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Abstract

For a county with a small population, a remote location and an awkward colonial past, Australia has a remarkable record of success in international sport, so much so that sport is often considered a 'religion' in the 'Lucky Country'. If diplomacy is the business of representation, it would be expected that sport features prominently in Australia's diplomacy. However, sport oddly languishes under the banner of Public Diplomacy (PD) and is overseen by an unloved, under-resourced and under-represented Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). To exploit the type of vertical, horizontal and plural channels and networks diplomacy can offer in the 21st century, DFAT must remove sport from under the PD banner. Sports diplomacy must be funded by DFAT appropriately and developed to truly represent the place of sport in Australia's history, culture and society.

Keywords

Sports Diplomacy, Sports Governance, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Public Diplomacy, Sport in Australia and AusAID

Disciplines

Entertainment, Arts, and Sports Law

SPORTS DIPLOMACY IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT: A CASE STUDY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

STUART MURRAY*

For a county with a small population, a remote location and an awkward colonial past, Australia has a remarkable record of success in international sport, so much so that sport is often considered a 'religion' in the 'Lucky Country'. If diplomacy is the business of representation, it would be expected that sport features prominently in Australia's diplomacy. However, sport oddly languishes under the banner of Public Diplomacy (PD) and is overseen by an unloved, under-resourced and under-represented Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). To exploit the type of vertical, horizontal and plural channels and networks diplomacy can offer in the 21st century, DFAT must remove sport from under the PD banner. Sports diplomacy must be funded by DFAT appropriately and developed to truly represent the place of sport in Australia's history, culture and society.

INTRODUCTION

For a country with a relatively small population and a remote location, Australia has had 'extraordinary sporting success in a variety of sports'.¹ In 1999 alone, Australia was crowned World Cup Rugby Champions, World Cup Cricket Champions (men and women, the male team was ranked number one in the world), Netball World Champions, Davis Cup Champions, and Rugby League World Cup Champions. Australia also won the Champions Trophy at International Hockey, while Mark 'Occy' Occhilupo took out the 1999 World Surfing title. In terms of the Olympic Games – which many consider the best starting point for recognition of international sporting prowess – Australia's record is also remarkable. It is one of only two countries to compete in every Olympic Games (Greece, being the other). At the last five Games held in Atlanta, Sydney, Greece, Beijing and London Australia finished respectively seventh, fourth, fourth, sixth and tenth. In the same year 'Occy' was

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¹ Tony Ward, *Sport in Australian National Identity: Kicking Goals* (Routledge, 2010), 11.

crowned the world's best surfer, the novelist Bill Bryson captured the mood when he wrote that:

Australia pretty generally beats most people at most things. Truly never has there been a more sporting nation it is a wonder in such a vigorous and active society that there is anyone left to form an audience.²

A pleasant climate, excellent facilities, strong government support and the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), one of the world's leading sports development facilities, are only partly why Australia excels in international sport. As Ansely states, a more significant factor is that 'the Australian psyche is bound in sports, as a passion and as an essential component of national identity'.³ For many Aussies sport 'is life and the rest a shadow...to play sport or watch others and to read and talk about it is to uphold the nation and build its character'.⁴ Australia lives up to the cliché that sport is a 'religion'.

In Australia's diplomacy – the business of peace, representation and communication – sport would be expected to figure prominently. However, cases where the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has engaged in sports-diplomacy are sporadic, anecdotal and ambiguously grouped under the broad heading of Public Diplomacy (PD). Being mindful not to confuse sports-diplomacy with sport and development, or occasions where regional and national sporting bodies practice a form of specialised diplomacy of international sport (the representation, communication and negotiation to make sporting competition possible),⁵ this article argues as a country that considers sport a religion, Australia has yet to realise the potential of sports-diplomacy.

This article begins by defining the term sports-diplomacy and presents some cases and reasons why governments are employing sport, sportspeople and sporting events as diplomatic tools, a means to a foreign policy ends. This article considers the activities of DFAT at the intersection of diplomacy and sport. The third section critically appraises these episodes. This article concludes with a number of benefits and recommendations to enhance sports-diplomacy within DFAT. Chief among these

² Ibid.

