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Can Cricket be used as a tool for ‘Peace Process between India and Pakistan’?

Abstract

The relations between Pakistan and India have remained pungent since 1947 due to conflicts over certain issues. To keep their bilateral relationship normal a lot of measures and mediums have been utilized, cricket is one of them. Whenever there was a mishap in relationship of both countries, game of cricket was introduced to normalize the ground for dialogues. The cricket is main passion of the masses of both India and Pakistan. The people across the border like to see their teams playing with each other but it discontinues whenever India and Pakistan develop some misunderstanding and especially India refused to play cricket matches with Pakistan. There is no doubt that sometimes diplomatic use of cricket could not help to keep the harmony between both nations permanently but this is also the fact that if this diplomatic source is utilized positively then it can surely help to mend the ties between India and Pakistan.

Key Words: India, Pakistan, Sports Diplomacy, Peace Process

Introduction

Sports are usually contest of physical activities or competition which aims to utilize and maintain friendly relation or make better physical conditions and expertise of people. Usually the competition or game is considered between two sides in which both try to go above each other. These kinds of activities are the part of the worldwide culture and consider an important mechanism as well to combine various people in the world. It is an important doing that contributes to world harmony. It is spirited and amalgamative facts which turn the natural surroundings of an individual into a human atmosphere and promote the possibilities of peace under particular rules.¹

If the many fold networks, actors and channels of international sports are analyzed then there emerges a point where two distinct categories, sports and diplomacy converge and give rise to sports diplomacy. In this category games are taken by governments and officials as a tool of negotiation and peacekeeping with their governments and states. In this conventional logic peacekeeping is the conversation between countries while method of sports negotiation is using the channel of sports to employ sportspeople for transferring a diplomatic message, to cool down the tensions or to just check the ground for a probable peace talk.

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What is Track II Diplomacy?

Now a day myths about diplomacy has changed and it is not just believed in provisos of relations or conversations between states, but in the sense of broader relationships and methods of discussions.² As a consequence, it has turn to be a general notion to consider the rising part of non-state actors in the working of the global society.³ Diplomacy can be summarized or defined as the expansion or diversity of actors and straits in the running of peripheral dealings.⁴

From last few decades mainly after the beginning of globalisation and the worldwide success of economic liberalisation, there has been an obvious modification in the character of world politics and in the behavior of inter-state dealings. The conventional vision of political affairs was state-centric.⁵ Therefore, concentration was focused largely on the national stage of political activity⁶. But, now there has been a positive degree of acknowledgment for the assistances by private public to the works of international pacification and conflict-prevention.

The conservative ways of solving intrastate or inter-state conflicts, such as military interference and official negotiation, are now supported by the pains of groups of civil order, non-state actors, think-tanks and private establishment which perform an important role in the working of relations between the countries, and manipulate the problems of international worry. From last few years, they have turn out to be so high up that the moderators see them as gravely testing the state as the major actors in the international pitch.⁷ A lot of tracks have appeared and are continuously appearing to perform their part for the working of smooth relations between states. In between these different levels track II talks has appeared as an important problem resolving method in conditions of the task it has played in hot times from corner to corner around the world. It is the diplomacy in which occasionally policy oriented planning is involved which are, informal, unofficial in nature, but are pretty close to official agendas. This policy involves the people which are close to official lodgings and are dominant over policy issues. , in this regard people like retired ambassadors, civil and military officials, prominent public figures, and policy makers are involved. Sometimes it also involves the contribution of management officials in their confidential capacities.⁸

Advent of Track II Diplomacy

The idea and thought of Track-Two diplomacy, as a problem resolving method-appeared during the Cold War era amid the United States and the Soviet Union.⁹ Since that time it is using as vital mean to advance the discussion process among groups in clash for example Israel-Palestine, Northern Ireland-Great Britain, India-Pakistan etc. This is a complete and comprehensive method with broader approach which encompasses a diversity of non-official talks between people of opponent groups to build up strategies, control public views and arrange such resources which may help to solve argument. The work of Track-Two is fluid and responsive as it broadens the choice of participation in the discussion process among the rival groups. In fact, it is now extensively recognised by Track-One diplomats that it helps in lessening the diverse barriers between opposite groups. By focusing on both nurturing relationships and strengthening humanity Track-Two is useful with regard to India and Pakistan relations.

