

Preface

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This special edition of the East Asian Journal of Sport Thought presents a number of studies which have either (i) resulted from peer reviewed key note addresses presented by international scholars between 2010 and 2012 to the Taiwan Society for the Sociology of Sport or (ii) been part of a series of commissioned studies which addressed aspects of the main theme of this edition sport, democracy and soft power. As a form of soft power the contribution that sport can make to developing resilience and promoting reconciliation has often been overlooked.

In January 2013 a UN special adviser visited Syrian refugee camps in Za'atari and sports clubs in Northern Jordan to raise awareness about the severity of the Syrian refugee crisis and the role of sport in rehabilitation and building resilience amongst refugee communities. The use of sport as soft power or a war without weapons is not new. It is more than 50 years since Chataway and Goodhart attempted to chart the place of international sport in society. In a War without Weapons they described the place of sport in the Cold War, in South Africa, in the American Civil Rights struggle and in brokering diplomatic relations between the USA and China.

At it's worst sport can divide and heighten national tensions. It has failed politically in the fight against racism. Europol figures provided by police investigators in the Hague suggest that gambling and corruption in sport could be a growing problem. This was recognised by IOC President Jacques Rogge, who was quoted in The New York Times as fearing for the effect that illegal betting might have 'on a sports industry now reckoned to turnover \$140 billion a year'. And yet at it's best sport can reduce tensions and promote reconstruction. Sport and physical education programmes have been used to promote peace-making work in the Balkans, the Middle East, West Africa, Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland and South Africa. Sport can be a valuable soft diplomatic tool but should understand its role in working not only with health and educational agendas but also international agendas.

The historical ideals of sport and physical education being cathartic wars without weapons have been thoroughly modernised. Orwell's famous statement that 'sport is war minus the shooting' has been replaced by a more realist body of evidence which recognises that sport can play key roles in a holistic package of resources at the disposal of foreign ministries, diplomats or local communities. One powerful example of this is the film documentary of "The boxing girls of Kabul" released by the Film Board of Canada. It tells the story of 3 girls who take up professional boxing, fight their way onto the international stage and in so doing challenge Taliban beliefs about sport and women.

We need to grasp the potential of sport and yet the contribution that sport and physical education programmes can make to improving life chances needs to be more than a just cause or a UN resolution. This requires harnessing a strong political action plan that is built from within local communities and is realistic about what sport and physical education can and cannot deliver. Students as well as diplomats need to know how to develop legitimacy from the ground up. Sport and physical education as a language crosses borders but students, diplomats and teachers need to know much more than the fact that sport and physical education can help people talk to one another.

To be fair this is something that UN Secretary Generals have recognised. Sport and physical activity is an acknowledged human right. In the years between 2003 and 2011 the United Nations General Assembly passed 23 resolutions advocating a greater role for sport within international peacekeeping efforts. (<http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/sport/home>)

Peace beyond Borders (www.peacebeyondborders.nl) utilized sport as a tool to assist the brokerage of peace and conflict resolution in the borderlands around Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda. Didier Drogba (Drogba Diplomacy) used his fame as an international footballer to talk about conflict involving the Ivory Coast. Football 4 peace international is a sports based project for Jewish and Arab children in northern Galilee that uses football as a basis for conflict resolution training (<http://www.football4peace.eu/>).

The United Nations exists *for not just its member states but also the needs of individuals and communities*. A point emphasised by former Secretary General Kofi- Annan but ignored by both Chataway and Goodhart and Orwell. Sport and physical education interventions should serve not only states but also individuals and communities. The modern soft power of contemporary sport rejects the imperialist values associated with muscular Christianity. The historical practice of Scottish churches and missionaries use of athleticism, captured in part by Robert Putnam in the film *Chariots of Fire*, is not the answer. Sport and physical education has a role to play in building resilience and reconstruction but the object of sport and physical education should be to reduce dependency on international development as a form of humanitarian aid.

As such the purpose of international development should be about the growth and the development of human and economic capabilities. The ultimate goal of aid should be to make itself redundant, having helped local communities create tools and resources they need to be their own architects of change and development. Joint research by the Universities of Edinburgh and Oxford has evidenced the potential of running to assist financial resilience amongst some Kenyan communities. Sport is not a universal solution but one that needs to be crafted through the use of targeted interventions, in specific places and at specific times.

Meaningful sport based interventions work best when sport is part of a greater joined up approach. Yet if they are to be a greater force for progress and soft power solutions, students, teachers, civil servants and diplomats need to engage much more not only in the key challenges of peace and security; respect for human rights and good governance but also the new internationally recognised role of sport today. This is partly recognised in this special edition of the journal which includes research studies from Denmark, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Taiwan, Canada, South Korea and the United States of America.

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