³ Greg Ansely, 'Aussies – Natural Born Winners', *New Zealand Herald* (Auckland), 25 March 2006.

⁴ Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country* (Penguin Books, 2008) 37.

⁵ See Stuart Murray and Geoffrey A Pigman, 'It's Our Game: Mapping The Hectic Convergence of Diplomacy and International Sport' (Paper presented at the International Studies Association Annual Convention, San Diego, April 2012).

is to cease considering sport as part of the cultural or public diplomacy policies of the Australian government.

This article's aim is simple: to begin mapping sports-diplomacy within Australia to instigate a discussion between theorists and practitioners from both diplomacy and sport conducive to realise the potential of this 'new' diplomatic hybrid. There are several benefits. First, arguing for a clear distinction between 'public' and 'sports' diplomacy reveals an esoteric gap in the canon of Australian diplomatic studies. Second, by revealing the gap discussion, scholarship and debate the enhanced practice of Australian sports-diplomacy can occur. Third, the case study reveals a picture of the plural, modern diplomatic environment and the types of networks, pathways and channels that a traditional diplomatic institution can exploit in the 21st century.

There are also parameters. The Australian state, its diplomacy and sport are the referent objects for inquiry. This article does not explore the relationship between domestic sport and diplomacy, or the relationship between non-state actors and sport (but readily admits that these are fecund areas of intellectual and practical endeavour). This article focuses on the Australian government's use of sport as a means of boosting its diplomacy. Its level of analysis is positivist and restricted to international sport and traditional diplomacy.

SPORTS-DIPLOMACY PAST AND PRESENT

For millennia, there has been a close relationship between politics and international sport. During the Ancient Olympiad, the Truce was an aspirational ideal that aimed to offer travelling fans and competitors protection during the months the Games were held. The 'Greek word [for truce] *ekecheiria*, a staying of the hand' conferred a sanctity and immunity from attack during the tournament.⁶ In the 19th century, the strategic rivalry between the British and Russian Empires for supremacy in Central Asia was considered The Great Game (or Tournament of Shadows). The British were spurred on by Henry Newbolt's *Vitai Lampada*, a stirring homage to sport and war, and told to '*Play up! play up! and play the game!*'⁷ Recently, sport has been used as a punitive tool (as was the case with apartheid South Africa), a vehicle to conflate diplomatic relationships (the United States 1980 boycott of the Moscow Olympics, followed by a similar refusal to compete by Russia and 13 satellite states four years

⁶ Mark Golden, 'War and Peace in the Ancient and Modern Olympics' (2011) 58 *Greece & Rome* 5.

⁷ Michael Duffy, *Prose & Poetry – Sir Henry Newbolt* (2009) <<http://http://www.firstworldwar.com/poetsandprose/newbolt.htm>>.

later at the Los Angeles Games) or as a means of bringing old enemies together (the Japan/South Korea 2006 World Cup). Like it or loathe it, sport plays a significant role in the relations between states.

When sport provides a useful function, it is usually 'co-opted by politics'.⁸ Governments are well aware of the scope, appeal and power of the opiate masses and are drawn toward sport and sporting festivals. International sport also provides a metaphorical arena for governments to demonstrate various types of superiority, from their athletic prowess to the ideology of a particular system of state. Consequently, international sport has 'always provided a useful mechanism for reminding people and nations precisely where they stand in relation to one another'.⁹

In this traditional context, sports-diplomacy is the reification and specialisation of a familiar activity in the relations between states. Typically, a diplomatic service can employ well-known sports-people to represent a particular policy issue or amplify a diplomatic message. Sporting events offer an opportunity to change an image of a country amongst foreign publics. Or, more commonly, sporting exchanges offer an alternate channel to conflate diplomatic relationships, cool tensions in acrimonious political situations, or consolidate positive relations. Sport is consciously employed by governments to illustrate that while nations may be politically separate people, they share a common human bond through the pursuit of sport.

