

SPORTS DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATION: A CASE STUDY OF INDIA

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Abstract

Sports events have been an integral part of efforts in strengthening relations between states since ancient days. Sports diplomacy uses the universal passion for sports as a way to transcend linguistic and socio-cultural differences and brings people together. Sporting events and exchanges increase dialogue and cultural understanding between the people around the globe. Recently we see a number of Mega sports events that have been used by different countries to improve their images in the world community. This paper seeks to analyse two important questions which are very relevant in the current scenario. The first question is that, can International sport be used as an instrument of diplomacy for the states and the second one being the importance of non-state actors in International sports diplomacy. The paper uses India as a case study as India is emerging as a major sporting country in the Asian region. In the International scenario, sport continues to grow in terms of number of sports, varieties of events, number of participating states, number of participants, fans and spectators, and very importantly corporate sponsorship that brings in the dimension of International economics.

In the last decade India joined the elite group of nations to host large International sporting events apart from Asian games, which the nation has been hosting. 21st century witnessed hockey world cup, cricket world cup, U17 FIFA world cup, Moto GP championship, formula one and most importantly 2010 commonwealth games which brought India into the limelight. In this case study, this paper will try to highlight and analyse if India has used these International sporting events as an instrument of its soft power diplomacy and the result of the same. It will also examine the role the non-state actors have played in the same.

Key Words: Diplomacy, International Relation, Sports, Olympics, Cricket, India-Pakistan Relation.

Introduction

Diplomacy is an age-old statecraft that can be traced back to ancient Greece, the relation between the city-states. Harold Nicolson stated, "special missions between the Greek city-states had become so that something approaching our own system of regular diplomatic intercourse had been achieved" (Norman D. Palmer, 2004). The relation between Sparta and its allies with Athens in 432 B.C. is the witness of it. In recent years, the concept of soft power, as enunciated by Joseph Nye, emerged as a focal point of academic discourse in International relations. The oldest diplomatic document possessed by the human is a letter inscribed on a tablet which has been dated back to 2500 BC, between the kingdom of Ebla and kingdom of Hamazi in the Mediterranean. (Cohen, R. 1995) (John Baylis, 1997). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, which stated, Diplomacy as "The profession, activity, or skill of managing International relations" or "The art of dealing with people". (Dictionary, n.d.) According to John Baylis and Steve Smith in their book *The Globalisation of World Politics* define as, "Diplomacy in world politics refers to a communications process between International actors that seeks through negotiation to resolve conflict short of war. This process has been refined, institutionalised, and professionalized over many centuries." (John Baylis, 1997) It accounts for a multitude of interest covering detailed relation between nations of war and peace. Collapse of it leads to danger of war or at least a major crisis, is very real and vice versa. Over the past 100 years, sovereign-state diplomacy and the diplomatic norms typically embodied by professional diplomats. (Stuart Murray, 2011)

Diplomacy can be divided into two types under the variables of structure, process, and agenda, are Traditional Diplomacy and New Diplomacy. From the communication process, traditional Diplomacy can be differentiated from its ancestor, ancient and medieval world diplomacy. Back then relation was expanded though Monarchs (political leaders), due to the distance involved, negotiations on a regular basis had to be indirect through diplomats. Diplomatic agents working on behalf of centre gradually turned institutionalised and professionalised. Institutions emerged, like fifteenth-century Italy, where permanent embassies were established for the first time (Hamilton and Langhorne. 1995) (John Baylis, 1997). Process in traditional diplomacy usually conducted under secrecy, traditional diplomacy was organised bilaterally to maintain a relationship of mutual agreements, which merely a mean to settle their disputes conducted on a state-to-state basis. Maintaining these under such secrecy has its own importance as every great player does hide their secret weapon to win it. Later after the 15th century, diplomacy was a regularised process instead of just being a regular one. The famous phrase quotes, "Don't shoot the messenger" inspired country to amend rules to provide messengers with rights and privileges. Agenda in traditional diplomacy refers to "issue or area of concern" about which diplomats negotiate with each other, which generally reflect the pre-occupation on diplomat's political leaders. For a long time, foreign policy acted as a tool in hand of monarchs to quench their personal thirst, perhaps the acquisition of another territory as a mere act of peace avoiding war and saving humanity and calling it as "diplomacy". (John Baylis, 1997)

