



# Can sport start reconciliation between peoples and states in conflict?

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## **Belief in sport as a tool of reconciliation**

"Sport has the power to unite people in a way little else can. Sport can create hope where there was once only despair. It breaks down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of discrimination. Sport speaks to people in a language they can understand."

– Nelson Mandela

“We, the politicians, we went to the best universities; we’re the intellectuals, the supposed leaders of the country...But when it came to making peace, we failed. It's a group of soccer players that brought us together”

- Geoffrey Baillet, spokesman for the Ivorian Minister of Sports, June 2007

“The potential of sport to effectively convey messages and influence behaviour on one hand, while improving the quality of people’s lives and promoting peace on the other hand has been increasingly recognized in recent years.”

– UN *International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005*

“[S]port has the power to bring people together, bridge differences, and promote communication and understanding.”

- UN Secretary General in the 2006 *Sport for Development and Peace: the Way Forward*



## Why study sports and reconciliation?

- Increased amount of attention
- Increased belief in sport as a tool to reconcile peoples and states
- Minimal research on the subject

## **What should we look for?**

- 1) What political order has to be in place to start sports and reconciliation projects?**
- 2) Under what conditions can sports and reconciliation projects survive?**
- 3) Can sport contribute to reconciliation between peoples and states in conflict?**

# Levels of analysis

- **Inter-state level** – international sports diplomacy
- **Intra-state level** – people-to-people reconciliation initiatives

## Selection of cases – inter-state level

- *Track and Field Diplomacy* between USA and the Soviet Union (1958-1985)
- *Ping Pong/Basketball Diplomacy* between USA and China (1971/72)
- *Cricket Diplomacy* between India and Pakistan (1987-2007)
- *Olympic Diplomacy* between North and South Korea (1984/88-2007)
- *Wrestling Diplomacy* between Iran and USA (1998-2007)
- *Baseball Diplomacy* between USA and Cuba (1999-2000).

## Selection of cases – intra-state level

- *Sierra Leone* – Football and social rehabilitation of child soldiers – *World Vision International Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace* (2000-2004)
- *Liberia* – Football and social rehabilitation of child soldiers – *Don Bosco Youth Project* (2001-2004)
- *Bosnia & Herzegovina* – Reconciliation of ethnic groups – *Open Fun Football Schools* – (1998-2007)
- *South Africa* – Sports and reconciliation in South Africa – *United School Sports Association of South Africa* (1993-2007)
- *Northern Ireland* – Integration Catholics and Protestants – *Sports Council for Northern Ireland's policy on community relations* (1997-2005)
- *Israel* – building bridges between Jewish and Arab towns and villages – *Football for Peace* (2001-2006)
- *Right to Play Projects* - Juba (2007), Monrovia (2005-2007), Kigali (2003-2007)

## International sports diplomacy initiatives

	Single sport diplomacy	Two sports diplomacy	Multiple sports diplomacy
<b>Government initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cricket Diplomacy</li> </ul>	Ping Pong/Basketball Diplomacy	
<b>NGO/National federations Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseball Diplomacy</li> <li>Wrestling Diplomacy</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track and Field Diplomacy</li> </ul>
<b>Third Party Intervention (states/NGOs)</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Olympic Diplomacy</li> </ul>

**Table 1a: International sports diplomacy initiatives**



## Intra-state reconciliation initiatives

	Single sport		Multiple sports
<b>Government initiative</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• South Africa</li><li>• Northern Ireland</li></ul>
<b>NGO/National federations Initiative</b>			
<b>Third Party Intervention (states/NGOs)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Israel</li><li>• Bosnia &amp; Herzegovina</li><li>• Liberia</li><li>• Sierra Leone</li><li>• Right to Play</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Right to Play</li></ul>

**Table 1b: Intra-state reconciliation initiatives**

## When was international sports diplomacy initiated?

	Strained relations	Thawing
<b>International sports diplomacy initiated</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cricket diplomacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track and Field Diplomacy</li> <li>• Ping Pong /Basketball Diplomacy</li> <li>• Wrestling Diplomacy</li> <li>• Olympic Diplomacy</li> <li>• Baseball Diplomacy</li> </ul>

**Table 2a: Relations when international sports diplomacy was initiated**

## When was reconciliation initiatives initiated?

	<b>Strained relations</b>	<b>Thawing</b>
<b>International sports diplomacy initiated</b>	* Israel (?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Africa</li> <li>• Northern Ireland</li> <li>• Liberia</li> <li>• Sierra Leone</li> <li>• Bosnia &amp; Herzegovina</li> <li>• Right to Play Initiatives</li> </ul>

**Table 2b: Relations when intra-state reconciliation initiatives was initiated**

## Continuation of international sports diplomacy

	<b>Continued after worsened relations</b>	<b>Halted after worsened relations</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track and Field Diplomacy</li> <li>• Wrestling Diplomacy</li> <li>• Olympic Diplomacy</li> <li>• Cricket Diplomacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseball Diplomacy</li> <li>• Ping Pong /Basketball Diplomacy (?)</li> </ul>

**Table 3a: Durability of international sports diplomacy initiatives**

## Continuation of intra-state reconciliation initiatives

	<b>Continued after worsened relations</b>	<b>Halted after worsened relations</b>
<b>Continuing reconciliation initiatives</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third party NGOs withdraw/freeze projects when tensions grow - War stops peace!</li> </ul>

**Table 3b: Durability of intra -state reconciliation initiatives**

## Preliminary conclusions

- Few cases/research at an early stage – hard to draw conclusions
- All reconciliation initiatives comes after a certain degree of political order is established
- NGOs play a central role at both levels
- Outside intervention is the rule in people-to-people reconciliation
- Answer to the title question: Sport DO NOT start reconciliation
- But: Sport can be a part of broader reconciliation initiatives