



PAKISTAN-INDIA RELATIONS: USING SPORTS AS A TOOL OF DIPLOMACY

Dr. Hafiz Hammaduddin
FUUAST, Karachi – Pakistan
hafizhammaduddin@gmail.com

Dr. Muhammad Arif Khan
Assistant Professor
Department of International Relations
FUUAST, Karachi – Pakistan
Arifkhan756@hotmail.com

Afshan Iqbal
Lecturer
Department of International Relations
Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences & Technology
Karachi - Pakistan
afshaniqbal41@yahoo.com

Abstract

On August 14, 1947, the former British Indian Colony of India was partitioned in half, resulting in the establishment of the sovereign country of Pakistan. The tensions between Pakistan and India have not subsided and there are still many unresolved issues between them. The conflict over Kashmir, which has had a devastating effect on the economy of both countries, is at the centre of the disagreement that exists between the two countries. Even though it has been discussed in international organisations like the United Nations Organization for the last seventy-three years, the issue in Kashmir has not yet been resolved. Tensions are at an all-time high on both sides of the border. At the Wagha border, there is an interesting tradition that involves lowering flags, but the chanting of slogans from both sides just serves to provoke additional enmity between the people of the two countries. In spite of the many obstacles that now stand in the way of communication between the two nations, there is still reason for hope. During times of intense conflict, cricket was often used as a productive means of fostering peace and understanding. As a direct consequence of this, there is now more understanding as well as peace between the two nations. The game of cricket has been instrumental in fostering better relations between countries. The most popular sport in both countries, cricket, has been disrupted as a result of the escalations and has been put on hold for a variety of different amounts of time. The game of cricket has made it easier for people from other nations to get married to one another; for instance, a number of Pakistani players have tied the knot with Indians. It has been shown that an addiction to the sport of cricket exists among followers in both Pakistan and India. It gets the fans excited and ready to cheer for the cricketers



by giving them something to look forward to.

Keywords: Pakistan, India, cricket, Relations, Diplomacy

Introduction

Since the partition of India in 1947, relations between India and Pakistan have been referred to be the "most dangerous political deadlock." When weighed against other global problems that have surfaced in the years after the end of the Cold War, the regional instability in South Asia is seen as being the most unsettling and unclear of any of them. In his last days as president, Bill Clinton advised his successor, George W. Bush, that the United States should place a greater priority on settling the dispute between India and Pakistan since both nations had nuclear weapons. This perspective is held by a large number of scholars (McLeod, 2008). It was determined that the process of India and Pakistan's Partition was the fundamental source of the hatred that still exists today. According to Pakistan, India has not been living up to its half of the bargain regarding the division of India. Even after decades have passed since its partition in 1947, Kashmir continues to be a controversial subject between India and Pakistan. Pakistan's refusal to comply with a court judgement splitting its assets, Islamabad's manipulation of international borders, and India's objection to Pakistan's reality all contributed to the escalation of tensions between the two nations (Raghavan, 2020). Pakistan and India are both perpetual victims because of the disparities in their economies, political systems, religious traditions, and cultural norms that exist between the two countries. The enmity and manufactured fear that exists between the two nations may be traced back to the fundamental disparities that exist between them. This protracted conflict over Kashmir has been the focal point of not one but three different and bloody wars: the 1947–48 war, the 1965 war, and the Kargil conflict in 1999. The military of India and Pakistan have always been unable to break the impasse that they have reached. When India responded to terrorist attacks on the Indian Parliament in December 2001 by launching Operation Brass Tracks in 1986–1987, a conflict-like situation occurred between the two nations. India's Operation Prokharan, which took place between the years of 2001 and 2002, pushed the two countries back to the brink of war (Ashraf, 2007). The conflict in Kashmir has, without a shadow of a doubt, made the situation on the South Asian subcontinent, which was already worsening, far worse. Because of the hostility that exists between the two nations that possess nuclear weapons, it has been determined that a nuclear exchange is a distinct possibility. This is possibly the most worrisome aspect of the situation. When the Modi government in India decided to abolish Kashmir's special status in August 2019, Pakistan was beyond itself with rage. The repeal of Article 370 was successful in achieving this goal. Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan said that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was acting in a chauvinistic manner. The failure of Pakistan and India to find a solution to their disagreement about Kashmir is the primary source of tension between the two countries (Jain, 2021).

