

Role of Cricket for Peace in South Asia: Analyzing the Impact of Sports Diplomacy and Its Economic Incentives

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research was to conclude how cricket promotes peace and cooperation between India and Pakistan through sports diplomacy and its economic incentives. The research used a qualitative exploratory approach. A semi-structured interview design was employed in this study. Former international cricket players from both nations were considered the population while the sample included ten experienced players five from Pakistan and five from India selected. To collect data online photographic sessions and voice-recorded interviews were conducted from April to July 2025. The transcribed data were analyzed using thematic, content, narrative and comparative analysis techniques to ensure depth and credibility of results. Findings of the study revealed that cricket plays a significant role as an informal diplomatic tool, fostering trust, dialogue and cultural exchange between the two nations. Results further indicated cricket's role as a soft power instrument shaping the global image of India and Pakistan while reducing stereotypes and improving shared identity. Moreover cricket was found to be a key economic connector, generating revenue through broadcasting rights, sponsorships, tourism, infrastructure development and job creation. The findings also highlighted cricket's contribution as a peace building mechanism particularly by humanizing adversaries, creating symbolic unity and engaging youth in cross-border initiatives.

Research implications suggest that cricket diplomacy supported by economic ties can serve as a sustainable tool for promoting long term peace and regional cooperation. Based on the recommendations of the study policymakers, cricket boards and regional organizations such as SAARC should promote bilateral cricketing ties to strengthen diplomacy, economic collaboration and mutual understanding between India and Pakistan.

Keywords: Cricket Diplomacy, Sports Diplomacy, Soft Power, Economic Incentives, Peace-Building, India–Pakistan Relation

INTRODUCTION

Cricket is the second most widely played sport globally after football with exceptional popularity in South Asia particularly India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Sengupta, 2004). In both India and Pakistan cricket has evolved into a cultural obsession drawing immense public attention as reflected in television ratings across decades. Recognizing the global significance of sport the United Nations declared 2005 the International Year of Sport and Physical Education appointing the Indian and Pakistani cricket teams as spokespersons for their contributions to peace-building efforts (United Nations, 2006). Sport and cricket in particular has been highlighted for its potential to bridge divides promote communication and support conflict resolution as noted in the UN Secretary-General's report Sport for Development and Peace (United Nations, 2006).

Historically cricket has functioned as a diplomatic tool in easing India–Pakistan tensions and remains embedded in the social, cultural and political fabric of South Asia (Sengupta, 2004). In the digital era cricket has also facilitated digital sports diplomacy with social media enabling cross-border interactions among fans, softening nationalist divides and creating spaces for cultural exchange (Ahmed & Sharma, 2022; UNESCO, 2022). Such bottom-up engagement particularly resonates with younger generations transforming cricket into a virtual public sphere for peace-building.

While critics caution that sport cannot substitute for formal diplomacy cricket diplomacy has nevertheless been recognized as a soft power mechanism capable of fostering empathy and dialogue (Khan, 2005). Beyond politics, cricket generates significant economic benefits through tourism, broadcasting, sponsorships and infrastructure development (ICC, 2021; Kumar, 2022). Resumed bilateral cricket series have often preceded broader economic engagements reinforcing its role as a channel for cooperation (Satow, 2004).

Despite its dual nature as both a reflection of political conflict and a vehicle for peace cricket continues to be a central identity marker in South Asia and a powerful medium of sports diplomacy (Chatterjee, 2004; Oakley, 2004; Jonsson & Langhorne, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

Despite cricket's immense popularity in South Asia, the region remains marked by persistent political tensions and recurring diplomatic breakdowns (Giulianotti, 2011). In this context cricket diplomacy linking soft communication, regional cooperation and stability remains underutilized and underexplored academically (Murray, 2012). The India–Pakistan rivalry illustrates this duality while fiercely competitive it has also created openings for goodwill and dialogue.

Historical cases such as the 2004 bilateral series, highlight cricket's symbolic role as informal diplomacy capturing public attention and facilitating rare political engagement (Khan, 2017). Beyond symbolism, bilateral matches generate substantial economic benefits through broadcasting, sponsorship, tourism and infrastructure investment, providing strong incentives to maintain peaceful sporting ties (Murray, 2012).

At the social level cricket promotes people-to-people engagement. Cross-border youth academies and fan interactions reduce prejudice, reshape perceptions and foster cultural exchange. Combined with economic spillovers these initiatives underscore cricket's capacity to function simultaneously as a peace-building tool and a catalyst for regional integration. This study thus examines cricket's diplomatic, economic and social dimensions as a soft power instrument in South Asian international relations.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of cricket in promoting peace and understanding between India and Pakistan in south Asia
2. To investigate the economic incentives of cricket diplomacy in South Asia
3. To analyze the impact of cricket of sports diplomacy on improving India Pakistan relations through cricket.

Research Questions

RQ1: What role does cricket play in promoting peace and understanding between India and Pakistan in South Asia?

RQ2: How are the economic incentives associated with cricket diplomacy in South Asia?

RQ3: How does cricket diplomacy impact the improvement of India Pakistan relations?

Research Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant role of cricket in fostering peace and understanding between India and Pakistan.

H2: There is a significant role of economic benefits from cricket diplomacy in influencing relations between India and Pakistan.

H3: There is a significant role of cricket diplomacy in enhancing India-Pakistan relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Sports Diplomacy

Sports diplomacy a form of cultural diplomacy employs sporting events and players to foster mutual understanding, dialogue and cross-border engagement. In South Asia particularly between India and Pakistan it has historically eased political tensions and opened informal communication channels. Cricket the region's most popular sport occupies a unique position as a soft power tool capable of transcending political divides. This aligns with Nye's (2004) soft power theory which emphasizes influence through attraction and shared cultural values rather than coercion. Despite their history of conflict India and Pakistan have used cricket for symbolic reconciliation via bilateral series ICC tournaments and displays of sportsmanship. Such encounters generate emotional connections, international visibility, economic opportunities and moments of unity often unattainable through formal diplomacy positioning cricket as a powerful medium of sports diplomacy fostering peace-building, regional cooperation and positive image projection.