Though traditional diplomacy was successful with promoting stability, order and peace in the nineteenth-century it failed to prevent world war one in early twentieth century Europe, rather many consider it as the cause of the war. New diplomacy brought two new ideas into the table, first, diplomacy to be more open to public scrutiny & order, and second, the establishment of International organisation. Structure remained the same as traditional diplomacy as the government stood as the major contributor. In new diplomacy government wasn't the sole actor, International organisations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations also joined the course. Physical security of citizens was no longer the sole purpose of government, twentieth century witnessed rise of night-watchman states to the welfare state (John Baylis, 1997). Growing number of non-state actors in new diplomacy negotiation process also changed. State continued with bilateral negotiation, but multilateral negotiation also began under auspices of intergovernmental organisations. Priority agenda of new diplomacy was to avoid war, along with focus on economic, social and welfare related issues, highly specialized issues. Professional diplomats were no longer the only player, new diplomacy attracted direct role of political leaders of nations since interwar period. India is not an exception in this regard from the first prime minister Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru of India is very much inclined to sports diplomacy and our foreign policy also has a great deal for the same. Ranging from initiation of Asian games and Panchal are the prominent one and even today India plays a significant role in sports diplomacy to resolve various problem across the world, this research is a modest attempt to study sports diplomacy and its role in International relations with special reference to India. Further researcher tries to explore how far the sports diplomacy can be good alternative for hard diplomacy.

Sports Diplomacy

In contemporary International Politics cooperation plays a vital role in strengthening nation's alliances and even for the existence. With the turn of twentieth century, Sports plays a significant role in the world of diplomacy. Sports diplomacy uses the universal passion for sports which surpasses linguistic, socio-political, cultural differences, crosses borders and increases dialogues, exposes participants to different cultures to bring people together. Countries beads for hosting major sporting-event with global appeal is a major to showcase themselves, increase their International prestige and accrue soft power.

Sport is a highly sensitive, conditional, contextual and ambivalent means of communication. The inherent unpredictability of results in sports diplomacy is one of the risks taken by those who initiate or sponsor it. (Riordan, 1993) It is evident that national governments use sports to promote, advertise, and propagate their own political agenda to prove themselves as powerful regimes : "Adolf Hitler took advantage of 1936 Berlin Olympic as a podium to legitimize Nazi Germany and to validate his ideology of the superiority of the Aryan race, whereas, U.S.S.R show of force and success at medal tally to project superiority of its ideology." *one of the paradoxes on which all sports diplomacy rests – it matters because it does not matter.* (Guardian, 2018)

The idea to utilise sports to improve relations dates back to the sacred truce of Olympic, reached in Ancient Greece. The "Truce" or "Ekecheiria" was established in 9th century BC by the signature of a treaty between Greek monarchs of Elis, Pisa and Sparta, on the advice of the Oracle at Delphi. The athletes, artists and their families, were allowed to travel in total safety to the Olympic Games and return afterwards to their respective countries During the Truce period. (Committee, n.d.) Many sports historians consider, beginning of the Olympics in Athens reduced the rivalry between the city-states of Greece to a greater extent. Sport was rediscovered by politics in the early 20th century, when the Olympic Games were revived in 1896. Within a short period of time the Games had developed into platforms for national competition and political leverage. Olympics are a leading example of using sports for diplomatic purposes. Other sports like cricket, table tennis and association football too, are being used in the global arena. (Padhi, 2011)

A considerable number of countries successfully used sports as a tool of diplomacy to reduce hostility with their counterparts. Although the sport is not the last stop but definitely becomes the stepping stone to read the dialogue between the two nations. Ping pong policy of China with the United States, the pin-down policy of Iran with the United States, North and South Korea's unified team at PyeongChang winter Olympics are obvious examples of how sports and popular diplomacy go hand in hand.

East Germany before reunification in 1990 used its "diplomats in tracksuits" to aid its recognition as a separate state from West Germany in 1970s. Even Cuba showcased its boxing and baseball stars, also exported doctors, physicians, couches, support staffs to 76 countries (Robert Huish, 2013).