The promotion of peace via the use of sports-based tactics has become more important in this age of increased globalisation. The General Assembly of the United Nations voted in favour of Resolution 66/7 in order to acknowledge the potential role that sports may play in promoting



peace and understanding amongst nations. The work that the Commonwealth has been doing with Sports for Development and Peace (SDP) has made it possible for international sports federations to take advantage of new avenues of cooperation and to better coordinate the many sporting events that aim to promote peace across the Commonwealth's member states. The United Nations has made use of sports in its efforts to promote global peace and harmony among the countries that are members of the UN. In 2005, the United Nations established the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP) in recognition of the importance of sports in contributing to the maintenance of international peace (Dudfield, 2014). There has always been a close connection between the consolidation of peace in the world and the staging of international sporting events. Around the same time in the nineteenth century, Pierre de Coubertin, who is often regarded as the person most responsible for the development of the current Olympic Games, made an observation quite similar to this one. Coubertin remained in close communication with a variety of Western peace organisations for the remainder of his life. He was a fervent believer that international athletic competitions and expositions may help reduce the possibility of a violent war. As an internationalist, he held the belief that the world's main nations had the potential to bring about global peace; nonetheless, it would be more than a century before his vision was realised. In the year 2000, Kofi Annan, then the General Secretary of the United Nations, made the observation that the goals of the Olympic Games and the goals of the United Nations are the same. The mission of the United Nations is to work toward the establishment of a global community that is characterised by collaboration, mutual respect, and mutual understanding. Competitions in various sports have the ability to play a substantial part in reducing the amount of animosity and enmity that exists between different nations (Burke, 2019).

Background of the Relations and Sports

The oldest known iteration of cricket goes back to the Middle Ages. This version of the game most likely emerged after the collapse of the Roman Empire but before the Norman conquest of England. It also most likely originated in Northern Europe. Some people believe that the original form of this game goes back to the eighteenth century, although others dispute this theory. It has been through and is now going through a number of periods of growth and development as new formats of the game have arisen during the course of time, with test matches being the original, followed by one-day internationals, and now T20 matches. Every nation that plays cricket is required to abide by a universally accepted set of rules and guidelines governing the sport. The International Cricket Council (ICC) came into existence on June 15, 1909, and since then it has been in charge of formulating and implementing all of the cricket laws that are applicable on an international level. (Anderson, 1991)

The establishment of the British Raj and the East India Company may be seen as a parallel to the development of cricket in India. The British East India Company is credited with being the first to introduce cricket to India. The very first known match of cricket was played in India in the year 1721. It was held at Cambay, a little town located not too far from Baroda. After the partition



of India and Pakistan in 1947, several cricket players who had previously participated in unified India joined cricket teams in both Pakistan and India. In October of 1952, the Pakistan cricket team made their debut on the international cricket stage when they competed in their first Test series in the city of Delhi, which is located in India. However, cricket has developed into a passion shared by the whole country. Cricket's status as a national fixation in many countries is not exactly a well-kept secret. (Ahmed, 2011)

Among the nations of South Asia, India and Pakistan rank high in terms of their strategic significance. After the partition of India, these two countries emerged as independent states. Much unites the Republic of India with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Soon after independence, diplomatic ties were established, but they have not been friendly and have often been downright antagonistic. When neither state could guarantee the safety of its minority citizens amid the largest mass exodus in human history, the finger-pointing began almost immediately after Pakistan's founding. The truce was broken, and intermittent combat broke out between the two countries. Kashmir, water, terrorism, border tension, commerce, etc. are just a few of the numerous concerns that have arisen between Pakistan and India. Kashmir continues to be ranked first. As a direct consequence, four conflicts broke out in 1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999. There have been several diplomatic strains and difficulties in the relationship between India and Pakistan. Even throughout the most contentious periods of their histories, cricket served as a unifying force, bringing together people from both nations at cricket fields and stadiums. Pakistan visited India for the first time in 1952, while India did the same in 1954–55 for the first test series between the two countries. Thereafter, competition between India and Pakistan began. (Ahuja, 2011)