Socio-Political and Cultural Significance of Cricket

Cricket carries profound socio-political and cultural significance across South Asia extending beyond sport to embody national identity, unity and collective pride. In countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan cricket reflects national character and aspiration. The sport frequently transcends political ethnic and religious divisions, serving as a unifying symbol during periods of instability or social unrest. Matches between historic rivals particularly India and Pakistan create shared moments of

pride and celebration, temporarily easing hostilities and fostering communal unity (Khan, 2015; Sarkar & Jain, 2022; Bose, 2022; Rai, 2016; Chakrabarti, 2021).

Cricket Diplomacy in India-Pakistan Relations

The bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan, shaped by tensions over Kashmir and other issues has seen cricket function as an informal diplomatic tool. Historical cases such as the 2004 bilateral series illustrate how matches facilitated political engagement and symbolic gestures for peace (Sharma, 2019). Even during the 2019 Pulwama crisis debates over boycotting India-Pakistan World Cup matches highlighted cricket's political sensitivity and economic stakes with officials warning that withdrawal could trigger sanctions or BCCI penalties (NDTV, 2019; Nayyar & Akhtar, 2020).

The 2025 ICC Champions Trophy hosted by Pakistan the first major international tournament there since 1996 reinforced cricket's dual role as a unifying cultural force and a geopolitical marker. India's refusal to play on Pakistani soil with matches shifted to Dubai diminished cross-border engagement, tourism, and cultural exchange yet the tournament boosted domestic enthusiasm and showcased Pakistan's hosting capacity (ESPNcricinfo, 2024; TRT World, 2025; Reuters, 2025). This episode underscores cricket's potential as a soft power instrument while highlighting its vulnerability to political influence.

Expanding the Scope of Cricket Diplomacy

Beyond India-Pakistan bilateral relations, cricket diplomacy extends regionally and globally. In Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh the sport promotes national unity and acts as a cultural bridge in multilateral forums such as SAARC (Qureshi, 2023). Grassroots initiatives including youth exchanges coaching camps and school tournaments support long-term confidence-building deconstruct hostile narratives and foster peaceful cross-border engagement (UNESCO, 2022). Digital platforms further amplify these efforts enabling fan interactions, viral displays of sportsmanship and informal cultural diplomacy (Ahmed & Sharma, 2022).

Women's participation adds inclusivity and strengthens the moral legitimacy of cricket diplomacy, aligning with UN Sustainable Development Goals on peace, gender equality, and cooperation (Fatima & Mukherjee, 2023).

Gaps in Existing Literature and Study Rationale

Despite growing scholarly interest existing literature remains fragmented. Most studies focus on isolated historical events (e.g., 1987 Jaipur visit, 1999 Chennai Test, 2004 Vajpayee-Musharraf series) without examining long-term continuity or evolution (Sengupta, 2004; Haigh, 2011). Economic dimensions, including broadcasting, sponsorship, tourism and revenue impacts on peacebuilding are underexplored (Bandyo padhyay, 2007; Darnell, 2010). Similarly digital sports diplomacy and women's cricket have received limited attention. Existing research also overemphasizes state-led diplomacy, neglecting the role of civil society, NGOs, private sector actors and fans.

Most critically players' lived experiences shaped by memory, identity and emotion remain largely absent leaving a gap in understanding cricket's practical diplomatic and peacebuilding roles. This study addresses these gaps by integrating historical patterns, economic incentives, soft power dynamics, gender inclusion, digital engagement and first-hand narratives from Indian and Pakistani cricketers. By centering player experiences it contributes to sports diplomacy literature and offers practical insights for policymakers, sporting institutions and peacebuilding practitioners in South Asia.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter presents a qualitative methodology to examine cricket's role in peacebuilding, diplomacy and economic cooperation between India and Pakistan. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews with former players and analyzed using thematic, narrative and content analysis. Ethical measures and credibility strategies were strictly applied. The approach highlights cricket's symbolic, cultural and economic dimensions as a soft power and peacebuilding tool in South Asia.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative exploratory design with semi-structured interviews of 10 former Indian and Pakistani cricketers (5 each) to explore cricket's role in peacebuilding, sports diplomacy, and economic cooperation. Thematic analysis identified recurring patterns, providing nuanced insights into cricket as a tool for regional engagement in South Asia.

Population/sample

This study selected ten former international cricketers five from India and five from Pakistan each with direct experience in bilateral cricket ensuring informed insights into cricket's role in diplomacy, peacebuilding and cross-border relations. All participants had direct involvement in cricket at various levels in the past providing them with relevant experience-based insights into how cricket intersects with diplomacy, peace-building and cross-border relations. However it is acknowledged that some participants had limited direct experience of competing in high-stakes bilateral India–Pakistan series which represents a methodological limitation.

Construction of Research Tools

This study used a qualitative exploratory design with semi-structured interviews of former Indian and Pakistani cricketers to examine cricket's role in peacebuilding, sports diplomacy and economic cooperation. Thematic analysis identified recurring patterns offering nuanced insights into cricket as a tool for regional engagement in South Asia.

Interview Protocol Table

The purpose of this interview is to understand how cricket can help promote peace, mutual understanding and economic benefits between India and Pakistan through sports diplomacy.

