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## **London 2012 and beyond: Concluding reflections on peacemaking, sport and the Olympic movement**

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### **Abstract**

The 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games have reinvigorated the debate on Olympic legacies for peace and development. Addressing this debate and building on the articles in this collection, this epilogue argues that the theoretical-conceptual understanding of peace and peacemaking remains poorly developed within the peacemaking discourse espoused by the Olympic movement. The authors draw upon insights from mainstream peace research to identify a series of key themes and questions across six dimensions of peacemaking – aim, means, time, actors, process/action, and organization. These themes and questions can guide future research, policy and practice in peacemaking through sport.

### **Introduction**

The preparations for the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games have brought to the fore many of the issues addressed in this collection of papers. The debate in the British Parliament on the invocation of the Olympic Truce at the Games is a case in point. The Baroness Garden of Frognal's announcement that the UK government fully supports the principles of tolerance and understanding, equal opportunities and fair play that underpin the Olympic Truce and that, as the host country, the UK would promote a fresh resolution calling for the observance of the Olympic Truce during the 2012 Games, met with considerable

scepticism. For example, Lord Bates pointed out that the modern Olympic Games fail to live up to the ideal of peacemaking: '[T]he modern Olympic Games have been running for 110 years. They have been cancelled due to war three times, the subject of terrorist attacks twice and of mass boycotts five times, and the truce has been violated on virtually every occasion.'<sup>1</sup>

Despite this legitimate concern, Lord Bates has actually been at the forefront of campaigns to revive the Olympic Truce at the 2012 London Games. Lord Bates believes that 'London 2012 provides a perfect platform to rediscover that ancient ideal and to light a torch of peace which can be passed on the future Hosts.'<sup>2</sup> Having lobbied the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) and the UK government for more than 18 months, in April 2011 Lord Bates flew to Mount Olympus from where he commenced his walk back to London, visiting areas that have been affected by violent conflict or war along the way.<sup>3</sup> Lord Bates has not been alone in his efforts to promote a lasting peace legacy for London 2012. Civil society initiatives include for example the OLOS Foundation (see Burleson's article) and the London 2012 Olympic Peace Campaign, which seeks to achieve a UN and IOC supported period of world peace during the Games.<sup>4</sup> The latter campaign proposes a multi-level strategy which, *inter alia*, incorporates a commitment from governments, the nomination and involvement of youth peace ambassadors, responsible and sustainable tourism, and the mobilization of local residents.

These and other efforts that celebrate London 2012's capacity to promote peaceful coexistence have been confronted with significant challenges. During the aforementioned Parliamentary debate, Lord Jopling was particularly cynical about the peace legacy of the Games, arguing that 'whether or not we have a truce this extremely expensive two or three-week circus in London will be an invitation for bombs, bullets, bloodshed, blackmail and boycott.'<sup>5</sup> Security concerns have been on the minds of the organizers from the outset and extend to the torch relay leading up to the Games. In the opening paper of this collection, Spaaij notes that the torch relay personifies intercultural encounter, conflict and negotiation, offering a global public platform where opposing views on the Olympic movement, peacemaking and human rights can be voiced. Worried about the reputational damage caused by mass political protests during the international torch relay leading up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the IOC and LOCOG have sought to ensure that the 2012 Games would not be marred by similar protest. In May 2011 it was announced that the 2012 torch relay would be domestically focused rather than a round-the-world relay. According to the organizers this change was inspired by the desire to bring the torch to people's doorsteps. The Minister for

Sport and the Olympics, Hugh Robertson, commented that the relay would ‘bring London 2012 to the doorsteps of the UK giving everybody the chance to celebrate the London Games’.<sup>6</sup> However, a more critical reading would see this decision as a missed opportunity for promoting peaceful internationalism. The securitization of the Olympic Games more generally can be viewed as the repression of dissent and the curtailing of protestors’ civil liberties, as opposed to opening up spaces for global participation and dialogue.<sup>7</sup>

London 2012 thus highlights some of the tensions and contradictions in the Olympic movement’s aim of promoting peaceful coexistence, and provides further evidence of the norm confusion described by Bousfield and Montsion. This norm confusion is not restricted to National Olympic Committees or Organizing Committees but, as Stockdale notes, also applies to the IOC itself. The contradiction between purporting to be an apolitical organization yet aspiring to promote universal Olympic ideals is of particular import here. This contradiction is evident in the following statement by IOC President Jacques Rogge:

The IOC is not a political body. It is a sports organization, so we will not get involved in politics. ... The IOC is of course in favor of the best possible situation of human rights in all countries in the world ... Having influence on human rights is the task of political organizations and human-rights organizations. It is not the task of the International Olympic Committee to get involved in monitoring or lobbying or influencing.<sup>8</sup>