Cricket Diplomacy and its Importance in the Relationship

It is generally agreed upon that cricket is the sport that is played the most often all over the world; nevertheless, in the Subcontinent, and notably in the countries of Pakistan and India, the sport has reached the level of a national obsession. India and Pakistan have engaged in a total of four wars with each other since both countries gained their independence in 1947. Their strained relations are the source of many of the most enduring problems in South Asia, including the Kashmir dispute, which has been going on for decades now. Diplomatic advancements were achieved in the year 2008, despite the fact that terrorist activities were undertaken in Mumbai by persons who were suspected of being linked with militant organisations. The Indian government, as is usual, laid the blame on Pakistan for the attack; nevertheless, the cricket match that India and Pakistan played in the World Cup inspired fresh discourse about reaching peace between the two nations. The conclusion of the competition marked a fresh beginning to the peace discussions that had been going on between the two rivals. Before the start of the match, the Indian citizen Gopal Das, who had been imprisoned in Pakistan for 27 years on suspicion of being a spy, was freed from jail as a show of goodwill. Das had been accused of spying for India (27-03-2011). Evidence that love has the power to alter the course of history for a nation and its people



It is possible that the two nuclear giants of Asia may utilise the media and the sport of cricket in an effort to defuse the diplomatic tensions between them. The practice of using the popularity of cricket as a political instrument to either build or diminish connections between nations that play the sport globally is referred to as "cricket diplomacy." The competition between the national cricket teams of the two countries is often regarded as among the most intense rivalries in the history of the sport. Both nations, who had a history of success on the cricket field in common, have experienced a boom in their competitive spirit since obtaining their independence from Britain in 1947. Both nations also have a shared history of success. Diplomacy via the sport of cricket is seen as a constructive strategy that has the potential to enhance relations between the two nuclear powers in Asia and lead to visits between them. Cricket matches might be an excellent opportunity for prospective customers and business partners to network and break the ice with one another. There is potential for impact on political, social, and societal ties via the use of sports diplomacy. A lot of diplomats are of the opinion that the use of sports as a diplomatic tool has the ability to bring people of different cultures together. In a statement (David and Bankole, 1994), the former president of Pakistan said that restarting cricket matches with India would act as a confidence-building measure and a constructive step toward developing public-to-public discourse. Efforts like this unquestionably help to a more agreeable environment and productive bilateral meetings. According to the highest authorities, the Pakistan-India World Cup 2011 semi-final match that took place in Mohali served as a vehicle for the development of relations between the two nations.

In the past, there have been repercussions that may be categorised as both beneficial and harmful as a result of the interaction of politics and sports. As a direct result of the excessive partiality shown by each nation during matches, cricketing ties between India and Pakistan were broken for a number of years. Despite this, it has undergone rigorous testing on several occasions in order to establish trust and confidence. As we have seen, the game of cricket has played a significant role in the process of improving relations between Pakistan and Politics and games are part of a long tradition of discourse that affirms that it is impractical to view the sport as separate and above social, economic, and more exclusively political issues. Participation in sporting activities may serve as an entry point toward political participation (Karen, F., Timothy, M., 2003). When there is a greater level of public interest in and support for a particular sport, there is a greater likelihood that a state will utilise that sport as a medium of policy - control. Sports have a significant role in helping people integrate on a national and political level. In January of 1999, a crowd in Chennai, India, applauded Pakistan's cricket team for their victory against India after Pakistan had earlier beaten India. Six months later, during a World Cup match that took place against the tense background of the Kargil War, a Pakistani crowd applauded the performance of the Indian fast bowler Balaji. The President of Pakistan travelled to India in 2005 with the intention of attending an Indo-Pak cricket match. However, the trip swiftly turned into a high-level summit when the two nations decided to build a militarised border separating the disputed area of Kashmir. Cricket has a long history of playing the role of a venue for communication on an international scale (Rockower, 2011)



Usage of Cricket as a Tool of Diplomacy

Some cricketers continued to play for the unified India side after India and Pakistan split in 1947, but the two nations eventually fielded rival cricket teams. During its maiden test series in India in October 1952, the Pakistan cricket team was mostly visible due to its success on the cricket field. Both are crucial to the stability of the South Asian region, yet hostility between them has persisted since the shaming began. Multiple concerns, including Kashmir, water, cross-border terrorism, border conflict, and so on, have caused tensions between Pakistan and India. The situation in Kashmir is the most pressing of these concerns. Four wars, starting in 1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999, may be directly attributed to these disagreements. Many attempts at diplomatic resolution have been made to improve relations between India and Pakistan. In spite of their troubled history, cricket has served as a strong unifying factor between the two nations, and even then, people from both sides often met up on cricket fields and in stadiums. In the 1950s, teams from both nations began touring the other's stadiums for the first time. Nonetheless, conflicts in 1965 and 1971 between the two nations caused a rift in cricket relations between 1962 and 1977. (Mukharji, 2004)