Target Respondents: Former Cricket players

Interview Type: Semi-structured interview

Duration: 20 to 30 minutes

Variables	Sub Variables	Questions
Sports Diplomacy		How does cricket act as an informal diplomatic tool between India and Pakistan?
		In your opinion how does cricket contribute to building trust between the two nations?

	Role of Cricket in Diplomacy	How can cricket contribute to building trust between India and Pakistan in times of conflict or political standoff? Why is cricket often considered more effective than other forms of diplomacy in fostering dialogue between the two countries? How does cricket help to change negative perceptions and stereotypes between the citizens of India and Pakistan?
	Cricket as Soft Power	How does cricket function as a form of soft power in shaping the image of India and Pakistan?
		Why do you think cricket is viewed as a form of soft diplomacy between India and Pakistan, especially during tense moments?
		How can cricket enhance the cultural exchange between India and Pakistan despite political challenges?
		Why is cricket considered a neutral platform that allows India and Pakistan to engage peacefully, even amidst their political differences?
		How can cricket serve as a means to promote shared values and interests between the two countries?

Economic Incentives Promoting Peace	Revenue Generation from Cricket Events	How do cricket events generate revenue for both India and Pakistan? Why is investing in cricket seen as a viable strategy for economic growth in both India and Pakistan? How does hosting a major cricket event impact local economies in terms of tourism and business? Why are sponsorships, advertising, and broadcasting rights so valuable to the economic success of cricket tournaments between India and Pakistan? How do cricket events help develop infrastructure and create jobs benefiting both nations economically?
	Impact on Bilateral Trade and Investment	How do cricket events stimulate bilateral trade between India and Pakistan? Why do you think cricket helps open doors for greater foreign investment between India and Pakistan? How do diplomatic relations improved by cricket events lead to stronger economic cooperation in areas like trade and investment? Why is cricket seen as a tool that can bring about long-term economic benefits for both countries?
	Cricket as a Peace-building Tool	How can cricket tournaments attract international investors and sponsors helping boost the economies of both India and Pakistan? How can cricket contribute to peace-building efforts between India and Pakistan, especially in the context of their long-standing conflicts?

		Why is cricket seen as an effective tool to promote peace and reconciliation especially compared to other forms of diplomacy or conflict resolution? How can a shared love of cricket help reduce tensions and foster unity between the people of India and Pakistan?
		Why do you believe that cricket matches or tournaments can serve as a bridge for peaceful communication during political crises?
		How do the emotional and cultural ties to cricket enable it to transcend political divides between India and Pakistan?
	Youth Engagement through Cricket	How can cricket programs targeting youth help create lasting peace between India and Pakistan?
		Why youth engagement in cricket is considered an important tool for peace building in both countries?
		Why do you think youth-focused cricket initiatives can be more effective in promoting peace than traditional diplomatic efforts?
		How can cricket help young people in India and Pakistan see each other as partners, rather than adversaries in their shared future?

Procedure of Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 former international cricketers (5 Indian, 5 Pakistani). Initial Zoom sessions introduced the study and secured informed participation followed by voice-recorded interviews conducted between 15 April and 11 July 2025. Each recording lasting 20–30 minutes addressed themes of sports diplomacy, peacebuilding and economic aspects of cricket. Transcripts were produced verbatim and analyzed through thematic coding to ensure accuracy, consistency and reliability.

Data Analysis Approaches

Data from semi-structured interviews were analyzed using four qualitative approaches. Thematic analysis identified patterns like cricket fostering unity, content analysis categorized economic references (tourism, sponsorship, media rights) narrative analysis interpreted personal stories and comparative analysis contrasted Indian and Pakistani perspectives. This combination allowed systematic categorization alongside deeper interpretation of cricket's role in diplomacy, economic cooperation and peacebuilding.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented through tables, capturing the perspectives of both Indian and Pakistani players. The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic framework which included familiarization, coding, categorization and refinement into four final themes: sports diplomacy, peace-building, identity and economic collaboration. Participant responses were systematically coded (P1–P4 for Pakistan, I1–I4 for India) to ensure clarity and anonymity. Presenting the results in tabular form allows for a structured comparison between the two sides highlighting both shared values and divergent viewpoints.

Table 1: Summary of Emerged Themes, Codes and Players Identities

Theme No.	Theme Title	Associated Questions	Codes Identified	Players Identified
Theme 1	Cricket as a Diplomatic Bridge and Soft Power Instrument	Q1-Q10	Informal diplomacy, trust-building, symbolic gestures, soft power, cultural exchange, shared identity	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, I1, I2, I3, I4, I5
Theme 2	Cricket as a Channel for Economic Engagement and Bilateral Cooperation	Q11-Q20	Economic impact, media & tourism, job creation, foreign investment, trade openings	P1, P2, P3, P4, I1, I2, I3, I4
Theme 3	Cricket as a Peace-Building Tool in Conflict Transformation	Q21-Q25	Symbolic unity, crisis dialogue, emotional connection, peace messaging, empathy through sport	P1, P2, P3, P4, I1, I2, I3
Theme 4	Cricket and Youth Engagement for Sustainable Peace	Q26- Q29	Youth bonding, cross-border interaction, stereotype reduction, peace culture, social learning	P1, P2, P3, P4, I1, I2, I3

Theme 1: Cricket as a Diplomatic Bridge and Soft Power Instrument

Q1: How does cricket act as an informal diplomatic tool between India and Pakistan?