Rogge’s remarks reveal a major limitation of the peacemaking discourse espoused by the Olympic movement, namely its poorly developed theoretical-conceptual understanding of peace and peacemaking. For example, the distinction Rogge seems to draw between human rights (as a political issue) and peace (as an objective of the Olympic movement) is conceptually flawed. Renowned human rights scholar Jim Ife has convincingly demonstrated that peace and human rights are necessary for each other. According to Ife, ‘peace without human rights would be a weak and flawed peace. People cannot be said to be living in peace if their human rights are violated, as the structural and institutional violence inherent in human rights abuse is the antithesis of peace.’<sup>9</sup>

How, then, can a better theoretical-conceptual understanding of peacemaking through sport be produced and applied? The Second International Forum on Sport for Peace and Development hosted by the UN and the IOC emphasized the ‘essential importance for the

interaction and intersection between research, policy and practice.<sup>10</sup> This emphasis resonates with Gldenpfennig's call for a peace and conflict research in sport. Gldenpfennig argues that it is fruitless to 'idealize sport and make it appear to be an oasis of primeval peacefulness, as has often been done.'<sup>11</sup> Peace and conflict research in sport, he asserts, 'must remind the sport world of its responsibility for the preservation and promotion of peace and illuminate its possibilities for action from all sides. ... [T]hrough criticism and counselling, the science of sport can help to define and promote the role of sport in the peace movement.'<sup>12</sup> A number of papers in this collection, most notably those by Parry, Martnkov and Burleson, contribute to this cause by illuminating possibilities for action based in philosophical and historical thought.

At least equally important, however, is for research, policy and practice in 'peacemaking through sport' to engage more fully and consistently with mainstream peace research in order to address theoretical-conceptual flaws and to develop an underlying theory of change on which peacemaking projects can be built. To progress this task, below we identify a series of key themes and questions which can guide future research, policy and practice. Drawing loosely upon the analytical framework proposed by Haugerudbraaten,<sup>13</sup> we discuss six (partially interdependent) dimensions of peacemaking that can inspire a critical rethinking of the ways in which peacemaking through sport is conceptualized and implemented, and of the potential role of the Olympic movement therein. Each dimension poses key questions intended to 'shift conceptual ambiguities from the back of the mind to conscious awareness and scrutiny'.<sup>14</sup> The six dimensions of peacemaking discussed below are: aim, means, time, actors, process/action, and organization.

### **The aim of peacemaking**

The aim of peacemaking is to create peace. Peace, however defined, is a fragile, complex, ongoing, collective social achievement.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, normative values and definitions of peace can be and are contested. If the Olympic movement is serious about incorporating peacemaking into its programmes, it must be clear about its definition and normative view of peace and its positions on human rights and justice, and ensure that these terms are employed with care and accuracy. As Haugerudbraaten points out, both excessively wide and excessively narrow definitions of peace pose problems of their own. A narrow definition may exclude a number of aspects pivotal to the achievement of lasting peace. A broad definition,

on the other hand, ‘runs the risk of rendering the concept superfluous, imprecise and useless’ as a guide to policy and practice.<sup>16</sup> This dilemma becomes evident when we consider Galtung’s distinction between two concepts of peace: negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace is the absence of violence, absence of war. Positive peace, on the other hand, is the absence of what Galtung calls ‘structural violence’, which stems from violence in the structure of society, rather than the actor-generated personal and direct violence.<sup>17</sup> Positive peace entails the cultivation of cultures and structures of peace. There is a tendency to focus on negative peace because consensus is more easily obtained, a tendency Galtung rejects because negative peace is essentially pessimistic, whereas positive peace is optimistic.

Is Olympic peacemaking about resolving old and new disputes in a peaceful fashion (negative peace) or does it seek to remove the root causes of violent conflict (positive peace)? Olympic education as conceived by Pierre de Coubertin and as laid down in the Olympic Charter aspires to achieve more than negative peace, notably through fostering international cooperation and mutual respect. However, it remains unclear whether the Olympic movement can be seen to be striving towards promoting positive peace to any real degree, due in part to the absence of a clear articulation of what is meant by ‘peace’.

