

ELU project: research text of Team 1 - Cricket diplomacy

Sports has always played a role in international politics. For example, in ancient Rome gladiatorial combat was often used as a way to divert attention when the public was growing critical of their rulers. Sporting events have also helped to bridge international conflicts in history, sometimes creating definite periods of peace; in Greece, in the 9th century BC, a tradition of truce or "Ekecheiria" was created: three kings signed a treaty, agreeing to suspend all violence and hostilities during the Olympic event to provide enjoyment to spectators and athletes alike. This concept is still present in the modern world, after being revived by the International Olympic Committee.

With Resolution 66/7, The United Nations General Assembly recognized the contributions of sports to peace-building. Sports have been used to strengthen the objective of the United Nations - to achieve international peace and harmony. The founder of the modern Olympic Games, Pierre De Coubertin, also expressed his opinion that the real aim of organizing sports events is to develop peace among nations.

In this episode, we will focus exclusively on cricket - the second most popular sport in the world after football. Being extremely popular in former British colonies and particularly in India and Pakistan, cricket has been used to shape relations between the two South Asian neighbors for almost 70 years. 'Cricket diplomacy', as named by the former president of Pakistan General Mohammed Zia ul-Haq, similarly to sports diplomacy, means the use of cricket as a political tool to improve or damage diplomatic relations between two cricket-playing countries. The engagement with Sports for Development and Peace (SDP) has provided many possibilities for sports federations to organize multiple games for peace promotion among its member countries.

On many occasions, cricket diplomacy has prompted both governments of India and Pakistan to visit the other's country and strengthen ties between the two.

The rivalry between India and Pakistan dates back to 1947 when Pakistan was carved out of India on religious lines by the Muslims, who sought independence from both India and Britain. The partition led to horrific memories for both sides: incidents of mass killings, rapes, and riots in different parts of India and Pakistan. As such there are many unresolved disputes between Pakistan and India. One being the disputed territory of Kashmir, which has caused severe damage to the socio-economic conditions of both countries. Despite being presented in forums like the UN, after 73 years it is still a location of a continuous peacekeeping mission and after 73 years the dispute has still not been solved.

The first India-Pakistan cricket series was played in 1954 when the Pakistani team toured India. Later, thousands of Indian fans were granted visas when the Indian team went to Pakistan for the first time in a set of test series. However, it took time till the concept of “cricket diplomacy” was born because at the time, it was hockey that was far more popular in both countries.

The wars of 1965 and 1971 stopped the convergence between both countries. India and Pakistan did not play even a single match between 1962-1977. After a 17-year break, cricket was restored between the two countries in 1978. Although the series was won in part due to reportedly biased umpiring against India, cricket was warming relations between the two. As a result of the 1978 Test series, prime minister Desai then requested that India's Research and Analysis Wing, one of India's intelligence agencies, cease its operations in Pakistan. He was honored with Pakistan's highest civilian award, the 'Nishan-e-Pakistan', in 1990 as a gesture of goodwill.

However, this heyday of the relationship was not going to last forever. In 1986 India launched Operation Brasstacks, a massive coordinated military operation “larger than any NATO exercise since WWII”, in Rajasthan's deserts in response to terrorism and the Sikh separatist movement in India's Punjab region. Pakistan quickly retaliated by gathering its forces on the border.

In light of increasing escalation, the world was surprised when the Pakistani president Zia suddenly appeared in India to watch a cricket match between Pakistan and India. Also present at the match was Indian PM Rajiv Gandhi. What the two discussed will remain a secret but as you can see, coming together for cricket was utilized as a way to de-escalate a looming

conflict. Indian media gave the event favorable coverage and soon Indian and Pakistani troops returned to their normal positions and the Brasstacks crisis had been laid to rest.