Confidence-Building Measures

Track-two and track-three diplomacy 'avoid or control issues and put up self-belief between the governments they represent.¹⁰ It is so simple fact that for promoting peace development of confidence' is the first key¹¹.

Since his birth man has met with disagreement and each person, belief, culture, and state have experienced clash in one type or the other. Basically the assignment of quarrel resolution has been seen as help of those parties who recognize the problem then negotiate with rivals to lead the issue in the positive direction.¹² Similarly building of trust and confidence mainly is a method which engages a basic move in decision maker's ideals from a critical postulation of antagonistic intensions to each of non antagonistic intensions.¹³ It occupies a significant place in various track skill efforts of problem solution, because they aspire to minimize nervousness and antagonism by making the parties behavior more conventional. The only purpose behind CBMs is to generate an atmosphere that is favorable for the commencement of any peace process.¹⁴ Officials of governments, non-state actors, other third parties likethe UN, local associations like South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, or others, can start these actions.¹⁵ These are the starting point for the re-establishment of trust among states and groups.¹⁶ In the South Asian context especially in the case of India and Pakistan, these CBMs are in the place over the years.

Usage of Sports in Diplomatic Channels

Negotiation is explained as a mechanism of demonstration and connection, and it clings to sports diplomacy too. Players and gaming officers perform as representative of their states National teams are frequently taken as to represent the principles, interests and reflection of a nation that is why games carries great possibility as a spot of recognition. This type of diplomatic tool in the international politics is a more recent and valuable accumulation and it gives an informal road for talking about formal issues by giving a low peril checking ground for estimation of the civic response to rival state and eventually, for advancing towards settlement.¹⁷ It gives ways for contact because at one stage, the players and state representatives contact straightly with each other on and off the ground.

By the similar period, viewers and fans of both sides get a chance to resolve differences and promote joint understanding. In ambassadorial phrasing, this is considered as track II and track III negotiation. That is why sport is a tool of that kind of diplomacy, in which sport and politics interweave. Sport mediation can be taken as being carried out on the multi trackstages of ambassadorial methods.¹⁸ It has been utilized to keep good and healthy contacts between neighbours and associates and the Commonwealth Games¹⁹ are an example of this. This is regularly gained by using sport exchanges; mainly well-known example to date is the ping-pong negotiation between China and the United States in the starting years of 1970s.²⁰ Similarly role of football diplomacy²¹, wrestling diplomacy²², baseball diplomacy²³ also played an important role. Cricket peacekeeping between Pakistan and India also comes in this class.

Origins of Cricket in India and Pakistan

British sailors and soldiers were the first who played cricket on the soil of subcontinent in 1721.²⁴ They played it among themselves, and against each other, in their, cantonments and towns Cricket was started in England, but it was out of question that the popularity of cricket remained limited in England.²⁵ Its popularity spread among neighbouring countries as well as in those which at one time were the colonies of British Empire. In South Asia the first people who adopted this sport were the Parsis of Bombay and first Indian cricket guild titled as the Oriental Cricket Club which was formed by Parsisin 1848.²⁶ The further societies of Bombay too went after the Parsis for cricket. Both Hindus and Muslims started to play not long after but this was the visible fact that formation of teams was along the communal lines and this pattern was followed till 1947.

Indo Pak relations and diplomatic use of cicket

After separation of India and Pakistan in 1947 both the countries had their own cricket teams and among them there were some players who played for the undivided India.²⁷ The cricket team of Pakistan was seen primarily in game of cricket in October 1952 when it participated in its first test series in India.²⁸ Both are the two strategic countries in the South Asian region and both countries have been remained mostly hostile towards each other because the blaming process was started soon. There are many problems between both Pakistan and India on various issues like Kashmir issue, water issue, cross border terrorism, and border confrontation etc. Kashmir is on the top of the list with all these issues. In the result of these conflicts, four wars in 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999 have been fought.²⁹ The Indo-Pak ties have gone through different diplomatic problems and for the solution of these problems. Cricket has proved as a significant bond between them and the citizens of the both countries used to meet up on the cricket fields and stadiums even in the harsh periods of their past.³⁰ The first meet up of these teams was in the decade of 1950s when both countries toured each other grounds. But from 1962-77, their cricket ties were strained due to wars of the 1965 and 1971 between the two countries.³¹