The notion of positive peace as the absence of structural violence remains controversial. For example, it has been criticized for being misleading and too broad.<sup>18</sup> A narrower and more practical definition of peace has been put forward by Müller, who defines peace as ‘a state between specific social and political collectives characterized by the absence of direct violence and in which the possible use of violence by one against another in the discourse between the collectives has no place.’<sup>19</sup> This definition’s reference to discourse as a manifestation of ideational structures in politics is important, and resonates with Olympic scholars’ argument that the Olympic Truce can act as a source of inspiration, indicative of which is Briggs et al.’s conclusion that:

The most important force exerted by the Olympic Truce is its power to inspire, which enables it to unlock the potential of the global platform offered by the Olympic Games and the myriad of sports networks around the world. It brings a simple message – peace, if only for 16 days. ... While the Truce cannot hope to turn 16 days into an immediate, lasting peace ... it can help to raise expectations about what is possible, shifting the tone of the debate from ‘why peace?’ to ‘why not?’.<sup>20</sup>

From this perspective the Olympic movement can be viewed to make a potentially significant contribution to peace discourse, however critics would argue that there is no evidence to suggest that (thus far) this has been anything more than rhetorical achievement.

Regardless of how the aim of peacemaking is defined, it is necessary to exercise humility with regard to the claims made for the impact of peacemaking endeavours and to our capacity for their effective evaluation.<sup>21</sup> The evidence to assess such claims may not always be available and the complexity of processes in conflicts and conflict transformation will inevitably make attribution difficult.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, as Kay's article shows, developing careful, well-evidenced, culturally appropriate evaluations is an important part of peacemaking through sport.

### **The means of peacemaking**

The second dimension of peacemaking asks: which measures are the most important in the process of peacemaking? Is the rhetorical commitment of the UN and its members states to the Olympic Truce for the duration of the Olympic Games sufficient, or should this commitment be connected to humanitarian, economic or security intervention, or to all of these at the same time? Although sport is increasingly recognized as a significant element in peacemaking processes, it would be extremely naïve to view sport – by and of itself – as being capable of transforming serious internecine conflicts. In areas characterized by protracted violent conflict, 'culturally focused peace initiatives can work only when preceded by military and political accommodations.'<sup>23</sup> Parry rightly notes that if sport programmes can be useful in peacemaking, then they must be implemented as part of a wider set of peacebuilding strategies. In this context, Burleson points to the emergence within UN circles of robust peacekeeping as a novel approach to managing volatile environments. Robust peacekeeping involves the use of force and therefore runs counter to the imagery that paints peacemaking as essentially a non-violent process. As Burleson points out, critical consideration and discussion about the nature and consequences of the UN's role in robust peacekeeping is needed, and possible talks surrounding the Olympic Truce adoption through the UN Security Council could very well provide the platform for these discussions to take place.

The articles by Martínková and Parry raise another, more specific question that is directly relevant to the conceptualization and implementation of sport-based peacemaking:

how can sports activities be organized in ways that best align with peace education? Both essays propose ways in which Olympic sporting competition can be placed at the service of peacemaking, focusing on participation and fair play over result, moderate competition over excessive competition, and cooperation over domination. Thus, Parry argues that the very nature of sport lends itself to the task of interpersonal understanding and respect, and that the nature of co-operative striving in rule-governed competition can lead towards peaceful resolutions. In a similar vein, Van Tassell and Terry point out that the ‘psychological rewards’ of voluntary rule-governed competition can potentially extend to politico-social domains such as community building and conflict transformation. For Van Tassell and Terry, the example of sports cooperation between North and South Korea demonstrates how organized sport can assist in building political unity and may allow for the possibility of future allegiance to a common identity or state. From this perspective, sport can be viewed to promote peacemaking by helping people to (re)humanize each other through its ritual ceremonies and ethics of fair play, sportsmanship and mutual recognition.<sup>24</sup> This view of sport represents an alternative paradigm that replaces the win-at-all-costs mentality.

### **The temporal aspect of peacemaking**

The temporal dimension of peacemaking addresses questions such as: should the Olympic movement’s involvement in peacemaking be a short, medium or long-term effort? Ought the measures employed in peacemaking to be short, medium or long-term ones, or a combination of all of these? Some view the Olympic Games as a significant window of opportunity for promoting peace in spite of their short duration. However, it is doubtful whether short-term efforts can do anything but provide an enabling environment for, or an initial impetus towards, peacemaking (especially if the notion of ‘positive peace’ is adhered to, which would require actors to address the root causes of violent conflict). Peacemaking generally requires a broader time frame. If promoting peaceful coexistence is an explicit aim of the Olympic movement, as stated in the Olympic Charter, then its commitment to realizing this objective must go beyond the periodic celebration of the Olympic Games to include more sustained involvement through ongoing Olympic education and outreach. It is worth reiterating here de Coubertin’s vision that the basis for mutual understanding and respect between human beings is not in the elite sporting competitions that are on display during the Olympic Games, but is ultimately rooted in Olympic education at the grassroots level.