There are many examples of traditional sports-diplomacy. Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) regularly exploits and mobilises football and footballers. Initially, football was used to overcome imperial stereotypes. One intention behind the formation of the J-league in the 1990s was to improve the performance of the national team to reflect 'a level worthy of its [Japan's] economic power and overall achievements after 40 years of post-war peace and prosperity'.¹⁰ MOFA has also used football to 'secure a peaceful environment for Japanese troops in Iraq', to bridge divides between Balkan states and frequently invites 'Israeli and Palestinian youth players to participate in training camps in Japan' as a way of getting to know the 'other'.¹¹ The US Department of State also typifies a rallying call to aggressively use sports as a diplomatic tool through programs like *Sports United*. States regularly

⁸ Steven J Jackson and Stephen Haigh, 'Between and Beyond Politics: Sport and foreign policy in a globalizing world' (2008) 11(4) *Sport in Society* 354.

⁹ Manzenreiter, 'Global Movements, sports Spectacles and the Transformation of Representational Power Asia' (2010) 1 *Pacific World* 37.

¹⁰ Wolfram Manzenreiter, 'Football diplomacy, post-colonialism and Japan's quest for normal state status' (2008) 11(4) *Sport in Society* 417.

¹¹ *Ibid* 421-423.

employ Sports Envoys, such as figure skater Michelle Kwan and baseball star Cal Ripken Jr, to engage in sports-diplomacy. The People's Republic of China is embracing sport as a diplomatic tool since formation 'when athletes were used to promote China's diplomacy in the Third World through cultural diplomatic exchanges', with an emphasis on 'friendship first, contests second'.¹² The most famous example of was the Ping-Pong diplomacy of 1971, that paved the way for normalisation of Sino/US diplomatic relations, but even today the PRC exploits the start power of basket baller Yao Ming or the Tennis star Li Na.

Sports-diplomacy involves representative and diplomatic activities undertaken by sports-people on behalf of, and in conjunction with, their governments across any number of venues, on *and* off the proverbial pitch. These engagements are facilitated by the traditional diplomatic institution, which uses sports-people and sporting events to engage, inform and create a favourable image among foreign publics and organisations. The diplomatic institution shapes perceptions in a way that is more favourable than expressing a government's diplomatic and foreign policy goals.¹³ Sport is no different from a government employing classical musicians to explore new diplomatic possibilities.¹⁴ Or a government proselytising its language, values, society and politics abroad through cultural diplomacy channels such as the Goethe Institute, the VOA or the British Council.

SPORTS-DIPLOMACY IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

'Sport in Australia is more than just a pastime', the DFAT website informs the visitor, 'it plays a major role in shaping the country's identity and culture, so much so that sport is often referred to as Australia's national religion'.¹⁵ Sport is tremendously important to Australian society in sporting participation, spectators and even shared collective memory. A recent survey found that 'seven of the ten most inspirational moments' in Australian history were related to sporting triumphs, such as the America's Cup Victory over the USA in 1983.¹⁶ While a 2002 Australian Sports

¹² Peter Horton, 'Sport as Public Diplomacy and Public Disquiet: Australia's Ambivalent Embrace of the Beijing Olympics' (2008) 25 *The International Journal of the History of Sport*.

¹³ Thanks must go to Dr Caitlin Byrne of Bond University for help with this definition.

¹⁴ On 26 February 2008, the New York Philharmonic played a series of concerts in Pyongyang, North Korea, as part of a historic cultural exchange. The Philharmonic was the first significant American cultural group to visit the hermit kingdom.

¹⁵ DFAT, *About Australia: sporting excellence* (2008) <<http://www.dfat.gov.au>>.

¹⁶ Bob Stewart et al, *Australian sport: Better by Design? The evolution of Australian sport policy* (Routledge, 2004) 9.

Commission (ASC) survey found '11.7 million or 78% of the adult population' participated in sport.¹⁷

Who administers the sport 'religion'? Domestically, the Ministry of Sport is under the Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio and oversees a broad range of institutions. ASC 'is responsible for the funding and development of sport' and 'supports a wide range of programs designed to develop sporting excellence and increase participation in sports activities by all Australians'.¹⁸ ASC oversees a number of different programs and institutions.

