

SPORTS AS A DYNAMIC FORCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS AMONG NATIONS IN GLOBAL POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

Sports are understood as one of the dynamic forces in developing national integrity among the masses creating national unity in the country; whereas sports diplomacy is referred when sport is used as a political means to improve relations and some times may worsen diplomatic relations between two nations. The intention is to bring about fundamental changes relating to fine relations. While the Olympics events are the leading political examples of using sports for diplomatic means, such as cricket, table tennis and football as well as other international sports competitions have also been used in this regard. In the case of Apartheid, competitive sport was used to isolate South Africa that brought major changes in nation's social structure in terms of socio- political relationship, examining the sports diplomacy which implemented Nelson Mandela of South Africa for national reconciliation, and Iran's former President Khatami's inspiring initiative provided an opening for a watchful rapprochement policy with USA, favoring peoples mutual contacts between these two nations to release tensions developed between them that may be compared with Ping Pong diplomacy, which softened US-Chinese relations.

Key Words: Sports, rapprochement, dynamic, diplomacy, apartheid, relationship, pride, tensions, integrity and nationalism.

METHODOLOGY

This article has been developed on the basis of descriptive research method and data was collected from various books and sports magazines, analyzing it from biographies published in national and international newspapers of leading former international players of Football, Cricket and Table Tennis and also from personal sports experiences. The survey question-nnaire was administered to 100 students and 20 visiting

and regular faculty members of the Centre for Physical Education, Health and Sports Science, functioning in the Faculty of Natural Sciences at University of Sindh, Jamshoro, and the results of the respondents were further processed for analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Most of the international sports competitions are contested between national teams, which encourage the use of sporting events for nationalist purposes that may have organized

intentionally or sometimes with other reasons. The national solidarity achieved through sport may be one of the primary sources of developing nationalism as popular sports events, which people like the most, are considered a matter of national pride for them and cricket test match series between Australia and England popularly known as 'Ashes' comes in the same category of national honor. Similarly, test cricket series between India and Pakistan place both countries virtually immobile where match is being played and the normal traffic on roads is heavily reduced as it has turned into a matter of national honor for the majority of the local people.¹ The Olympic Games are the leading juncture for meeting the nationalist purposes, as it reflects the history of political conflicts between them since its inception at the end of the 19th century. The 1936 Summer Olympics held in Berlin, Germany has been an illustration of vital recognition of the sensitivity of the prevalent situation, where an ideology was rising which used the Olympic event to strengthen its position through propaganda. Consequently, United States refused to participate and politically aligned nations joined her in the boycott of summer Olympics of 1988 and Soviet Union considered it as the part of the Cold War conflict.²

It would be convenient for the researcher to argue first with the impact of apartheid nations confining their policies developing political systems of their governments which was against the United Nation's Human Rights Charter, then, elaborated on the charm of Olympic games which witnessed boycotts and conflicts between nations, and the Ping Pong diplomacy that reconciled the relations between USA and Peoples Republic of China. Further, charisma of Cricket gave rise making friendships and some times brought some tensions among the people and lastly attraction. Soccer (Foot ball) game has been discussed that brought severe conflicts and observed clashes among nations that also conveyed for national integration and bringing unity among the citizens of these nations, the incidences took place in various countries would be good examples in this regard. Such as:

a. Apartheid Policy

It is notable that sporting boycott of South Africa during Apartheid understood to have played vital role in forcing South Africa to open up their society and to end a global isolation. South Africa was barred from the 1964 Summer Olympics and many sports' governing bodies expelled or suspended membership of South

African affiliations. It was said that the international boycott of apartheid sport has been an effective move toward sensitizing world opinion against apartheid and mobilizing millions of citizens for action against that disgraceful political system. The imposed ban helped change official policies towards participation in sports.³

The South African Table Tennis Board, founded in contravention to the United Nations human rights, White South African table tennis board was replaced in consequence of the boycott of the International Table Tennis Federation. While former body managed to participate in the world championships held in Stockholm in 1957, and team members were refused passports by the government as it ruled that no black person can compete internationally except through the white sports body.

