

The Games Of Summer: From Playing Fields To Battle Fields

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When the modern Olympics were first conceived, they were intended as a peaceful alternative to war. The nations of the world were supposed to lay down their arms and stop fighting during the games out of respect for the Olympic ideal. That, of course has not happened.

In 1936, Adolph Hitler used the Berlin Olympics to showcase his “ideals,” and, now, today, the sports spectacle in London became a showcase of corporate branding and entertainment while wars rage without comment by the global TV machine that focuses only on the play by play of who’s ahead and who’s behind on the fields of sports and politics.

The Games themselves encourage patriotism without reflection, while TV companies fight a war for ratings and revenues. Uri Avnery, the Israeli peace activist, goes further, arguing that sports have become a substitute for war.

“Konrad Lorenz, the Austrian professor who researched the behavior of animals as a basis for understanding human behavior, asserted that sports are a substitute for war.

Nature has equipped humans with aggressive instincts. They were an instrument for survival. When resources on earth were scarce, humans, like other animals, had to fight off intruders in order to stay alive.

This aggressiveness is so deeply imbedded in our biological heritage that it is quite useless to try to eliminate it. Instead, Lorenz thought, we must find harmless outlets for it. Sport is one answer.”

Needless to say, this type of analysis is missing in all the pomp and circumstance of flags waving and anthems playing.

When you turn away from the contests and leave the sports pages to return to the news pages, you note that the games politicians play are less open and much more covert, concealed with rhetoric and labeling that makes it much harder to identify the players or watch their coaches and advisors who stay in the shadows.

It’s far more fascinating, apparently to watch Curiosity rove about Mars, than look closely at the way the battle for Syria is being portrayed.

Hillary Clinton has been visiting South Africa in part to try to win support for US policy for the endless “terror war” and “human rights” for the people of Syria. That is the way the

issue is being presented in the US where the media drones on about the righteousness of the “rebel” fight for “democracy.

Of course, the contradiction of non democratic monarchies like Saudia Arabia and Qatar arming an opposition that enjoys Al Qaeda backing is seldom mentioned.

It's significant that while the US Secretary of State visits the aging Nelson Mandela and praises his “smile,” Mandela's wife Graca Machel and the visiting former Irish President Mary Robinson blast the US for undermining the UN's efforts to mediate a peaceful solution in Syria. (Kofi Annan is leaving the UN “team” with an Algerian envoy expected to replace him. Recall that it was Algeria that was the intermediary for the release of American hostages in Iran in 1981)

What Washington is doing at the UN, meanwhile is a basketball style “full court press” to get the General Assembly to pressure the Security Council to authorize a fuller war. So far, China and Russia have used vetoes that the Obama Administration finds infuriating

The French Magazine Le Nouvel Observateur, while criticizing the Russians, points out, “Though Moscow is a difficult partner, it doesn't always refuse cooperation — the US is the country that has used its veto the most.”

Needless to say that “fact” rarely, if ever, surfaces in US media accounts. Another one that is missing is that Iran is trying to find a formula to end the fighting. Russia is attending its conference but the opposition has not been invited.

Says Russia: “Naturally, we intend to firmly pursue our line [calling for] an immediate end to bloodshed and the suffering of the civilian population, as well as for achieving a peaceful resolution in the interest of all Syrians through a broad political dialogue.”

The only people who would dismiss the idea of a broad political dialogue are those who are determined to overthrow the Syrian government. That's why most observers now say diplomatic breakthroughs are unlikely and the military stalemate will continue, according to WorldCrunch:

“Russia's strategic maneuvering in the UN, along with China, has shielded the Syrian regime from sanctions and full-scale international intervention. “

How long will the impasse continue? Washington is chomping at the bit to intervene even more, beyond covert financial subsidies and overt posturing, to enhance Obama's status as a commander in chief. Just this past week, he signed a new set of tougher sanctions.

Israel was predictably one of the first countries out of the box to blast the Iranian peace initiative, with the Jerusalem Post quoting anonymous sources, as in “Western diplomats have dismissed the conference as an attempt to divert attention away from bloody events on the ground and to preserve the rule of Syrian President Bashar Assad,” and:

“The Islamic Republic's support for Assad's regime is hardly compatible with a genuine attempt at conciliation between the parties,” said one Western diplomat based in Tehran.”

But aside from toppling Assad, it is uncertain what these unnamed—or invented—self-styled western diplomats envisage or propose about “conciliation.” The Seattle Post Intelligencer reports that there are now fears of “chaos”—in essence a replay of the deadly aftermath of the Libya intervention with its bloody liquidation of Gadaffy, toll in human lives and continuing uncertainty despite the pretense of elections.

Jordan says that the Syrian Foreign Minister who went there will soon leave, while Lebanon’s Daily News reports that Syrian refugees in the tent camps set up in Jordan are finding not freedom but “snakes, scorpions and dust storms.”

My hunch is that too few in the world are paying much attention to the Syrian scenario, caught up as they are with the games in London. Surely someone there can say something about how the Olympics were supposed to promote peace in a world that would apparently rather fight it out, than negotiate it out.

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