The introduction of cricket as a trust enhancing means was introduced by President General Zia in the arena of diplomacy when he visited India unexpectedly to watch cricket match in 1987. That trip came in the circumstances of growing tensions as India carried its biggest peace period military training near to the Pakistani boundary which is called "Brasstacks".³²

From the time President General Zia's cricket peacekeeping increased the expectations for further, approaching Pakistani strategy in 1987³³ so as a result Pakistan and India, both are involved in two-sided cricket matches on six further occasions. India visited Pakistan for a full Test series in November and December 1989, but after the uprising in Kashmir in 1989, the relations were soured between the two countries.³⁴ Their relations were deteriorated more after the devastation of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya by Indian radicals in 1992. This demolition ignited common aggression in great areas of India, and put both Hindu-Muslim communities to the trial. Therefore, the opinionated ambiance that appeared amid Pakistan and India after 1989 put an effectual end to their normal ties.³⁵

Although cricket diplomacy of 1987 was purely superficial and it changed nothing in the ten years later but it provided a way for applying a game as track II or track III diplomacy. In the year of 1998 both states blew up nuclear bombs which contributed to intensify the stress and a mounting terror that what would be the consequences of the clash.³⁶ After some time there was awareness at the high command level that tensions between two countries were needed to be relieved. When the counterparts of both India and Pakistan congregated each other at the SAARC level conference in Sri Lanka in July, two of them were had the same opinion to recommence the official discussions.³⁷ The result of these dialogues was the opening of new channels and ways for good relations. This normalization of ties was sourced in the joint benefits of both governments and was taken as a step towards de-acceleration of conflicts.

As relations were becoming warm once again so both states decided to resume the people to people contact and cultural ties. Resuming of cricket ties and using game of cricket as a track II diplomatic tool was also the part of this people to people contact diplomacy and cultural interactions so it was announced in 1999 that Pakistani team would tour India for cricket match.³⁸ This was the first cricket tour of Pakistan on the Indian soil since 1987 but there was some kind of disagreement in both states that the visit should be carried out or not. In the State of India, there was tough resistance from the Hindu radicals who were against the visit of Pakistani players.³⁹ Despite of the tense and debatable environment it was felt that a booming tour would help to decrease cross-border issues.

The tour went forward in the months of January and February, 1999. This channel of cricket remained successful as it provided communicational and conversational spaces wherever the team travelled. Team was welcomed warmly and the total of these unexpected welcome by the people of India was resulted in the form of historic meeting between Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Shareef on 20 February 1999.⁴⁰ This important visit was on the inauguration of the Delhi to Lahore bus service. This Lahore Summit showed a significant melt down in Indo-Pakistani relations.⁴¹

There was no doubt that Cricket diplomacy worked as backdoor channel and paved the way for this political landmark. Cricket plays an important part to enhancing the fresh tranquility course by offering a way of converse between the civics of the bilateral neighbours.⁴² All excellent effects can't stand forever so in spite of the obvious achievement of usage of cricket as peacekeeping methodology in 1999, the Lahore Declaration did not exist up to the way towards its aims and botched to smoothen the Indo-Pakistani tensions because much of the goodwill and efforts created by the official talks in 1999 were whitewashed by the Kargil war in 1999⁴³. After these incidents, both states put a ban on official talks and other channels of diplomacy and obviously bilateral cricket between India and Pakistan was banned too. The assault on the Parliament of India in the month of December 2001 also added to enhance the strains which damaged the ties even more. In its result, dialogue process was destroyed once again due to failing political conditions. It was seemed that fight was coming up between India and Pakistan throughout the year of 2002, and as a result there was total stalwart in bilateral talks, public contacts and in sports as well.

The dialogue process between both states was reinstated once more in the year of 2003. The service of bus between Lahore and Delhi was resumed in month of May and the accord of end of hostility on Kashmir Line of Control was signed in November⁴⁴. The dialogue course of action received a new let out on backdoor diplomacy and cricket was noticed by the two states as a medium for increasing joint reliance involving their governments and populace. In the starting week of January 2004, Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee and Pakistani President Musharraf gathered in Pakistan's capital on the boundaries of a SAARC conference.