The Indian Cricket team visited Pakistan again in 1997, but surprising the entire world, in May 1998, India conducted a nuclear test. The Pakistanis saw only one option - conducting a test of their own to retaliate. New Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif and Indian PM Vajpayee met in New York in September of 1998, under close watch of the US administration. As a result of this meeting, Pakistan's cricket team was to head to India in the beginning of 1999, for the first time in 12 years! The Pakistani cricket team was welcomed warmly in every Indian city during its stay, it even was applauded in a standing ovation by 40,000 Indian spectators.

Under the same efforts, the Indian prime minister also went to Lahore (the second most populous city in Pakistan). During the visit, the Lahore Declaration was signed, binding both countries to solve bilateral issues through talks. However, three months after, the Kargil conflict raised new concerns about regional stability, putting The Lahore Declaration to the test and ultimately showing its failure to serve its cause.

Pakistan fought the Kargil war on the international Kashmir issue. It deemed the Indian accessions in Kashmir illegal and wanted the retirement of lines according to the existing UN Security Council Resolution. India banned bilateral cricket with Pakistan until the other stopped supporting insurgency in Kashmir. The terrorists attack on the Indian Parliament building in New Delhi on December the 13th, 2001 created a new level of hostility and aggression. Military standoffs lasting from 2001 to 2002 challenged regional security and again brought possibilities of nuclear war into South-Asia.

We have chosen liberalism - one of the traditional IR paradigms - to frame the events of the 2004 series. Although often associated with John Locke and the "invisible hand" of economics, liberalism does not fall short when explaining behavior of international actors. As a matter of fact, liberalism first became popular in criticizing realism - the standard IR theory which puts emphasis on the use of force and power to manage international relations and seek security.

The key point for liberalism is that even the most rational security seekers, like realists, are able to cooperate to bring about so-called “just peace”. The writings of Emmanuel Kant, John Locke and Hugo Grotius have inspired what has come to be known as “liberal institutionalism”.

The elements helping the creation of such institutionalism are considered to be 1) democracy at home and 2) international trade. These two give cause for the establishment of international organizations and international law which would lead to cooperation to resolve security dilemmas. Cooperation allows states to make their exchanges mutually beneficial, instead of engaging in battle, while losing lives and exhausting their economies.

In 2004, two years after extreme standoffs, and after being close to nuclear war, Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf met during the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation summit. They agreed that peace talks were urgently needed and after the sitting, it was announced that the cricket team of India would tour Pakistan in March and April of 2004. The cricket series was named ‘Friendship Series’. When people on both sides yearned for peace, the cricket tour, it was argued, after all the talk of uncertainty and security concerns, ‘should pave a new road to constructive friendship and understanding’.

Security was a major concern. As a matter of fact, only a single country had completed its full cricket tour of Pakistan since 2001. Although there were no known threats against the Indian players, a three member delegation from the Board of Control for Cricket in India visited Pakistan to assess the security measures taken and were satisfied with the result.

In this case, you can see how the Pakistani side willingly put its trust in India, being ready to accept its conclusions. This, too, is a good example of cooperation in the liberal IR manner. Further, airlines, bus companies and railways multiplied commutes in their schedule, while additional millions crossed the border on foot. It is believed to be the most inventive cross-border traffic since the partition.

In the 21st century, the media plays a major role. The media tirelessly speculated during the months preceding the actual official decision to clear the tour that the tour was in serious doubt. Although security reasons were cited in a media campaign pressing for postponement,

the real fear was that any unfavorable incident during the series would spoil the 'feel good' mood.

When the players met the Prime Minister before their departure for the tour, Vajpayee urged the Indian cricketers straightaway 'to not only win the matches in Pakistan but also win the hearts of the people there'. He presented a bat to skipper Sourav Ganguly, on which was written 'Khel hi nahin, dil bhi jitiye' ('Not only the game, win hearts as well'). On the other hand, Priyanka Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, representing the Congress outfit at the National Stadium in Karachi to watch India play, emphasized the need to develop people-to-people contact and both of them also acknowledged the role and potential of cricket diplomacy for peace promotion.