Table 2: Comparative Discussion Table

Category	Indian Players Perspective	Pakistani Players Perspective	Common Ground / Agreement
Cricket as a Symbol of Diplomacy	Indian players (e.g. I1 I2) emphasized that Indo-Pak matches carry unspoken messages of reconciliation you do not need a press release to get that feel.	Pakistani players (e.g. P1, P4) noted that just playing a series during political strain is itself a gesture of peace and a sign that things are not entirely broken.	Both see cricket as an unofficial but symbolically powerful tool of diplomacy during political deadlock it communicates intent without words.
Emotional Diplomacy	Indian players (I2, I5) stressed genuine respect and unspoken care shown through post-match gestures calling it felt not staged diplomacy.	Pakistani players (P2, P3) reflected on fans cheering both sides saying cricket accomplishes what oratory cannot by connecting emotions across the border.	Agreement that cricket is a form of emotional and symbolic diplomacy that shapes perception and mutual empathy through authentic player behavior.
Public Visibility and Influence	Indian responses highlighted how millions	Pakistani players focused on cricket's ability to reach	Both agree that cricket diplomacy has bottom-up

	watching internalize mutual respect between teams which reshapes the public's views of the rival country.	ordinary people creating unity and national attention beyond official diplomatic efforts.	influence reaching ordinary people and offering a shared emotional spectacle that transcends borders.
Soft Power and Symbolism	Indian players (I3, I4) talked about the symbolic gestures greetings sportsmanship becoming loaded moments in the eyes of the media and fans.	Pakistani players (P5) observed that even warm-up banter or helping each other becomes a message we are not enemies we are athletes.	Consensus that every small gesture becomes symbolic cricket serves as a platform for soft power by modeling civility and respect before a regional audience.
Expression Style	Indian players (I1–I5) used slightly more structured and diplomatic tone emphasizing the intuitive symbolism and impact of public behavior.	Pakistani players (P1–P5) were more emotionally expressive often emphasizing feelings of warmth, personal encounters, and audience reactions.	Style differs but substance aligns both sides reveal that emotionally charged cricket encounters enable interpersonal diplomacy and public reflection.
Perceived Impact of Cricket Diplomacy	Indians linked cricket diplomacy with global image and moral signaling showing grace and dignity on an international stage.	Pakistanis saw it as a message of hope that dialogue is still possible especially when official diplomacy is absent.	Both agree that cricket creates hope challenges stereotypes and softens hostility through shared sporting moments even if only temporarily.
Cultural and Human Connection	Indian players (I5) said cricket becomes a space where Indian and Pakistani stories coincide showing we still care even if we would not say it aloud.	Pakistani players (P3, P4) described fans across the border cheering for rivals and how that challenges the stories we grow up believing.	Strong agreement that cricket humanizes the other side enabling both nations to see each other not as enemies but as emotional equals in a shared cultural experience.

Q2: In your opinion how does cricket contribute to building trust between the two nations?

Table 3: Comparative Discussion

Category	Indian Players Perspective	Pakistani Players Perspective	Common Ground / Agreement
Post-Match Conduct & Sportsmanship	Indian players (I5, I2) emphasized how conduct after a match win or lose leaves a lasting impression and teaches mutual respect	Pakistani players (P9, P10) also stressed that the way players treat each other post match reflects decency and shapes public perception.	Both sides view courteous post match behavior as an opportunity to model peace dignity and fairness key for emotional trust building.
Symbolism of Rituals	Indian players (I4) pointed to rituals like handshakes	Pakistani players (P8) recalled past tours (e.g.	Consensus that cricket rituals act as soft diplomatic

	anthems and gift exchanges as moments that uphold civility and shared identity.	2000s) where hospitality and rituals left powerful impressions of goodwill and cultural respect.	signals that challenge hostile narratives and show respect without political speech.
Crickets Continuity in Political Tension	Indian players (I3) noted that cricket's continuation during political strain sends a message of consistency and hope.	Pakistani players (P7) echoed this saying matches proceed even when tension is high and that alone helps melt fear and suspicion among fans.	Agreement that cricket offers a stable emotional space for symbolic engagement even when official relations are frozen.
Humanity & Emotional Vulnerability	Indian players described how simple gestures a smile nod or applause for rivals humanize the opponent and resonate more than diplomatic language	Pakistani players (P6, P9) emphasized moments like helping injured players laughing together and noted such actions hit different emotionally.	Shared view that emotional openness in cricket builds bridges and makes peace feel real and human not abstract or political.
Public Perception & Behavioral Modeling	Indian players (I1, I5) stated that the public learns from player conduct and that respect between rivals encourages audiences to mirror it emotionally.	Pakistani players (P10) reinforced that fans notice fairness and even handed behavior and this raises perception of the rival country.	Agreement that cricket influences public emotion and memory more deeply than speeches a clear function of behavior based soft power.
Unscripted Acts as Diplomacy	Indian players stressed that authentic moments on the field not orchestrated but natural carry more diplomatic weight than rehearsed formalities.	Pakistani players also emphasized that genuine emotional moments (not driven by protocol) create trust and remind people that we can still connect.	Both sides recognize that unplanned sincere conduct in cricket builds emotional trust and serves as the most credible form of sports diplomacy

Q3: How can cricket contribute to building trust between India and Pakistan in times of conflict or political standoff?

Table 4: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspective (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspective (I1–I5)	Common Ground / Agreement
Cricket as Emotional Engagement	Emphasized that during tense periods cricket gives people relief and emotional space to reconnect. (P3, P4)	Noted that continued public interest in cricket reflects emotional attachment and concern even during conflict. (I4, I5)	Both sides agree that cricket offers a non-verbal emotional lifeline that sustains hope and public engagement despite political deadlock.
Public Trust & Symbolic Resumption	Mentioned how even the announcement of a match can restore public faith and indicate openness to dialogue. (P5)	Argued that playing a fair and respectful game signals that cooperation is still possible and builds public trust more effectively than speeches. (I1)	Shared belief that cricket sends powerful symbolic messages helping to rebuild trust before formal negotiations begin.