Vajpayee settled to discuss on the entire problems, together with Kashmir, and a way to harmony was settled upon as a standard. In addition, it was decided to reinstate two-sided cricketing relations. This understanding was developed that State of India would carry out the first cricket trip of Pakistan after 1989 but there was the similar arguments as were in 1999 concerning the commencement of the visit. In the last it was Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee who by himself obtained the verdict that India must visit. The visit of Indian team to Pakistan was labeled as the series of companionship and as the title was this tour existed up to this title. In the meanwhile, previously there had been infrequent uprisings, anarchy and murders, but in this moment of time situation was changed. Something new was occurring, as Pakistani spectators were draping in the Indian flag, while Indian spectators were rejoicing with them in the heartland of Pakistan⁴⁵. This diplomacy proved a good therapy for bilateral ties between India and Pakistan. Not only the Indian players received an excellent welcome in Pakistan, but thousands of Indian admirers and news reporters who also passed the border to watch and cover the series, returned back to India commemorating a warmth and reception they had not envisaged. Therefore they had returned to India like Pakistan's ambassadors. This visit can be taken into consideration as multi track diplomacy. It not only provided an opportunity to play each other in a friendly ambiance but it also helped to keep the relations on track. This kind of diplomacy in which there is a healthy contest on the field, helped to mirror the progresses in the political field. This intended that the cricket diplomacy had constructive effects regarding the tranquility development in the logic that it gave extraordinary flexibility on both sides of states. Pakistan afterward carried out a complete visit of India in February to April 2005.⁴⁶

This moment the series carried on even more important ambassadorial task as it offered the leaders of two states a fresh impetus for the chance to gather. Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf expressed his aspirations to watch cricket match live in India as President Zia-ul-Haq did in 1987 but mostly to talk about political issues. President Musharraf's effort at cricket negotiation came at an instance of a continuing tranquility course and it jammed India with as much astonishment as President Zia did few decades ago. As the talks were about to begin, Pakistan made it clear that Kashmir was more significant than cricket. The Pakistani Information Minister stated on this cricket diplomacy that the President will look at cricket for a moment but he will engage himself more on the field of politics. Both counterparts President Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh saw the game in Delhi with each other and announced that now the peace process was irreversible. Informal in character cricket diplomacy was, it had an added formal stage as well. Furthermore, this type of sports peacekeeping had

really got its rapidity, and in the same year in the month of April the travelers from both sides of the boundary traversed the divided Kashmir through a bus service. The years from 2004 to 2008 until Mumbai assault were a fair phase for Indo-Pak relations particular and track II diplomacy in general. General Pervez Musharraf later in a meeting with CNN-IBN news agency mentioned this point.⁴⁷ Cricket diplomacy amid the two states remained on going regardless of the Samjhauta Express train explosion in February 2007 but after the 26/11 assaults in Mumbai, India canceled the all diplomatic and track II and track III channels.

Cricket diplomacy again came on a high pitch when Yousuf Raza Gilani and his matching part Manmohan Singh met with one another on the semi final of the World Cup in 2011 between India and Pakistan where Pakistani Prime Minister invited Indian counterpart to Pakistan. The harmony process initiated once more and Pakistan visited India in the month of December ,2012 for a T20 and 3 ODIs⁴⁸ and paved the way for better diplomatic backdoor channel. In totality, cricket diplomacy for long has been used as an instrument to get the civics and governments on two sides of LOC nearer to one another by the mean of this game but it also fails when some non state actors on both sides try to sabotage the peace process.

Those individuals and groups, who play some part to build harmony or do somewhat to ease the harmony are come to the category of backdoor diplomacy and game of cricket and its players clearly fall into this class. When one analyzes the diplomatic environment of both countries after any tragic incident one will also analyze the role played by cricket in the course of civilizing ties between Pakistani and Indian state. Therefore, cricket is a bilateral confidence building measure that help to reduce tensions.

To solve the unavoidable problems and issues between India and Pakistan and to move towards peace and harmony there is a need to understand the reality that difficult situations need to be handled with suppleness and maturity. Successful peace measures need joint efforts at all platforms and ways that can help to spread compromise in divided reigns, such as South Asian region. Sport exchanges have used in the past as an important diplomatic tool, especially in paving the way for better relations. By analyzing the role of sport of cricket in past this conclusion can be drawn easily that it helps to defrost the iciness between angry representatives on each side. Therefore cricket diplomacy can have a constructive impact on dialogue process between the neighbouring countries. Nevertheless this fact is also notable that the diplomatic organizers are the ones who get the final authority as well as verdict control for making dealings better.

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