Peacock, “Sport and Diplomacy”, 710.

⁵⁸ The diplomacy of hosting, organising, and assessing mega-events is considered in both a number of other articles in this volume and a burgeoning literature addressing the

subject. Cf. Michele Acuto, “World Politics by other means? London, City Diplomacy and the Olympics”, *Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 8/3-4(2013), 287-311; and the special issue, “Going Global: The Promise and Pitfalls of Hosting Global Games”, *Third World Quarterly*, 25/7(2004).

⁵⁹ Geoffrey A. Pigman and J Simon Rofe, “Sport and Diplomacy: an introduction”, *Sport in Society*, 17/9(2014), p.1096. Simon Anholt’s work on “nation branding” is particularly relevant. See his testimony in the House of Lords Select Committee on Soft Power and the UK’s Influence. Report of Session 2013–14, *Persuasion and Power in the Modern World* (London, 2014), paragraphs 40, 278, 292: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldselect/ldsoftpower/150/150.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Black and Peacock, “Sport and Diplomacy”, 721.

⁶¹ House of Lords, *Persuasion and Power*; Kieron Culligan, John Dubber, and Mona Lotten for the British Council, *As Others See Us – Culture, Attraction and Soft Power* (London, 2014): <https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/as-others-see-us-report.pdf>. Cf. Christopher Hill and Sarah Beadle, *The Art of Attraction – Soft Power and the UK’s Role in the World* (London, March 2014).

⁶² Author Interview with Tim Vine, head of Public Affairs, English Premier League, London, 19 February 2015.

⁶³ Hill and Beadle, *Art of Attraction*, 30.

⁶⁴ Tim Vine Interview.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Another project might look at the mimicry of ISFs and other international organisations in a longitudinal study.