

## SPORTS AND NEW POLITICS

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### ABSTRACT

Sports and Politics are different and both should not be mixed, is the most cited argument in favor of sporting ties with Pakistan. People argue that not playing with Pakistan or Pakistani sportsmen would not serve any purpose as it would not end cross border terrorism. The fact is that Sports since the time of Gladiators has affected politics and shaped public opinion. The two just cannot be separated. Sports, like war is used as a tool to achieve political objectives. Of course it is non violent and not as effective as war. Last month, a senior official of Iran Football League had to resign. His crime? He accidentally sent an email to Israeli Football federation wishing New Year!! Israel and Iran have no sporting ties and the reason is purely political. None of the two countries have ever been on war with each other. And it is not just about the Arab world, where many countries have no sporting ties with Israel; Politics has even affected Sports in other parts of the world. Key words: Politics, Sports, Diplomacy

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### INTRODUCTION

South Africa was not only banned from Olympics from 1962- 1990 but the UN also maintained a list of people who participated in sporting events in South Africa to put a moral pressure on athletes not to appear in South Africa. The UN and other countries did this so that the country ends its apartheid policies. South Africa could play its first cricket world cup in 1992. Many sportsmen who visited South Africa on private tours were banned by their respective sports federations. In 1976, 28 African nations, boycotted Olympics to protest against tour of South Africa by New Zealand's Rugby team. The Sports boycott in itself did not put an end to the apartheid in South Africa. But, the boycotts put across the point that it wont be business as usual for South Africa and it would have to mend its ways. Olympics were not boycotted only in 1976. In 1980 around 45-50 countries boycotted Moscow Olympics including

US, Japan, China & West Germany as a protest against Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The boycott triggered a debate in US that it could be perceived as a sentimental rather than a strategic reaction. However, the counter argument prevailed, that the boycott would be an effective symbolic protest because of its dramatic visibility to the citizens of the Soviet Union, regardless of whether or not the action provoked a response. In retaliation the Soviet Union along with fourteen countries boycotted the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. Superpowers like US & Soviet Union clearly did not believe that Sports and Politics can be separated just because Sports alone could not achieve any political objective. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan did not end after the Olympics boycott and the US had to fight a proxy war for eight years. On the other hand, the argument that Sports and Politics should not be mixed prevailed during 1936 Berlin Olympics. The Berlin Olympics marked the return of Germany on International stage after World War 1. There was a huge debate in US over boycotting the Olympics to protest anti Semitic policies of Hitler's Nazi regime. Avery Brundage, president of the American Olympic Committee, stated: "The very foundation of the modern Olympic revival will be undermined if individual countries are allowed to restrict participation by reason of class, creed, or race." Brundage opposed a boycott, arguing that politics had no place in sports saying "The Olympic Games belong to the athletes and not to the politicians." Many Afro Americans favored participating arguing that victory of Blacks would undermine Nazi's "Aryan Supremacy" theory and foster Black pride in US. Thus there were political reasons as well for not boycotting the games. The issue was settled by a vote and the Amateur Athletic Union defeated the proposal to boycott the Olympics by two-and-a-half votes. However many Jewish players personally boycotted the games. Hitler initially held the Olympics in low regard because of their internationalism, but he became an avid supporter after Joseph Goebbels, his Minister of Propaganda, convinced him of their propaganda value.

Goebbels stated in 1933. "German sport has only one task: to strengthen the character of the German people, imbuing it with the fighting spirit and steadfast camaraderie necessary in the struggle for its existence.- Germany won most medals in that Olympics and won praises from most of visitors for its hospitality and organization. Hitler even had plans to take over the Olympics forever. He said, "In 1940 the Olympic Games will take place in Tokyo. But thereafter they will take place in Germany for all time to come. in this stadium". Many observers believe that boycott by western countries would have bolstered international resistance to Hitler's expansionist designs.

## Conclusions

In the context of India Pakistan relations, Cricket has played an important role many times in the past. In 1987, when the Indian and Pakistani army were in an eye-ball-to-eye-ball confrontation on the border, General Zia invited himself to watch an India Pakistan match at Jaipur and eased the tension. Before India's tour to Pakistan in 2004, when ties between the two countries were improving, opponents of the Pakistan tour within the Govt argued that an attack on Indians on Pakistani soil would destroy the sense of well being whereas supporters of tour argued that it would help to ease the tensions. The successful tour by the Indians further created a false sense of normalcy. Prior to the tour, cross border terrorism had reduced in 2004 and Pakistan for the first time had said that it would not allow its territory to be used against India. This has since proved to be a false promise. Today the situation is much different from the one in 2004. Despite evidences against 26/11 attacks, Pakistan has not taken any relevant action against terrorist groups acting against India. Yesterday, Pune was attacked barely a week after JuD said that Delhi, Pune & Kanpur were its targets. The current circumstances demand isolating Pakistan on international forums and exerting diplomatic pressure, if not a limited war, to dismantle terrorist infrastructure. The recent unofficial boycott of Pakistani players by IPL has once again demonstrated the importance of cricket diplomacy. Isolating Pakistan in cricket and not just IPL would go a long way in exerting diplomatic pressure on Pakistan.

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