When President General Zia of Pakistan unexpectedly travelled to India to see a cricket match in 1987, he presented cricket as a tool for establishing confidence in the realm of diplomacy. That visit occurred while tensions were rising due to Indian military exercises being held close to the disputed "Brass tracks" border between India and Pakistan. Since 1987, when President General Zia's cricket peacekeeping raised hopes for a more proactive Pakistani policy, six more bilateral matches have taken place between Pakistan and India. Even though India had toured Pakistan for a complete Test series in November and December 1989, ties had already deteriorated due to the rebellion in Kashmir that year. The 1992 destruction of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya by hardline Indians further strained their already tense ties. This destruction sparked widespread violence between Hindus and Muslims over large parts of India. The resulting polarised atmosphere between Pakistan and India after 1989 effectively severed their traditional connections. (Vamey, 1999)

The cricket diplomacy of 1987 was mostly inconsequential, and it hasn't led to any significant changes in the intervening decade. Nonetheless, it paved the way for using sports as a kind of "track II" or "track III" diplomacy in the future. In 1998, both countries detonated nuclear weapons, adding to the tension and stoking fears about the potential fallout of the conflict. Eventually, those in positions of authority realised they had to do something to ease the tension between the two nations. Two of India and Pakistan's counterparts at the SAARC level summit in Sri Lanka this past July agreed on the need to resume formal talks. New lines of communication and avenues for improved ties are the fruit of these discussions. The two countries' mutual interests motivated them to take this step toward de-escalating their tensions through normalising relations. As diplomatic ties warmed again, both countries agreed to revive cultural exchanges and communication amongst their citizens. In 1999, it was reported that a cricket team from Pakistan will go to India to play a



series of matches as part of an effort to restore relations between the two countries and use sport as a track II diplomatic weapon to facilitate communication and understanding between the two peoples. Cricket had not been played in India since 1987, therefore this trip marked its return. However, there was a significant controversy between the two countries as to whether or not it should be played. Some very conservative Hindus in the Indian state of Gujarat opposed the presence of Pakistani athletes. It was believed that a successful tour, despite the heated atmosphere, would contribute to lessening cross-border difficulties. (Guha, 2002)

As planned, the tour continued over the first two months of 1999. The cricket team's ability to maintain open lines of communication and social gathering places despite frequent relocation was a major factor in the sport's continued success. The team received a warm welcome from the people of India, and on February 20, 1999, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Shareef and Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee met for the first time in history. The inauguration of the bus service between Delhi and Lahore was the occasion for this crucial stop. Indicative of a severe breakdown in ties between India and Pakistan, this Lahore Summit was a disaster. Without a shadow of a doubt, Cricket diplomacy opened the door to this historic political achievement. Cricket's ability to facilitate communication between the populaces of the bilateral neighbours is a significant contributor to the revitalising calmness of the course. Despite the undeniable success of cricket as a peacekeeping method in 1999, the Lahore Declaration failed to achieve its goals and failed to ease tensions between India and Pakistan because much of the goodwill and efforts created by the official talks in 1999 were obliterated by the Kargil war in 1999. Following these events, diplomatic ties between India and Pakistan froze and bilateral cricket matches were called off. In addition to pre-existing tensions, the December 2001 attack on India's Parliament exacerbated the situation and further strained relations. Ultimately, political failures led to the destruction of the dialogue process. Throughout 2002, tensions between India and Pakistan seemed to be rising, resulting in a complete lack of flexibility in bilateral negotiations, public interactions, and even sports. (Schofield, 2003)

In 2003, the two nations' conversation process was revived. May saw the return of bus service between Lahore and Delhi, while November saw the signing of an agreement to stop hostilities along the Kashmir Line of Control. As a kind of backdoor diplomacy, cricket was recognised by the two nations as a means of strengthening the bonds of trust between the governments and people of the two countries, hence accelerating the dialogue process. On the eve of a South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit in Islamabad in the first week of January 2004, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee met with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. Vajpayee decided to have talks on all the issues, including Kashmir, and a path to peace was agreed upon. Additionally, it was agreed to restore cricketing ties between the two countries. It had been agreed that this cricket tour would be India's first to Pakistan since 1989, but much like in 1999, there were some squabbles about when exactly it would begin. The final conclusion that India must attend was secured only via the efforts of Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee. The Indian team's trip to Pakistan was dubbed the "series of camaraderie," and it lived up to its billing. While earlier there