When it was time for the 2004 tour, positive interactions emerged between the Indian and Pakistani fans in a way that had never been seen before. Everybody understood on the eve of the tour that there were bridges to be built and hearts to be won.

A 32-year-old fan from Lahore, Pakistan, in his interview to the AFP agency said, as a reaction to the tickets being sold out days before, that if "I managed to find a ticket thanks to my friends in India, I can't thank them enough!" And a hindu cricket fan said: "Today if I see a Pakistani, I will invite him home for tea". This showed how rare it was for Pakistanis to visit India.

Indian fans expressed their pleasure to host Pakistanis, while the Indian entrepreneur Barka Sen said he was happy to have the chance to extend a friendly hand to the other side of the border thanks to this match.

Severe security measures were also taken: Indian military helicopters and anti-aircraft guns declared a no-fly zone over the stadium in case of a possible terrorist attack.

When the one-day series was poised at 1-1, Raju Mukherji, a former Indian cricketer, had already become suspicious and wrote a newspaper article that opened with these words: 'Was the result of the first one-day international of the India-Pakistan revival series in Karachi a gift to a guest?' He concluded with a unique prayer: 'Now that the first two matches are over and the teams are at par, let us pray that the real cricket begins. Let us hope that from now on, the series is played in the spirit of competitive cricket and not in the spirit of gracious politics.'

The financial status of both cricket teams improved as a result of these matches. More than their counterpart, the Pakistan Cricket Board recovered its financial footing which was troubled after the nation had been in danger of going bankrupt due to the terror environment, border conflicts with Afghanistan, and other acts of violence.

So, coming together actually brought improvements to both teams. As mentioned before - liberalism makes exchange mutually beneficial. We could also draw a connection to the liberal “growing the pie” analogy. By engaging in competition with the other major member of the global cricket league, financial flows for both teams increased.

This run of games, despite some minor criticism and preconceptions, significantly helped to tear down barriers between the two nations. There have been some minor conflicts between the two nations since, but in general, relations have warmed up significantly. Since 2004, visas have been given out numerous times for citizens of one country to visit the other during cricket matches. The effect that the Friendship Series had is significant, as people came together and managed to change a hostile course into genuine goodwill. We can then conclude that in this particular event, India not only won the game but also the hearts of the Pakistani people.

References:

Bandyopadhyay, K. (2008). Feel Good, Goodwill and India's Friendship Tour of Pakistan, 2004: Cricket, Politics and Diplomacy in Twenty-First-Century India. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25(12), pp.1654-1670.

Available at:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09523360802327509?needAccess=true>

Diplomat, T. (2022). India and Pakistan's Cricket Diplomacy. [online] *TheDiplomat.com*.

Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/india-and-pakistans-cricket-diplomacy/>

[Accessed 13 October 2022].

Tasleem Ashraf, M. (2022). Pakistan-India Relations: Bridging the Gap through Cricket Diplomacy for Peace and Political Integration. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 6(1), pp.82-95.

<https://pssr.org.pk/issues/v6/1/pakistan-india-relations-bridging-the-gap-through-cricket-diplomacy-for-peace-and-political-integration.pdf>

Dunne, T., Kurki, M. & Smith, S. (2013). *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. United Kingdom: Oxford

Indian delegation happy with arrangements. (2004.). ESPN, 11th of February. Available at:

<https://www.espn.com/story/indian-delegation-happy-with-arrangements-136651>

[19.10.2022]

Bhattacharya, R. (2005). The Indians in Pakistan, 2003-04. ESPN, n.d. Available at:
<https://www.espnricinfo.com/wisdenalmanack/content/story/238003.html> [19.10.2022]

<https://www.youthpolicyreview.com/post/analysing-india-pakistan-cricket-diplomacy>

Olympic Truce. (2021). International Olympic Committee, n.d. Available at:
<https://olympics.com/ioc/olympic-truce> [24.10.2022]