Appreciation Across Borders	Shared examples of Indian fans applauding Pakistani performances saying such acts create mutual respect. (P1, P2)	Indian players recalled crowds cheering rival players and emphasized how such public moments challenge stereotypes. (I2)	Agreement that applause and admiration from rival fans is a potent form of emotional diplomacy and peace signaling.
Interpersonal Conduct & Influence	Emphasized player's behavior like smiles handshakes hospitality as reflections of respect that touch audiences deeply. (P2, P4)	Explained how player's respectful conduct during tours influences media and public narratives back home. (I3)	Consensus that player conduct has ripple effects influencing public discourse and gradually softening national attitudes.
Shared Cultural Identity & Memory	Discussed how playing amid hostility people of unity cultural overlap and shared history remind. (P4)	Stressed that cricket recalls shared myths and rivalries helping people remember they are still emotionally and culturally connected. (I5)	Agreement that cricket reawakens collective memory and highlights common cultural ground countering political narratives of total separation.
Cricket as a Peace Catalyst	Described cricket as a symbol of restored normalcy and emotional reassurance when played after conflict. (P3, P5)	Emphasized that cricket restores faith triggers dialogue and helps people view opponents in more human and nuanced terms. (I5, I4)	Shared understanding that cricket can reopen emotional space for peace rebuild trust incrementally and prepare societies for potential diplomatic healing.

Q4: Why do you believe cricket is more effective than other forms of diplomacy in fostering dialogue between the two countries?

Table 5: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspective (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspective (I1–I5)	Common Ground / Agreement
Public vs. Private Diplomacy	Emphasized that cricket occurs in the eyes of the people (P1) unlike political diplomacy which is closed off and elite driven.	Noted that cricket is mass appeal and visible globally (I1) unlike political discussions which are not headline material.	Both agree cricket is more publicly visible and emotionally accessible than traditional diplomatic meetings.
Authenticity & Emotional Trust	Highlighted cricket as natural and based on emotion and respect (P5) making it more trustworthy than political agendas.	Reiterated that cricket actions are real and lived while politics often seems per formative or hollow (I2, I3).	Shared belief that cricket diplomacy is more emotionally genuine thus more trusted by the public than political statements.
Impact of Symbolic Gestures	Mentioned how handshakes respect and hospitality are emotionally impactful, dissolving hate (P2, P3).	Emphasized that respectful gestures (e.g. celebration, good conduct) stay in public memory and drive peace forward (I2, I5).	Consensus that small respectful actions on the cricket field serve as powerful symbols of peace resonating deeply with audiences.

Youth Engagement	Touched indirectly on public involvement and shared emotional passion (P4, P5).	Directly stated that cricket appeals to youth far more than politics making it the ideal space to sow seeds of peace (I4).	Agreement that cricket reaches a broader and younger audience making it a better tool for future oriented peace building.
Cricket as a Conversation Starter	Said that matches open emotional channels people who never discuss peace suddenly discuss it after a game (P4).	Echoed the idea that cricket brings sincerity and triggers meaningful social dialogue more than diplomatic words do (I3, I5).	Both view cricket as a cultural platform that revives conversation around peace and makes it accessible to the general public.
Crickets Media Power & Virility	Mentioned how public witnesses shape the meaning of each match pictures more powerful than any formal handshake (P1).	Observed that cricket goes viral dominates news and social platforms helping spread peace further and deeper than negotiations (I5).	Agreement that cricket diplomacy spreads faster wider and more effectively through mass media and social media than official diplomatic processes.

Q5: How does cricket help to change negative perceptions and stereotypes between the citizens of India and Pakistan?

Table 6: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Player Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Ground / Agreement
Breaking Media-Created Stereotypes	P1 noted that most people have never met someone from the other side and rely on hostile media.	Pakistani players act with dignity it challenges the negative media portrayals and causes people to rethink.	Cricket provides visible moments that challenge one sided media narratives and push people to reconsider stereotypes.
Humanizing the Opponent	P2 explained that fans stop seeing each other as enemies and start seeing fellow sports lovers when respect is shown during matches	I3 stated that post-match praise and dignified gestures add a human factor to rivalry which is key to transforming entrenched views.	Players on both sides agree that cricket introduces human warmth into the India Pakistan rivalry helping to reframe public perceptions.
Fan Behavior and Public Emotion	P3 and P5 described Pakistani fans applauding Indian stars emphasizing that such reciprocal appreciation dismantles old animosities.	I2 and I5 cited examples of Pakistani fans cheering Indian centuries or waving flags together saying these moments build mutual respect.	Both noted that fans play a crucial role in expressing warmth, and that public admiration for rival players fosters people-to-people diplomacy.
Visual Symbols and Viral Moments	P4 emphasized how viral visuals (hugs, jokes, respect) shared from cricket matches reshape public attitudes more effectively than speeches.	I5 echoed that these human moments leave a lasting emotional imprint and create stories politics cannot tell especially when they go viral.	Agreement that symbolic and visual gestures in cricket diplomacy carry strong emotional impact and help rewrite the emotional narrative of hostility.

Impact on Youth and Future Generations	Indirectly mentioned (P2, P5) youth see mutual respect on the field and may adopt more open attitudes.	I4 clearly stated that youth are deeply influenced when their idols show cross-border respect promoting a peaceful form of national pride	Consensus that younger audiences are especially impressionable and respectful cricket conduct can model tolerance and peaceful coexistence.
Cricket as a Cultural Equalizer	Players noted that talent is admired regardless of nationality and cricket reveals shared emotional values and respect (P5).	Players observed that cricket makes people realize that behind the rivalry is shared humanity and emotion (I1, I3).	Cricket is seen as a neutral ground where shared values and emotions emerge allowing the public to recognize common identity beyond borders.