Its torchbearer is the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), 'a premiere sports training institute, internationally acknowledged as a world's best practice model for high performance athlete development'.¹⁹ Established in 1981 after a dismal Montreal Olympics (1976),²⁰ Ricky Ponting (cricket), Luc Longley (basketball) and Cadel Evans (road cycling) are AIS graduates. Referred to as the 'gold medal factory', the AIS is fundamental to Australia's international sporting success and, 'Australia's sense of itself, its morale and how Australians (particularly politicians) believe the rest of the world sees them, so in sport they must succeed'.²¹ Through sport, Australia has developed an international profile and 'the success of its athletes has allowed Australians to claim a central place on the world stage'.²²

Sport does not feature in the diplomatic and representative duties of the DFAT prominently. It falls under the category of PD, which DFAT lists as one of its key functions and defines as,

work or activities undertaken to understand, engage and inform individuals and organisations in other countries in order to shape their perceptions in ways that will promote Australia's foreign policy goals.²³

Working alongside the ASC and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), DFAT's sporting vanguard is the Australian Sports

¹⁷ Ibid 11.

¹⁸ Australian Sports Commission, *What is the ASC* (2011) <<http://www.ausport.gov.au>>.

¹⁹ Australian Sports Commission, *What is the AIS* (2011) <<http://www.ausport.gov.au/ais>>.

²⁰ Australia won just one silver and four bronze medals.

²¹ Horton, above n 12, 855 – 856.

²² Stewart above n 16, 14.

²³ The Senate Committee definition of public diplomacy was presented to the Australian Senate on 16 August 2007 upon the conclusion of the Inquiry and delivery of the Committee's Final Report. Australian Senate, *Hansard* (16 August 2007) <http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Hanssen261110>.

Outreach Program (ASOP). ASOP uses sport as a soft power vehicle to address regional development priorities and community issues. It aims to,

help build the capacity of committed individuals and organisations to manage and deliver activities; use quality and inclusive sport and physical activities; [and] contribute to improved leadership, health promotion and social cohesion.²⁴

Through a decent grant program, Sport for Development activities currently run in Vanuatu, Samoa, Fiji, Nauru and Kiribati and will be made available to predominantly commonwealth countries in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. For example, the Fiji Volleyball program was awarded a grant of \$4,930 (Aud) to 'train volleyball players, coaches and administrators to promote active sports participation by young rural women and to deliver messages about vulnerability to HIV and AIDS to program participants'.²⁵

Other instances of sports-diplomacy where DFAT has figured prominently is the 2000 Sydney and the 2008 Beijing Olympics. In addition to its normal consular duties, for the Sydney Games DFAT organized a number of media briefings, produced and disseminated a collection of Australian fact sheets and marketing materials, liaised with the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, organised the Torch relay through Oceania and hosted the 'Australia – Our Sporting Life' Exhibition 'seen by over 1.5 million people [and] generated significant positive international media coverage in 11 countries'.²⁶

The Australian Olympic Army – a collection of Australian businesses, individuals, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government at all levels (territory, state and federal) – were also heavily involved in Beijing's preparation for its 2008 Games. As Horton alludes,

So entrenched and interconnected did the Australian Olympic army become that they were actively engaged at every stage of the strategic planning, design and construction of the new Olympic infrastructure, and the development of the policies and planning of security systems, the environmental master plan for the

²⁴ Australian Sports Commission, *Pacific* (2011). <<http://www.ausport.gov.au/supporting/international/programs/pacific>>.

²⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Successful Projects* (2011). <http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/spacific/asop/successful_projects_1011.html>.

²⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade *Annual Report 2000-2001, Projecting a positive image of Australia internationally* (2002) <http://www.dfat.gov.au/dept/annual_reports/00_01/s02/02_3-1_effect_2.html>.

game, the volunteers' programme and the transport and telecommunications systems.²⁷

Australian companies' profits benefitted, but the greater boon came in closer Sino-Australian diplomatic relations that developed, fostered and facilitated as a result of the 2008 Beijing Games collusion.