## **The actor and process dimensions of peacemaking**

The actor and process dimensions of peacemaking raise a number of important questions: who are the main actors in peacemaking? Does peacemaking constitute a set of concrete actions, such as the invocation of the Olympic Truce, or is it more usefully conceived of as an aggregate process? No institution can make peace alone. The Olympic Truce and Olympic education do not ease the importance of a political commitment to peace; at best, they may offer an entry point into and global cultural space for conversations about, and struggles towards, peace and peacemaking.<sup>25</sup> The cooperation between the Olympic movement and the UN has been heralded by its proponents as an important step in this direction. However, the question remains how effective – both discursively and practically – this cooperation is (or can be), especially given the UN’s increased focus on robust peacekeeping and the fact that the UN has ‘all too often proved to be ineffective in promoting international peace and justice’.<sup>26</sup>

The question of who are the main actors in peacemaking proposes a reorientation of the role of outside third parties in peacemaking and conflict transformation. In so far as peacemaking is heavily dominated by external actors and ignores or under-values the actions of locally based citizens and organizations, it can be characterized as donor-biased.<sup>27</sup> The predominance of external actors is problematic within the context of Olympic outreach programmes that aim to promote conflict resolution and peace because of these actors’ privileging of Western political, economic and cultural norms, arguably grounded in their implicit assumption that sport possesses universal values regardless of cultural context.<sup>28</sup> Importantly, MacAloon recommends that in the Olympic movement, ‘valuing “universality” should never mean demanding standardized modernization or cultural homogenization, much less Europeanization or Westernization’.<sup>29</sup> Renewing the Olympic movement’s social legitimacy necessitates a profoundly multicultural and intercultural approach to Olympic education.

Overcoming donor bias in sport-based peacemaking programmes requires a participatory and culturally appropriate approach to peacemaking and development that prioritizes and engages local knowledge and wisdom, as Kay’s paper clearly demonstrates. Indeed, external involvement in peacemaking may be most effective when it empowers local actors to create or rebuild their own sustainable infrastructure of processes that promote

peaceful coexistence. Indigenous approaches to peacemaking, with their emphasis on localism, cultural specificity and – in some cases – popular participation, may be able to deal with issues overlooked or misinterpreted by international peacemaking actors and to help connect bottom-up and top-down peacemaking.<sup>30</sup> In any case, peacemaking endeavours must actively envision, include, respect, promote and build on the human and sociocultural resources for peace and conflict resolution present within a given setting.<sup>31</sup>

### **The organization of peacemaking**

The organization dimension asks whether peacemaking should be viewed as a top-down or bottom-up process, as a centrally planned and coordinated process, or as one that is primarily formulated locally and pursued by a multitude of local and extra-local actors. As noted, the challenges of peacemaking are far greater than the Olympic movement is able to address by itself, especially if we take peacemaking to be a process that depends on the combined effect of actions occurring at different levels. The peacemaking literature teaches us that high-level peacemaking cannot be seen in isolation from peacebuilding from below.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, peacebuilding from below may be of decisive importance, for it is the means by which a peace constituency can be built within the setting of the conflict itself.

An integrated approach to peacemaking requires a move away from top-down, technocratic imposition towards a multiplicity of peacemakers with broader time frames. Lederach stresses the need for an operative frame of reference that takes into consideration the legitimacy, uniqueness and interdependency of the needs and resources of the grassroots, middle-range and top level, as well as for recognition, inclusion and coordination across all levels and activities.<sup>33</sup> The Olympic movement – including the IOC, NOCs, athlete activists, and so forth – must thus coalesce with progressive people in other spheres of society, including international governments, transnational and local NGOs, new social movements, grassroots sports communities, corporations and local communities, if a significant contribution to the promotion of peaceful coexistence is to be made. In other words, peacemaking requires a more egalitarian approach that regards the endeavours of local residents, NGOs and other volunteer organizations as just as important as, if not more important than, high-level efforts undertaken by the IOC and associated supranational and intergovernmental organizations.