Q6: How does cricket function as a form of soft power in shaping the image of India and Pakistan?

Table 7: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Ground / Agreement
Global Perception & Representation	P1 & P2 stated that cricket helps counter negative global media narratives by showing Pakistan's discipline professionalism and culture on the world stage.	I1 & I2 emphasized that the world watches how Indian players perform and behave and that cricket becomes the prism through which the country is perceived.	Both sides see cricket as a corrective lens helping replace political or media driven images with real relatable human performance.
Humanization & Emotional Diplomacy	P3 & P4 said that cricketers through humility and warmth, form soft bonds with international audiences helping humanize Pakistan beyond politics.	I3 & I4 noted that Indian player's humility and character help win hearts especially in regions where cricket is the only cultural touch point with India.	There is agreement that cricket diplomacy builds emotional bridges through visible human behavior creating soft power via reliability and respect.
Cultural Messaging	P2 & P5 emphasized that every match conveys Pakistan's cultural values unity passion and resilience which become a form of cultural storytelling through sport.	I4 & I5 described cricket as Indian language to the world that showcases its diversity energy and emotional spirit giving the nation a cultural edge.	Both sides affirm that cricket communicates non-political cultural narratives that appeal to global audiences and build cultural admiration.
Cricketers as National Symbols	P3 & P4 identified players as cultural ambassadors who shape global perceptions through behavior on and off the field, not via policy or speeches	I1 & I3 saw Indian cricketers as icons of the nation whose behavior becomes a mirror of India's identity and values reinforcing unity and moral credibility.	Both acknowledge that cricketers function as symbolic diplomats projecting national identity in subtle but powerful ways through their visibility and conduct.
Power of Action Over Words	P5 explained that performance and respectful	I5 echoed that sport forms image better than	Both acknowledge that cricketers function as

	conduct speak louder than diplomacy and cricket's story tells the world who Pakistan is through behavior.	diplomacy and the way Indian players operate becomes a model for how the world views the nation.	symbolic diplomats projecting national identity in subtle but powerful ways through their visibility and conduct.
Soft Power Through Visibility	All Pakistani players viewed cricket as a silent but impactful form of diplomacy where visibility and emotional connection shape Pakistan's soft image abroad.	All Indian players reinforced that cricket draws global attention especially during big events giving India a direct channel to shape international perception positively.	Cricket is unanimously viewed as a high visibility platform for emotional and cultural diplomacy offering both countries a strategic image advantage globally.

Q7: Why do you think cricket is viewed as a form of soft diplomacy between India and Pakistan especially during tense moments?

Table 8: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Ground / Agreement
Cricket as a Continuity Channel	P1, P2 and P5 emphasized that cricket continues to function even when formal diplomacy collapses maintaining a symbolic line of communication.	I1 and I5 highlighted that cricket remains accessible in times of political crisis serving as a way to engage without needing a formal table.	Both agree that cricket offers a parallel track of communication and relational continuity during moments of official diplomatic breakdown.
Non-Verbal Diplomacy	P3 and P4 stressed that gestures like smiles and handshakes are symbolic acts of diplomacy that require no words but have wide emotional impact.	I2 and I3 pointed out that sportsmanship, dignity and respect carry diplomatic meaning under global observation delivering unspoken messages of peace.	Shared belief in the symbolic and emotional nature of cricket diplomacy where visible actions matter more than political declarations.
Emotional Appeal & Softening Tension	P2, P4 emphasized that cricket softens hostility and offers a gentle space for reconnection even during intense periods	I1, I3 and I4 agreed that cricket soothes public sentiment creates emotional bridges and reminds people of shared human values over political divides.	Consensus that cricket reduces nationalistic friction by appealing to shared cultural emotion functioning as an emotional soft power tool.
Public Impact & Mass Messaging	P3 and P5 noted that cricket sends peace signals into society, functioning as silent yet deep communication that influences how citizens think about conflict.	I2 and I5 explained that cricket diplomacy delivers messages of peace to millions of viewers often more effectively than elite political summits.	Agreement that cricket serves as a mass diplomacy medium broadcasting peace and mutual respect across national borders in ways politics often cannot.
Apolitical Space for Engagement	P2 and P5 viewed cricket as a non-threatening domain that fosters connection	I4 emphasized that cricket lacks political baggage and functions as a neutral	Both sides see cricket as a non political people-centered platform where diplomacy

	without the pressures of statecraft or political rhetoric.	cultural space where people can rediscover what unites them not divides them	happens naturally and symbolically rather than through formal structures.
Hope & Peace Symbolism	P4 and P5 presented cricket as a window of hope reinforcing the belief that peace is still possible even when politics fails.	I3 and I5 viewed cricket as a visible alternative to conflict a way to remind both societies that war is not the only path.	Shared understanding of cricket as a peaceful alternative an emotional and cultural signal that coexistence and mutual respect are both possible and desirable.

Q8: How can cricket enhance the cultural exchange between India and Pakistan despite political challenges?