Australia had a significant presence at the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai and once more sport was involved. DFAT hosted four events which created valuable networking opportunities for sportspeople and senior Australian and Chinese business representatives. The highlight was the 'Showdown in Shanghai,' an Australian Football League (AFL) exhibition match between the Melbourne Demons and the Brisbane Lions. DFAT promoted 'Aussie Rules' as an indigenous example of the greatness, uniqueness and idiosyncratic nature of Australian Culture.

THE SCORECARD?

These examples allude to, but do not confirm, a mature realisation of the power of sports as a diplomatic tool. The AIS work, for example, is exclusively geared toward high-performance in elite sport, winning in other words. The AIS is an esoteric institution and the secrets of its success are national secrets. There is no 'sharing' of best practice (for fear others may learn the formula) and by extension, no diplomacy. Similarly, the Australian Sports Outreach Program (ASOP) clearly uses sport for development and not for the purposes of diplomacy, although it fits under the broad term PD.

Sport and Development is a discipline in its own right and is considered in isolation to diplomacy. DFAT's role in the Sydney Games was to be expected and can be considered as routine, while during the Beijing Games it was difficult to discern what they did above and beyond their normal consular and facilitative duties as interlocutor between AusTrade and Chinese business representative. The same can be said of DFAT's participation in the Shanghai World Expo, where little diplomacy took place that was particularly innovative and beyond what would be expected of any traditional diplomatic institution. Only four sports-related events occurred during the 12 months of the World Expo. This is a poor statistic for a country where 78% of its adult population play sport and is hardly representative of a sporting 'religion.' As for the 'Showdown in Shanghai,' the AFL has been aggressively promoting its brand in the Chinese market since 2007. If anything, DFAT hitched a ride.

²⁷ Horton, above n 12, 857.

Returning to this article's definition of sports-diplomacy, (the conscious reification and specialisation of a familiar activity in the international relations), it is fair to argue that sports-diplomacy in Australia is not developed or potentialised and is unrepresentative of Australia's remarkable international sporting pedigree. The literature reflects this. There is no scholarship on the specific *means* of how and why the Australian government could or should employ sport as a diplomatic tool, or the specialised diplomacy of international sport. Very few publications focus on how specifically sport functions as a 'pillar' of Australian foreign policy and diplomacy.

Institutions such as the US Department of State, Japan's MOFA and Canada's MFAIT are leagues ahead. These governments employ sports people and sporting events for specific diplomatic purposes. First, engaging with sport as a foreign policy end demonstrates capacity for reform and innovation in diplomacy as a direct counter to the irrelevance, obsolescence and deliquescence arguments consistently levelled at diplomacy since the end of the Cold War. Second, sport as a soft power overture, a means of bringing estranged peoples, nations and states closer together, or as a way of demonstrating the collegiality of a relationship, is today an effective method of diplomacy in comparison to hard power traditions. Third, sport and diplomacy are compatible. Both are pacific means of international exchange short of open conflict, methods to sublimate conflict and to demonstrate comity between estranged peoples and nations. Fourth, diplomats and sportspeople also share similarities. Both characterise an elite stratum of society, both represent their country in the international arena and just as sports people vie with one another, diplomats also compete in a great game that like sport involves rules, tactics and opponents. Fifth, sports-diplomacy exchanges can promote international understanding and friendship and dispel stereotypes and prejudices. They are also 'low-risk, low-cost and high profile'.²⁸ In the post-modern information age, sport, culture and diplomacy are proving they are no longer niche or deliquescent institutions, but relevant foreign policy tools.

Australia is yet to realise the value of sports-diplomacy in the modern diplomatic environment. Part of the reason why sports-diplomacy is overlooked in Australia is DFAT itself. Questions such as 'is diplomacy dead?'²⁹ or 'are diplomats still necessary?'³⁰ take on added relevance of the Australian Government's attitude

²⁸ Marc Keech and Barrie Houlihan, 'Sport and the end of apartheid' (1999) 88 *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 109 – 121.