United Nations in 1980 advised member countries to inform about sports contacts with South Africa and provide a list of sportsmen who have participated in sports events. That action proved to be an effective instrument discouraging collaboration with apartheid sport and later on in the same year South Africa was expelled from most inter-national sports bodies and on June 21, 1988, International Olympic Committee approved a declaration for the total isolation of apartheid sport.⁴

b. Olympics Charm

In 1936 Olympics, Adolph Hitler used it as a vital occasion to promote superiority of Germany with his ideological belief of racial domination. These games were used as a means of strengthening the German potency and bringing unity among the youth. It was also believed that sport was a "way to weed out the weak, Jewish, and other undesirable communities. As a result, many Jews and Gypsies were banned from participating in sporting events, while Germany secured top position in winning medals, the Nazi portrayed ethnic Africans as inferior nation was dispelled by Jesse Owens' gold medals in the 100m, 200m 4x100m relay and long jump events.⁵

Again, in 1968, Olympic Games were used to demonstrate the world the plight of the African-American struggle during the civil rights movement in their home country. Black American, John Carlos during the medal ceremony in Mexico City, performed the well-known Black Power salute. In 1972, Israeli Olympic athletes of Jewish team were massacred in an assault by Palestinian gunmen at the Olympic village that eventually resulted in 17 deaths of the team members. In 1980 the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led to a boycott of the Moscow Olympics by a large part of the western nations and their allies

in protest against Russian actions. In the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics the Soviet Bloc countered a retaliatory action in the form of boycott of the games in response to the American-led Moscow games.⁶

c. Ping-Pong Diplomacy

The exchange of table tennis players between the United States and the People's Republic of China led to make softer policies in Sino-American relations that eventually led US President Richard Nixon to endorse rapprochement policy with the Chinese government. It was the first initial public information of improved U.S. China relations known to the world on April 6, 1971, when the American Ping-Pong team was visiting Japan, received a surprise invitation from their Chinese colleagues to visit People's Republic of China. On April 10, nine players, four officials, and two spouses stepped across a bridge from Hong Kong to the Chinese mainland. It was the first group of Americans allowed in Chinese territory since the Communist take-over in 1949.⁷ Ten journalists, including five Americans, were also invited to cover the visit of the team thus, ending the information blockade from the People's Republic since 1949. The delighted American public were aware of the daily progress of the visit through newspapers and television, as the Americans played

and lost exhibition matches with their hosts, traveled around the Great Wall, Summer Palace and during their visit chatted with Chinese students and factory workers and had the opportunity to attend the Canton Ballet.

d. Cricket Charisma

The charisma of Cricket has also played important role in developing relations between the nations help to improve and some times severe the relations between them. Pakistan and India is the good example, which seems developed tensions in global politics. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and Soviet pressurized India to deflect the tension they are confronted with. Pakistan's dictator and former president General Zia-ul-Haq, in 1987 watched a test match between India and Pakistan in Jaipur, apparently it helped to cool down the tensions and fifteen year break in playing test matches, cricket tours between India and Pakistan were also revived in 2004 in the wake of diplomatic initiatives to bury past history of mutual hostility. Both sides relaxed their tough visa regulations for each other, allowing thousands of fans to travel across the border.

Taking the advantage of the cricket diplomacy another dictator and former president Gen. Pervez Musharaf visited India in 2005

apparently for a cricket match. The trip, however, quickly turned over to summit meeting as both sides willing to avail a historic chance to end their dispute over Kashmir as this enmity has traced with a religious-political current of air to it. A Pakistani fan in Karachi ran on the pitch to attack the Indian captain, and fans threw stones at the Indian players during the match in Karachi, and in 2006 a Hindu extremist dug up the cricket pitch in New Delhi to protest against Pakistan team's visit. The Mumbai attack on Parliament in 2008, the terrorists were believed to be from Pakistan also aggravated the situation and India boycotted all kinds of mutual talks with bordering nations.⁸

e. Football Attraction

The war between El Salvador and Honduras took place mainly on the sensitive rivalry of Football game that led to the war along with serious socio-economic issues of infamous immigration and land reforms fueled to chaos in these countries. The rise of tensions encouraged rioters during the second North American qualifying round of 1970 FIFA World Cup fighting broke out during the first game in Tegucigalpa, the situation worsen in San Salvador. The Honduran fans were physically beaten and humiliated, its flag was torched and insulted national

anthem. Consequently the emotions of both nations became agitated. In retaliation, violence against Salvadoran residents in Honduras increased and number of Salvadorans brutally killed and tens of thousands began fleeing the country. The press of both nations also contributed to a growing climate of near-hysteria, and on June 27, 1969, Honduras broke diplomatic relations with El Salvador and on July 14, 1969, the Salvadoran army launched an attack against Honduras. The Organization of American States negotiated a cease-fire which took effect on July 20, with the Salvadoran troop's withdrawal in early August, 1969.⁹