The classic icebreaker role ever played was over ping pong diplomacy, when the U.S. ping pong team was invited to China in 1971. Then world twenty fourth-ranked U.S. team winning over world champions in few matches as gesture of friendship by Chinese team, helped U.S. to have an ally in communist block and tension between the nation cool down. Gradually in 1979 U.S. Finally recognised communist sovereignty over mainland China. Ties between United States and Iran, which broke after Islamic revolution in the nation followed by hijack of US embassy in Iran, relaxed after two decades of high tension through Pin-Down Diplomacy, when first American athletes arrived in Iran officially for Takhti cup (NewYorkTimes, 1998). The global stage of the Olympics in 1968 was to highlight to the world the plight of the African-American struggle during the civil rights movement in their home country. In 1972, the Israeli Olympics team was massacred in an attack by Palestinian gunmen that started at the Olympic village and resulted in the death of 17 people. In 1980, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led to a boycott of the Moscow Games by the Western powers and their allies in protest of Russian actions. In the Los Angeles Olympics of 1984, the Soviet Bloc led a retaliatory boycott of the Games (Padhi, 2011). Most recently during 2018 winter Olympics at PyeongChang, when North Korea and South Korean competed under a unified flag. It's the third time the peninsular nation competing under unified flag, in 1991 world table tennis championship and 2006 winter Olympics in Italy.

- Balance of power through sports can be very much visible during the cold war between USA and former USSR (Sports plays important role to identify the power poll in International Relations). United States and its allies boycotted 1980 Moscow summer Olympic against Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and Soviet block countered the gesture by boycotting 1984 Los Angeles summer Olympics. Power projection of the nations on the podium is no less than their rivalry in battlefield. Both the nations put their best in the field of gymnastics, swimming and athletics, also the outcome of medal tally. 1980 Olympics boycott gain supports from 40 countries but not many first world nations weren't among them, except Australia, Canada and West Germany majorly from Asiatic nations and developing nations. 1984 Olympics boycott had relatively low support, only 14 countries, then its counterpart. The second last decade of twentieth century was moving toward western hemisphere and support of nations to the sides showcased the tilt in balance of power. Even till date FIFA matches between England and Germany remind the World War periods through the tension in the field.
- International Sports events are becoming medium of protest since the beginning of twentieth century with American's unwilling to attend 1936 Berlin Olympics. Many Americans considered Nazi Germany a Godless regime, has no space for Jews or Catholic believes. Black power salute in 1968 Mexico City summer Olympics, the greatest example of protest at mega sporting event. Rise of Black gloves from Tommie Smith and John Carlos rose the issue of discrimination against Africa-Americans in American society. 1972 Munich summer Olympics witnessed the most inhuman way of protest against Israel -Palestine dispute where terror group Black September killed 11 Israeli athletes demanding release of 234 Palestinian prisoners in Israel. 1980 Moscow Olympics boycott by United States and its 44 allies against Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and Soviet Union with its allies boycotted 1984 Los Angeles Olympic against American boycott of 1980 Olympics.
- Defy the global ideological war through sports diplomacy which is connecting diverse ideological background, e.g. US-China rapprochement through ping pong diplomacy in 1971. United States involvement was to make an alliance in communist block and China as counter to Soviet Union in Asian continent. China during destalinization of Soviet Union fought with the Soviet over Ussuri river in 1969, and needed a powerful alliance. Table tennis a major sport in both America and China, has a larger audience. America winning few matches against world number one eased Chinese image in front of Americans, and the same was witnessed during Chinese ping pong tour to America in 1972. These championship brought changes to ideological separations of the nations
- Even sports diplomacy gives an avenue to reconciliation between to enemy neighbours, e.g. North Korea and South Korea tries to bring peace to Korean Peninsula. Asian nations had been represented under unified team in 1991 world table tennis championship, 2006 winter Olympics and 2018 winter Olympics.

Sports as a major component in India's Diplomacy

Sports has been a political tool for India since its independence movement, gained test status in 1932 equalling British in their own game articles and Indian hockey which represented Britain in Olympics. Achievements in Sports for pre-independent India blew the wind of equality into political stage (OlympicReview). After World War II a determined struggle against the colonial despots, peoples of Asia got together among themselves to work for a new world order based on mutual respect and peaceful co-existence. Foremost in this fight for a new world order was prime minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru. The spotlight was fixed on youth, (the leaders of tomorrow) and sport, (an activity which brings out the best in a human being), who competes, not only for the honour of his country but also for the Glory of Sport. During Asian Relations Conference at New Delhi. Prof. Guru Dutt Sondhi invoked the Asian leaders to cooperate in the new sports venture. The response was positive and immediate, this marked the birth of the Asian Games movement which today is the greatest festival of sport next to the Olympics (OlympicReview). Since its independence, India involved track II diplomacy as its foreign policy to rise as an International cooperation.