²⁹ Allan Ramsay, 'Is Diplomacy Dead?' (2006) 288 *Contemporary Review* 273.

³⁰ John Robert Kelly, 'The New Diplomacy: Evolution of a Revolution' (2010) 21 *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 287.

toward DFAT. DFAT appears obsolete, irrelevant and archaic,³¹ withering away and doing little more than providing 'dubious solutions to long-forgotten or out-dated problems'.³² In 2009 and 2011, the Lowy Institute published two highly critical reports, *Australia's Diplomatic Deficit* and *Diplomatic Disrepair*. The reports reached a number of dramatic, yet accurate, conclusions. For too long, Australia's diplomatic network had been,

hollowed out by years of underfunding it had not kept pace with our interests or with a changing world our overseas representation compared very poorly with almost all other developed nations' shortage in posts and of diplomats with critical skills shortages – particularly in foreign languages public diplomacy was lacklustre and use of new digital platforms almost non-existent. In short, our diplomatic infrastructure was in a parlous state of disrepair.³³

While the new Secretary Dennis Richardson has breathed some life back into DFAT, including the creation of Australia's first embassy in Francophone Africa (Senegal) and 50 new positions, it is unclear if he prioritises sport.

DFAT's attitude toward PD – where sport languishes – has also been lambasted since its recognition and introduction in 2007. Inadequately resourced and uncoordinated from the outset, 'the reality is that Australian public diplomacy has been relegated to a level of importance equivalent to that of Embassy gardens'.³⁴ More recently, Alex Oliver of the Lowy Institute asked of PD:

have we abandoned this completely? What we used to have was a fairly feeble attempt at a public diplomacy function, with some funding for cultural events and expos (which limp along) complemented by plans for some marginally more rigorous programs which were disbanded before they really started (like

³¹ See eg, John Hoffman, 'Reconstructing Diplomacy' (2003) 5(4) *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 525-542. For example, Hoffman claims that 'the state is incoherent', and that this incoherence necessarily extends itself to statist diplomacy. Traditional or conventional notions of diplomacy 'must be avoided if we are to utilize the plural nature of modern diplomacy'.

³² Ibid 619.

³³ Andrew Shearer, Fergus Hanson and Alexandra Oliver, *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Inquiry into Australia's overseas representation* (2011) The Lowy Institute <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/files/inquiry_into_australias_overseas_representation.pdf>.

³⁴ Alex Oliver, *Public Diplomacy Adrift* (2009) The Lowy Institute, <<http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2009/08/26/Public-diplomacy-adrift.aspx>>.

the ill-fated 'Australia on the world stage' program). What we have now has dwindled to almost nothing.³⁵

If DFAT also does not realise the potential of PD, then what hope does sports-diplomacy have?

A second factor that feeds into DFAT's deficient attitude toward sports-diplomacy is a rather bizarre idea of the Imaginary Grandstand, a term coined by Graeme Davison. Accordingly, 'the world is watching' and Australia and Australians are judged by others on its sporting success alone. A core tenet of this 'imaginary grandstand of international spectators' is an Australian belief that 'people of other countries take notice and applaud Australian performance'.³⁶

This 'imaginary grandstand' can be traced to an Australian sense of geographical isolation, as well as a feeling of inferiority and insecurity stemming from its colonial heritage and an overriding desire to impress international audiences. This needless angst, the 'habit of seeing ourselves through the eyes of the imaginary other', Davison argues, 'is the most lasting mental relic of colonialism'.³⁷

Australia's attitude toward the international sport landscape is rather traditional, parochial and immature. Australia obsesses about performance, winning, medal tallies and views international sport in its most conservative, historical sense; as a means of developing an international presence through sport.