During 1986 Mexico World Cup, after the Falklands War between Argentina and the United Kingdom, Diego Mara Dona scored a goal that fuel the fire between the two sides and matter further worsen as it was an unrecognized foul using the hand (referee did not watch it) to score a goal that severed relationships between these nations, called it as hand of God.¹⁰

In 1998 FIFA World Cup held in France, Iran recorded their first World Cup victory in the second game, Iran beat the United States by 2-1 goals. The match was preheated with much excitement as both countries' political stance was detached after the Iranian revolution. However, both sides

presented one another with gifts and flowers and stood together for a picture before the match kickoff.¹¹

The 2004 AFC Asian Cup held in China during the final between China and Japan, apparently due to historical relations dating back to World War II (2nd. Sino-Japanese War and Nanjing Massacre), the home fans expressed their anti-Japanese sentiment by insulting national anthem with their anti-Japan slogans.¹² The Chinese fans hooted at the players and watched Japan beating China by 3-1 score and after the conclusion of match, some Chinese fans witnessed uprising outside the Beijing Worker's Stadium.

On September 6, 2008, Armenia and Turkey teams faced each other in 2010 FIFA World Cup qualification match in Yerevan, where the presidents of Turkey and Armenia sat together behind the bullet-proof glass, where the Turkish national anthem was insulted and hooted showing mistrust between the two countries. However, the gesture shown by the presidents demonstrated football diplomacy to resolve peacefully the legacy of the 20th century's first genocide.¹³

CONCLUSION

It is rightly concluded that Sports play a vital role in the development of both national identity and national

pride, although it confirms that national team's success and hosting events throw a light in this direction. The increased self-esteem and national honor pertaining to all members of the society utilize sports to construct their national identity. Further, it should not be assumed that all people within a community would derive pride from associating themselves with sporting success. It could be just one of the characteristics that influence perceptions of national identity and national pride as it becomes a major source in the development and expression of national aspirations.¹⁴ The philosophy of Olympic Games is considered to be the effective way of discouraging nations collaborating with apartheid sport, expelled South Africa from international sports bodies and declared total isolation of apartheid sports. The sports teams and events provide people with psychological benefits as well, which leads with pride and contributes towards people's better life style, confirming that sports has the capability to develop psycho-social behavior which promotes the maintenance of mental well-being and developing social interaction, societal cohesion, creating harmony and national integration. Consequently, many governments of these countries took adequate efforts to unify the multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities to revive the national spirit

which was prevalent under their dynamic leadership at the time of independence and following the rise of the nationalism in African, North American and Asian countries, attempted effective policies for social, political and economic development to promote social progress, reducing political tensions and maximizing economic performance for better and prosperous life standard of the people.

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ANNEXURE- 1

Questionnaire:

Respondents were administered the questionnaire to answer marking Yes or No or to some extent. It has been prepared on 10 point Liker scale analyzing the results of this research paper.

Sr. No	Question	Yes	No	To Some Extent
01	Popular sportsmen possess the qualities of sportsmanship spirit to develop tolerance in resolving conflicts.			
02	Match temperament is essential to normalize situation in bringing cordial relations between national teams.			
03	Some times popular sports competitions severe the relationships between two nations.			
04	Alarming socio-political and economic conditions and conflicts between nations create tensions leading to clashes or war.			
05	Apartheid policies debarred South Africa from Olympics Games and international sports competitions.			
06	Popular sports bring national unity and integration among the people of two complete teams.			
07	The sticky Indian politicians attempt to score points avoiding playing test Cricket series in Pakistan.			
08	The arrangement of 'Shanti' or Peace Cup of Cricket test match Series would be a remarkable achievement for India and Pakistan to release the tensions			
09	Sports should be kept clean of Politics and be held to develop the unity and tranquility among the nations to promote the standard of life style of the people.			
10	Popular sports are considered to be an effective force in making relations between nations.			