Sports ability to connect people even in the face of adversity has been a purpose, that statesmen use as tool of diplomacy throughout the twentieth century and India, in this regard, is no exception. Sports reflect and shape national consciousness, so does national consciousness reflect sporting character (Sengupta, 2004). Sporting nationalism reaches its peak when a nation feels insecure or threatened (Guha, 2002) e.g. India vs Pakistan during last decade of twentieth century and first decade of twenty-first century. Competitive sports reflect and maintain a collective psychology, gives rise to collective identities, and also used as a means of political motivation (Guha, 2002).

India making roads into traditional sports which it has little experience despite its poor performance in the Olympics, India, in recent years, has been trying deliberately to use sports to promote its rising power by hosting 1st and 9th Asian games in 1951, 1982 respectively and 20th commonwealth games in 2010. The formation of a professional cricket league, the Indian Premier League, in 2008, holding the Commonwealth Games in Delhi in 2010 and conducting the Indian Grand Prix in Formula 1 racing in Noida, Uttar Pradesh in 2011 are a few cases in point. India's strength in cricket is especially important in countries where this game is popular, and 'cricket diplomacy' has played a special role in the political history of South Asia (Kugiel, 2012).

After independence, cricketing prowess on the subcontinent became associated with patriotism (Guha, 2002): being a good cricketer meant that one was a 'good' Indian, Pakistani or Sri Lankan. By the 1990s, cricket had lost its association with colonialism and become a way to develop national and masculine identities (Sengupta, 2004). With the creation of the Indian Premier League (IPL) in 2008, at a time when Indian economy was booming, has helped in projecting India's soft power.

However, it won't be an exaggeration to say that India, despite having such ample resources and possibilities for its soft power projection, has failed to effectively streamline its capabilities in the right direction (Subramanian, 2015). The 2009 edition of Indian Premier League (IPL) fled to South Africa and first 20 matches of 2014 edition of Indian Premier League (IPL) were conducted in United Arab Emirates. The off-shore editions contributed heavily to both the nations, in providing short term employment as well as to the nations GDP. The 2nd edition of league contributed \$11.4 million to Cricket South Africa (EconomicsTimes, 2009) and 7th edition added 23% increase, 577 million Arab Emirates Dirham (Subramanian, 2015), to United Arab's GDP. Cricket also helped India to better soft power diplomacy with Afghanistan, as BCCI provided Shahid Vijay Singh Pathik Sports Complex at Greater Noida and Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Dehradun as home grounds for Afghanistan cricket team. Also playing of Afghani players in IPL boost the confidence of Afghanistan on India. India tries to better its stand with Sri Lanka by organising number of Cricket tours to the Island Nation.

Success of 20th commonwealth games in New Delhi opened up a new chapter in the book of Indian sports diplomacy, taking the nation to new heights. The nation leaving the boundary of regional powerhouse, and made itself ready to leave its footprint in International arena. One of the common strands on public platform was that the hosting of a sporting event at a scale as big as Commonwealth Games was the matter of International prestige for the country and was to boost "Brand India." (Majumdar, 2011) These sentiments were expressed in the official website for the Delhi Games, which left behind improved, world-class sports facilities that generations of Indian athletes can use in the future. The established Olympic-size pool, gym and other facilities in the Delhi University boost sports among the youths (Majumdar, 2011).

More than the venues or the Games village, it is the urban infrastructure, the issue of community integration, and performance of the athletes, as they have created the possibility of India embracing Olympic sport which is important in the long run. It starts from the premise that the Commonwealth Games (CWG) had the potential to create conditions for the building of "winning culture" in India, measured in terms of gold medals won and state status earned in front of the International arena. This belief was only strengthened after India's fantastic performance at the Asian Games at Guangzhou in November 2010, at Incheon in October 2014 and recently at Jakarta in August 2018. India won 65 medals with 13 golds, 57 medals with 11 golds and 69 medals with 15 golds respectively. India even saw increase of participation in individual sports as well as growth in performance of athletes in arena of Olympics.