This obsession is apparent in the budgets. In the 2011-12 Budget, more than \$300 million (AUD) was allocated to the ASC, with the AIS (the medal factory) receiving '\$171.1 million to ensure our athletes remain competitive on an international level'.³⁸ Considering the 2012 Olympics was held in the 'motherland,' Australia seemed particularly keen to provide the financial resources for success and recognition, respect and a reaffirmation of its national identity. By contrast, in 2011 the Australian government spent \$26 billion annually on defence, while DFAT's budget was a pitiful \$890 million.³⁹ The PD budget fell 'by 22% to just over \$24 million'⁴⁰ (\$20 million of

³⁵ Alex Oliver, *DFAT budget: On the mend?* (2012) <<http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2012/05/10/Modest-turnaround-for-DFAT-budget.aspx>>.

³⁶ Richard Cashman, *Sport in the National Imagination: Australia sport in the Federation Decades* (Walla Walla Press, 2002) 103.

³⁷ Bernard Whimpress, *The Imaginary Grandstand: Identity and narrative in Australian sport* (Australia Society for Sports History, 2001) 14.

³⁸ Australian Sports Commission, *Supporting Australian Sport* (2011) <http://www.ausport.gov.au/news/releases/story_430936_supporting_australian_sport>.

³⁹ Shearer, above n 33.

which goes to the Australia Network, Australia's international television broadcasting service), and the ASOP received \$2 million annually. While Australia's economy flourishes, funding for its diplomatic service dropped 6% in the 2011 Budget.⁴¹ In terms of sports-diplomacy Australia isn't backing the wrong horse. It isn't backing any horse.

RECOMENDATIONS

The need for wide-sweeping reform and expansion of Australia's diplomatic service is self-evident and has been recommended many times. Most recently, the current Secretary of DFAT Dennis Richardson stated,

to put it simply in a broad context I would agree with the general proposition that we are underdone in our international representation we are still not back to where we were in the early 1990's.⁴²

For most commentators, DFAT requires a major boost of funding because 'our traditional diplomatic footprint is simply outdated and inadequate'.⁴³ As a corollary, DFAT's PD budget, and the portion devoted to sport, should reflect the importance sport plays to Australian society, national identity and its international image.

The Australian government and DFAT must also remove sports from underneath the banner of PD. There are a number of reasons to do so. First, treating sport and sportspeople as a separate, powerful diplomatic tool would *actually* reflect and represent the significance of sport in Australian life. Blazing the trail for sports-diplomacy and acting as a pioneer in a field has a huge comparative advantage. Consequently, its diplomacy would accurately represent Australian life, culture and the importance of sport.

Considering the 'religious' nature of sport, it is difficult to fathom why sport languishes in an underfunded, unloved department and is grouped under a PD division that is yet to win over the fans. Sport must be treated as an independent area of focus. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute argues that,

an Office of Sport and Diplomacy within DFAT should be established to advance Australian foreign policy objectives in the [Asia-Pacific] region by

⁴⁰ Alex Oliver, *For DFAT, budget day is Groundhog Day* (2011) The Lowy Institute <<http://www.loyyinterpreter.org/post/2011/05/11/Groundhog-day-for-DFATs-budget.aspx>>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Shearer, above n 33.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

developing programs that will bring Australia and the people from the Pacific closer together through sport.⁴⁴

Hear, hear. A totally new approach to 'the use of sport to enhance international understanding and friendship between Australia and the world is required'.⁴⁵ Give the 'religion' its own church, in other words.

Second, DFAT needs to realise that international sport has changed. The power, scope and market of sport in the 21st century is immense. In 1990, Appadurai identified five dimensions of globalization – ethnoscaples, technoscaples, financescaples, mediascaples and ideoscaples. Manzenreiter in 2011 proposed the missing element of 'sportsaples':

to emphasise the significance of sport as another landscape of global dimensions, as well as its autonomy. Sportsaples are characterised by the transnational flows of physical culture, ideologies and practices centering on the body.⁴⁶

Set free by Globalization and driven by increasingly relevant non state actors such as Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the International Olympic Committee and sporting demi-gods like Leo Messi, Yao Ming or Roger Federer, sport matters. Approximately 3.9 billion people watched the 2004 Athens Olympics, while a staggering 1 billion people, or 15% of the global population tuned in for the 2008 Beijing Olympics opening ceremony.⁴⁷ DFAT's paltry \$2million a year for ASOP suggests they have either realised and ignored the growing sportsaple, and have done very little to tap into, exploit or develop a presence through sports-diplomacy;