Table 9: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Ground / Agreement
Informal Cultural Interactions	P1, P2 and P3 emphasized that meals, jokes and casual conversations during tours foster mutual respect and break stereotypes.	I1 and I2 spoke of welcoming Pakistani players exchanging small gifts and learning from each other's cultural gestures.	Both sides value interpersonal moments as authentic expressions of culture that build goodwill and empathy across borders.
Humanization of the Other	P2 and P5 stated that these experiences allow players and fans to see each other as individual's not political adversaries.	I3 and I5 highlighted how cricket helps people see beyond headlines recognizing shared traditions and values.	Agreement that cricket diplomacy helps humanize the rival reshaping public narratives and dismantling negative stereotypes.
Media Symbolic Visibility &	P4 and P5 suggested that respectful behavior during matches becomes widely seen and internalized especially by the youth.	I3 emphasized that media coverage of cultural celebrations during cricket spreads awareness of each other's festivals languages and customs.	Cricket becomes a visual and emotional medium for promoting cultural knowledge and appreciation through mass media.
Celebration of Shared Identity	P4 spoke of cricket as a celebration of common South Asian culture music food humor that fans from both countries enjoy.	I4 described cricket as creating a transient but powerful space where fans revel in shared identity and cultural expression.	Both sides agree that cricket acts as a unifying festival, momentarily blurring political lines and enabling people to rediscover cultural kinship.
Youth and Emotional Influence	P5 emphasized that youth are especially impressionable when they observe players admiring and respecting other cultures.	I2 and I5 noted that fan admiration and gestures of goodwill on social platforms influence how the next generation views bilateral ties.	Cricket diplomacy shapes the attitudes of future generations by modeling respect and cultural curiosity, encouraging long

			term peace building through soft power
Depoliticized Cultural Space	P1 and P3 said cricket enables exchange in a way government channels cannot its natural and not filtered through political agendas.	I1 and I4 echoed this, stating that cricket diplomacy functions without political baggage allowing real cultural connection.	Both perspectives underscore cricket as a depoliticized space for cultural diplomacy where connection occurs through emotion rather than official negotiation.

Q9: Why is cricket considered a neutral platform that allows India and Pakistan to engage peacefully even amidst their political differences?

Table 10: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Ground / Agreement
Non-Political Nature of Cricket	P1, P2 and P5 highlighted that cricket operates independently from state control and survives even when diplomacy fails, showing that both nations implicitly respect its neutrality.	I1 and I3 emphasized that cricket is free of ideology and state posturing, enabling competitive yet non-hostile interaction between the nations.	Both sides see cricket as separate from formal politics making it a trusted arena for symbolic interaction and emotional de-escalation.
Publicly Visible Fairness	P4 noted that media cannot distort real-time displays of respect and fairness which helps build trust.	I2 stressed that cricket offers clear rules, order and fairness unlike the chaos of political negotiation.	Shared belief in cricket as a visibly fair and emotionally transparent institution, helping the public experience dignity-based engagement.
Emotional Authenticity	P3 and P5 stated that players genuinely respect each other and the game lowers tension for both athletes and fans.	I4 and I5 emphasized that sincerity and earned respect make cricket more meaningful than scripted diplomacy.	Consensus that authentic emotional gestures in cricket carry more weight than political rhetoric making it a more believable form of diplomacy.
Cultural Common Ground	P2 and P5 viewed cricket as a shared cultural platform that belongs to both nations and provides space for informal coexistence.	I3 and I4 highlighted that audiences respond to skill not nationality and the field becomes a space for shared emotion not division	Both acknowledge cricket as a culturally shared ritual capable of momentarily erasing national boundaries and allowing mutual appreciation.
Transformation of Rivalry	P3 noted that fans view players as respected rivals not feared enemies reshaping public emotion.	I1 and I3 emphasized that rivalry in cricket does not carry hate and instead creates a constructive challenge helping change mindsets about the other.	Agreement that cricket transforms dangerous enmity into controlled admired rivalry thus diffusing conflictual thinking through sport.

Survival Amid Political Tensions	P2 and P5 explained that cricket is often allowed to continue even when other diplomatic links are cut making it a last bridge during standoffs.	I1 and I2 observed that cricket endures beyond political disagreement allowing engagement to persist in cultural legitimate ways	Both agree cricket survives when diplomacy fails, making it a vital default tool of cultural connection and emotional resilience in crisis times.
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Q10: How can cricket serve as a means to promote shared values and interests between the two countries?

Table 11: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Ground / Agreement
Core Values on the Field	P1, P2 and P5 emphasized shared traits like discipline respect, teamwork and patriotism as unifying characteristics demonstrated on the field	I1 and I2 also focused on values like grace under pressure, rule-following and mutual respect as visible across both teams.	Consensus that cricket reflects a shared moral code upheld by players from both nations strengthening soft power and audience perception.
Emotional and Ritual Parallels	P3 and P4 highlighted that emotional intensity and fan behavior are almost identical across borders showing a shared South Asian sporting culture.	I3 and I4 noted similar emotional responses how both teams handle wins and losses and how fans applaud talent regardless of nationality.	Agreement that shared emotional rituals and spectator behavior foster invisible empathy and intergroup recognition humanizing the rivalry
Symbolic Acts of Respect	P2 mentioned shirt-swapping and field side support as evidence of moral symmetry and human dignity while P5 described the field as a dress rehearsal for diplomacy.	I2 and I4 pointed out how gesture-based respect like clapping for an opponent or a kind word during play builds a values bridge between nations.	Both acknowledge that small spontaneous acts of sportsmanship serve as effective tools for cultural diplomacy and relationship repair.
Cultural Universals	P3 and P5 discussed the shared reverence for cricket calling it a religion like game and a symbolic system of cooperation.	I5 affirmed that cricket reflects human not national values such as honor resilience and unity which both nations admire and embody.	Agreement that cricket transcends state identity, functioning as a cultural equalizer and platform for emotional and ethical unity.
Spectator Diplomacy	P4 emphasized how fan reactions such as cheering good play by opponents build invisible trust across divides.	I4 supported this by noting how Indian fans respect Pakistani brilliance suggesting that admiration neutralizes hostility.	Consensus that cricket diplomacy also occurs at the audience level where affective response contributes to peace building from the bottom up.
Implicit Peace Messaging	P5 saw the rule based nature of cricket as a soft metaphor for applying shared order in diplomacy and commerce.	I3 and I5 echoed this idea by showing how cricket evokes ethical behavior and emotional	Cricket functions as an unspoken moral script where shared values and rule following provide symbolic

		coordination suggesting a model for cross-border coexistence.	cues for peaceful engagement beyond sport.
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Theme 2: Cricket as a Channel for Economic Engagement and Bilateral Cooperation

Q11: How do cricket events generate revenue for both India and Pakistan?