Any kind of public diplomacy or cultural diplomacy or popular diplomacy of India can't be discussed without finding its trail with Pakistan. Since independence of both the neighbours, the tensions have been hostile between the nations. There have been attempts to restrain the heat, "Indian cricket team touring Pakistan in 1955", "India Pakistan Dual championship in Lahore in 1960", which gave boots to popular diplomacy between the neighbours post-traumatic period of separation. These tournaments and championships helped the nations to keep the gates open for their citizens. Cricket diplomacy was the term coined during Pakistan cricket team tour to India prior to ICC world cup 1987, General Zia-ul-Haq visited India for unofficial talk during its team toured subcontinent. Similarly, in 2004 when Pakistan toured India, then president Musharraf attended one-day International match with Former prime minister Manmohan Singh, even Pakistani president stayed in Delhi for unofficial talks. Pakistani policymakers used cricket as a way to cut tension with India under track-II diplomacy. These actions indicate Indian leaders, that India has leverage over Pakistan through cricket. Any violence attack on Indian soil with Pakistani connection, India ends up cancelling cricket matches to condemn the events.

Bilateral cricket matches have been held hostage to political tensions between the two governments. Whilst this may not sound revelatory, it is far more explicit than in any other cricket playing countries. India-Sri Lanka cricket tours were not affected by the presence of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka or the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by a suspected Tamil Tiger suicide bomber (Crick, 2009), and Pakistan-Bangladesh cricketing relations have not been soured by their political relationship. However, India Pakistan cricket tours are influenced by every nuance of bilateral relations. Sports relation between these neighbouring nations is equals war except the shooting.

Conclusion

Most of the developing nations comes forward in hosting these mega events in order to attract new audience for investment and consumption purposes. The market escalation during such events are at high-stake for the consumer exploration. states which are hosting these mega sporting events tends to contribute in nation building image at International Arena. They also count on the idea, that hosting these mega events to improve country's status and put forward nations socio-economic and political capability, in forefront of world. These events allure the developing nation to host these high budget, high expectation sporting events. Hosting is understood as a way for cities (and their nations) to present themselves on a world stage and engage in a kind of strategic brand messaging in which they can "signal" their place in a powerful core of elite countries; this signalling may include showcasing economic achievements, asserting diplomatic stature, and projecting "soft power" (Cornelissen, 2010). Since, independence of India and Pakistan, cricket tours can be seen as a medium of cross border interaction through diplomatic lenses. It is therefore not surprising that cricket has been used as a tool for political engagement and disengagement between India and Pakistan. The use of cricket diplomacy in diffusing tensions with Pakistan and generating goodwill among other South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations is just an example of it. Cricket is not the only sport which binds India and Pakistan, these two rivals share same origin, similar culture as well as sports. After 26/11 Mumbai attack Indian government is quite sceptical about issuing of visa to Pakistani sportspersons, scholars and celebrities and even for persons with

Pakistan origin. During Kabaddi world cup 2016 Pakistani team refrained from the tournament in Ahmadabad, India due to visa issue (NDTV, 2016) . Even during 22nd Asian Athletic Association 2017 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, Pakistani team reached late over visa struggle (HindustanTimes, 2017) . Pakistani players were banned after the first edition of Indian Premier League post 26/11 Mumbai attack (IndiaToday, 2015) . Indian government refused to issue visa to Pakistan snooker team to play under-21 championship 2014 in Mohali, Punjab (Tribune, 2014) . India government did not issue Pakistan's junior hockey players the visa for Junior hockey world cup 2016 in Lucknow, India (Dawn, 2016). Post Pulwama attack the relation between India and Pakistan deteriorated drastically, and India almost denied visa to Pakistani shooters for International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF) world cup 2019, New Delhi (Reuters, 2019) and Pakistani snooker team for Asian Snooker Tournament 2019, Bengaluru (IndianExpress, 2019) . As a result of these decision International Olympic Committee (IOC) suspended all Indian applications for hosting Olympic sporting events, unless any written assurance is obtained from Indian Government (Reuters, 2019), which puts India's bid for 2032 summer Olympic on hold. Denial of visa to Pakistani sportspersons affected Indians dream of hosting mega sporting events, and International Olympic committee's urge to other International sporting federation to stage competitions in the country affected India's image in front of sport audiences. Instances like this moving away from Indian dreams to be an Olympic nation. The beginning of initiative like "Khelo India" was to cultivate sports culture in India, but events and instances like IOC's decision can affect these kinds of initiative. Breaking of bilateral sports ties has other story, but impact of it on International platform will affect nations image. Recent bilateral differences are also foreshadowing the history of soft diplomacy of the nation.

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