Or and third, perhaps Australia's cultural cringe, the repetition of its colonial past and obsession with the imaginary grandstand are too engrained to overcome? Such sentiment is still alive, embodied in a recent statement made by Deputy Leader of the Australian Opposition Julie Bishop. Writing of Cadel Evans' triumph in the 2011 Tour De France in an article entitled 'Our sporting diplomats' she claimed,

Australians will embrace Cadel Evans as the quintessential Aussie battler who overcame the doubters and the seemingly insurmountable challenges to finally triumph against the odds. In many respects, his story is the story of our nation.

⁴⁴ Richard Herr and Anthony Bergin, *Our Near abroad: Australia and Pacific islands regionalism* (The Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2011) 72.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Manzenreiter, above n 10, 39.

⁴⁷ Jackson and Haigh, above n 8 351.

With our convict beginnings, our distance and harsh climate, the ability to overcome obstacles is often seen as the hallmark of Australian character.⁴⁸

She could have been writing of Australia's triumph over the Pommies (England) at the cricket in 1882. This narrative is tiring, embarrassing, outdated, unreflective of Australia's remarkable achievements in international sport (remember 1999?). It sells Evans' achievements short. He is a superb athlete who won because he devoted his life to training and had the physical stamina and mental temerity to win one of the hardest sporting races on the planet. It is doubtful Evans was thinking of his nation's convict beginnings when he rode into Paris. Why Australia insists on this underdog, battler line is difficult to fathom when it is most certainly untrue. When Alan Bond said 'let's show the world!' on the eve of the 1983 America's Cup triumph, or when in 1956 and 2000 the 'Australians sought to impress the world',⁴⁹ they assumed the world actually cared. The trouble with the imaginary grandstand is that it is metaphysical, it does not exist. No one, other than the Aussies, cares about Australian sport.

And besides, and fourth, what use have DFAT made of the global icon that is Cadel Evans, particularly in demonstrating that French and Australian people share an affinity beyond politics, fine wine and diplomacy, but through sport and cycling? What use did DFAT make of superstar cricketer and all-round nice guy Adam Gilchrist when diplomatic relations with India were at an all-time low in 2009-2010? Or, what use does DFAT make of Rugby League legend Mal Meninga in its stop-start relations with Papua New Guinea, where the player/coach has near demi-god status? The answer is as self-evident as sport is neglected in DFAT's activities. Sports-people such as Cathy Freeman (400 metres), Pat Rafter (tennis), Joel Parkinson (surfing) or John Eales (rugby union) could act as sports-envoys and help 'transcend cultural differences and bring people together' and increase 'dialogue and greater cultural understanding'⁵⁰ as part of a broader diplomatic strategy of regional and international engagement through soft power overtures.

Clearly there is a disconnect between the reality of sport in Australia and its representation and utility as a diplomatic tool. The neglect of sport as a diplomatic tool, and an obsession with winning and impressing an international audience that does not really care is disappointing for a country that touts sport in religious terms.

⁴⁸ Julie Bishop, 'Our Sporting Diplomats', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 27 July 2011.

⁴⁹ Davison, above n 37, 24.

⁵⁰ US Department of State, *What is Sports Diplomacy* (2013) <<http://exchanges.state.gov/sports/diplomacy.html>>.

Sports-diplomacy could and should have great potential for Australia. Rather than being seen as a blight on an already struggling DFAT, sports-diplomacy could offer salvation and a way to boost its diplomacy, particularly with regional neighbours such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and the Solomon Islands, all of whom are sports mad. The theory and practice of sports-diplomacy must be enhanced in Australia, to reflect its remarkable sporting success and for DFAT to demonstrate its relevance, creativity, innovation and importance over its obsolescence, archaism, and under-appreciation. If sport is indeed a 'religion' in Australia, then the preachers are very out of touch with the national and international congregations.