The frame of reference proposed by Lederach addresses and engages the relational aspects of reconciliation as the central component of peacemaking.<sup>34</sup> For Lederach, contemporary peacemaking should focus on relationship building and ‘web-making’ in order to bring people and organizations together and weave dialogue, ideas and initiatives across boundaries. A relational approach to peacemaking through sport must thus be genuinely dialogical and democratic and take alternative voices ‘from below’ seriously; in short, it needs to be de-centred. To this end, the Olympic movement should also engage more fully and consistently with relatively radical nongovernmental and community-based organizations,<sup>35</sup> whose critical perspectives on sport, peacemaking and social development serve as an important counter-balance to idealized, over-generalized and elitist notions of peacemaking through Olympism. With reference to the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics, Darnell argues that such oppositional voices will likely play an increasingly important role in the ongoing struggle for development, equality and the building of peaceful relations in and through Olympic sport and the hosting of the Games. A de-centred, relational approach to peacemaking also resonates with Kidd’s call for alternatives to the Olympic Games, such as the Paralympic and Gay Games, to continue to challenge the hegemony of the Olympic movement, most notably with regard to how ‘sport for all’ is to be conceptualized and implemented, and what a more proactive and progressive role for Olympic sport in the betterment of the world for all citizens should look like.<sup>36</sup> Brittain’s paper on the social impact of the Paralympic Games underlines the importance and timeliness of this argument. Undoubtedly, this will require ongoing collective reflexivity and double-loop learning on the part of the Olympic movement to critically scrutinize and revisit underlying values and assumptions. We hope that the essays in this collection will be able to make a modest contribution to this process.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Lord Michael Bates, British Conservative Party, House of Lords Debate 'Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012: Olympic Truce', UK Parliament, 15 December 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Bates, 'The Olympic Truce—London 2012', 13 December 2010. <http://lordsoftheblog.net/2010/12/13/the-olympic-truce-london-2012/>. Accessed 10 June 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Bates, 'Time to give the Greeks their 'Marbels' back...', 13 June 2011. <http://lordsoftheblog.net/2011/06/13/time-to-give-the-greeks-their-marbels-back/>. Accessed 16 June 2011.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/pages/London-2012-Olympic-Peace-Campaign/211382448883873?sk=info>.

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- <sup>5</sup> Lord Michael Jopling, British Conservative Party, House of Lords Debate ‘Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012: Olympic Truce’, UK Parliament, 15 December 2010.
- <sup>6</sup> Quoted in ‘London 2012 Olympic torch relay route revealed’, *BBC News*, 18 May 2011. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-13426353>. Accessed 10 June 2011.
- <sup>7</sup> Boykoff, ‘The Anti-Olympics’.
- <sup>8</sup> Jacques Rogge, quoted in Chang, ‘Olympics Chief Softens Position on Monitoring Rights in China’.
- <sup>9</sup> Ife, ‘Human Rights and Peace’, 160.
- <sup>10</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of SDP Academics UN-IOC Forum*, Geneva, 10 May 2011. Private communication.
- <sup>11</sup> Gldenpfennig, ‘Sport in the Peace Movement’, 209.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Haugerudbraaten, ‘Peacebuilding’.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 18.
- <sup>15</sup> Richards, ‘On Peacemaking’.
- <sup>16</sup> Haugerudbraaten, ‘Peacebuilding’, 20.
- <sup>17</sup> Galtung, ‘Violence, Peace and Peace Research’; Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means*. The notion of positive peace has shifted over time. Galtung initially viewed positive peace in terms of integration and cooperation.
- <sup>18</sup> Boulding, K. ‘Twelve Friendly Quarrels with Johan Galtung’; Wiberg, ‘JPR 1964-1980’.
- <sup>19</sup> Mller, ‘Theories of Peace’, 62.
- <sup>20</sup> Briggs et al., *16 Days*, 50-1.
- <sup>21</sup> Hoffman, ‘Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment Methodology’, 190.
- <sup>22</sup> Ramsbotham et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, 225.
- <sup>23</sup> Sugden, ‘Teaching and Playing Sport for Conflict Resolution and Co-Existence in Israel’, 238.
- <sup>24</sup> Kidd and MacDonnell, ‘Peace, Sport and Development’, 172.
- <sup>25</sup> Cf. Darnell, ‘Conflict, Education and Sport’, 6.
- <sup>26</sup> Roche, ‘The Olympics and “Global Citizenship”’, 176-7.
- <sup>27</sup> Haugerudbraaten, ‘Peacebuilding’, p. 21.
- <sup>28</sup> Guest, ‘The Diffusion of Development-through-Sport’.
- <sup>29</sup> MacAloon, ‘Scandal and Governance’, 302.

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<sup>30</sup> Mac Ginty, ‘Traditional and Indigenous Approaches to Peacemaking’.

<sup>31</sup> Lederach, *Preparing for Peace*; Lederach, *Building Peace*.

<sup>32</sup> Ramsbotham et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, chap. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Lederach, *Building Peace*, 60.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Giulianotti, ‘Sport, Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution’.

<sup>36</sup> Kidd, “‘Another World is Possible’”.