had been sporadic revolutions, chaos, and killings, the situation has altered at this time. People in the heart of Pakistan were waving the Indian flag in celebration, and this was a first. India and Pakistan's strained bilateral relations were helped by this diplomatic intervention. Thousands of Indian fans and journalists crossed into Pakistan to witness and cover the series, and they all reported being treated with warmth and greeting that were beyond their expectations. Since then, they've followed in the footsteps of Pakistan's envoys and returned to India. This trip might be seen as a kind of parallel diplomacy. It was fun to compete against one another in a relaxed setting, and it did wonders for maintaining goodwill. The advancements in politics were reflected in this kind of diplomacy, where there is a vigorous battle on the field. Cricket diplomacy, by providing remarkable flexibility on both sides of governments, has positive benefits on the tranquilly growth. After that, between the months of February and April of 2005, a Pakistani delegation travelled across India. (Ahmad & Perveen, 2015)

Providing a new incentive for the opportunity to convene, the series continued a much more significant ambassadorial role at this time between the heads of two nations. The current president of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, has spoken publicly of his desire to follow in the footsteps of President Zia-ul-Haq and attend a live cricket match in India. While President Zia's efforts at cricket negotiation stunned India a few decades ago, President Musharraf's occurred at a period of relative calm and continue to stun the country. Pakistan stressed the importance of Kashmir before the discussions even began. When asked about cricket diplomacy, the Pakistani minister of information said that although the president could take an occasional interest in the sport, he plans to focus more on politics. After watching the game together in Delhi, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistani President Musharraf said that the peace process could no longer be reversed. Even though cricket diplomacy was mostly informal, it also had a formal phase. In the same year, in April, people from both sides of the border used a bus service to cross into Pakistani-controlled Kashmir. The years from 2004 to 2008, up to the Mumbai attack, were a relatively peaceful time for Indo-Pakistani ties and track II diplomacy as a whole. This was brought up in a subsequent meeting between CNN-IBN and General Pervez Musharraf. Despite the February 2007 Samjhauta Express train explosion, cricket diplomacy between the two governments continued, but following the 26/11 attacks on Mumbai, India cut off all diplomatic and track II/track III channels. Yousuf Raza Gilani and Manmohan Singh, the prime ministers of India and Pakistan, met during the 2011 World Cup semi-final when they invited each other to their respective countries to watch the game. When Pakistan's cricket team visited India in December 2012 to play three One-Day Internationals and a Twenty20 International, it marked the resumption of the peace process and the opening of a productive backchannel in the diplomatic dialogue between the two countries. As a whole, cricket diplomacy has been employed for some time to bring the civilians and governments on both sides of the Line of Control closer together via the medium of this game, but it has also failed when certain non-state actors on both sides have attempted to undermine the peace process. (Talbot, 2006)



Conclusion

The Indian government has blocked bilateral series between the two countries and the last series was played in 2012. The two countries still face each other in international like Asia Cup, Champions Trophy and World Cup. Pakistan and India have faced each other in the Asia Cup of 2022 twice and each team has emerged victorious once in the two contests. Therefore, the game of cricket and its participants unmistakably belong to the category of backdoor diplomacy, which includes those who help develop concord or do anything to ease the harmony. Cricket has played an important part in normalising relations between the governments of Pakistan and India, as can be shown in any analysis of the diplomatic climate in both nations after a terrible event. In this sense, cricket serves as a means of fostering mutual trust and easing tensions in bilateral relations. Understanding the truth that challenging conditions need a flexible and mature response is essential for resolving the inevitable conflicts and concerns between India and Pakistan and making progress toward peace and harmony. For peace initiatives to take root in conflicted areas, like the South Asian region, all parties involved must work together across all available channels. In the past, sporting events have been utilised as a diplomatic instrument, particularly to pave the way for improved ties. Cricket's historical significance in thawing the atmosphere between hotheads on opposing sides is a foregone conclusion, as is the fact that it facilitates the thawing of such temperatures. As a result, cricket diplomacy has the potential to positively affect the ongoing negotiations between neighbouring nations. Nonetheless, it is also worth noting that the diplomatic organisers are the ones who are given ultimate power and verdict control in order to improve the negotiations.



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