Table 12: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1-P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1-I5)	Common Ground / Agreements
Urban Economic Activation	P1 and P3 emphasized that cities like Lahore or Karachi become economically vibrant benefiting from local business, street vendors and city wide commercial buildup.	I2 described cricket as a seasonal economic cycle with cities preparing in advance boosting hospitality travel and retail sectors.	Both agreed that cities become temporary economic hubs driven by tourism hospitality and retail as a direct result of match preparations and celebrations.
Broadcasting & Sponsorship	P4 noted that broadcasters pay premium amounts which sustain the cricket economy from players to behind the scenes staff.	I1 and I3 focused on media rights advertising revenue and digital viewership stressing their role in funding cricket infrastructure and coaching.	Consensus that media monetization is a major revenue driver and that broadcasting rights generate sustainable income for national cricket systems.
Grassroots and Informal Impact	P2 and P5 stressed income generation for vendor's shopkeeper's food stalls and hotel workers treating the match like an economic fair.	I4 and I5 emphasized employment creation including for those in transport services retail and tourism sparked by large scale cricket events.	Both sides recognized that matches directly benefit informal and lower income groups, suggesting cricket plays a socially inclusive economic role.
Event as a Commercial Ecosystem	P3 portrayed the game as a kick start to the local economy driven by pre event marketing and promotions.	I2 and I5 used metaphors like ripple effect and business follows in all directions illustrating multi layered economic activation.	Agreement that cricket matches have multi phase economic effects, from pre match promotions to post-match tourism, media and memorabilia revenue.
Reinvestment into Cricket	P4 discussed how revenue helps maintain cricket infrastructure and pays staff across levels.	I3 explained how BCCI reinvests match earnings into stadium development training and youth programs enabling systemic cricket growth.	Both acknowledged that financial returns from matches sustain domestic cricket ecosystems proving that one game can support many levels of the sport.
Emotional Consumption & Commerce	P2 and P5 noted that non cricket fans also engage for business opportunities driven by the buzz and festivity of the event.	I4 emphasized the emotional to commercial conversion fans buying souvenirs traveling and creating consumer	Shared understanding that cricket fandom fuels consumerism converting emotion into spending which

		demand through national pride and passion.	supports local and national economic circuits.
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Q12: Why is investing in cricket seen as a viable strategy for economic growth in both India and Pakistan?

Table 13: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Ground / Agreements
Cricket as Economic Engine	Emphasized that investment leads to job creation tourism, and international confidence described cricket as Pakistan's most powerful brand (P1, P4).	Framed cricket as a billion dollar industry with national and global reach; investment seen as strategic not emotional (I1, I5).	Both framed cricket as a core economic driver capable of shaping national image policy and revenue generation across multiple sectors.
Urban & Infrastructure Growth	Noted the development of stadiums roads and surrounding areas (P2, P5) suggesting that cities and localities flourish through match based investments.	Cited case studies like Mohali and Jaipur where IPL investment improved infrastructure created jobs and increased regional tourism (I2).	Agreed that cricket-led investments revitalize urban centers improve public facilities and attract recurring commercial activity.
Employment & Systemic Support	Cricket supports not only players but a full system of workers from media crews to ground seen and hotel staff (P3, P5).	Investment is tied to employment in tourism tech merchandise event services and even politics cricket acts as a long-term labor market generator (I3, I4).	Consensus that cricket fuels employment across direct and indirect sectors serving as a sustainable labor hub especially for youth.
Entrepreneurship & Ecosystems	Cricket investment leads to academy formation local business growth and branding potential in hospitality and services (P3, P4).	Investment is tied to employment in tourism tech merchandise event services and even politics cricket acts as a long-term labor market generator (I3, I4).	Consensus that cricket fuels employment across direct and indirect sectors serving as a sustainable labor hub especially for youth.
National Branding & Investor Appeal	Players stressed that well executed cricket events reassure foreign investors and enhance Pakistan's global image as a secure organized nation (P4).	Indian players noted that MNCs invest due to cricket's financial reach and emotional impact it provides foreign firms a profitable entry into the Indian market (I5).	Agreement that successful cricket events boost international trust and soft power making them catalysts for foreign direct investment and positive diplomacy.

Q13: How does hosting a major cricket event impact local economies in terms of tourism and business?

Table 14: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Ground / Agreements
Urban Economic Activation	Emphasized how the entire city benefits hotels fill, restaurants boom, and transport thrives (P1, P2). Described matches as city wide economic events that mobilize commerce.	Highlighted transformation of cities during matches with increased business for hotels, transport and local attractions (I1, I3).	Both sides agree that matches generate widespread commercial activity stimulating urban life far beyond the stadium.
Street-Level and Informal Economy	Discussed the preparation by street vendors and informal workers who depend on match-day crowds for key income (P3, P4).	Emphasized how restaurants and small shops triple revenue on match days concessionaires and taxi drivers see peak earnings (I2, I4).	Consensus that informal and small-scale enterprises thrive during cricket events showcasing the games inclusive economic impact.
Tourism and Visitor Engagement	Described tourism as a byproduct of cricket attracting families and out of town visitors who spend on food lodging and shopping (P2).	Stressed that matches attract both domestic and foreign tourists building the city's image and increasing economic circulation (I3, I5).	Both perspectives affirm that cricket matches stimulate tourism promote city visibility and contribute to travel and cultural exchange
Atmosphere and Community Value	Highlighted emotional and cultural impact the city lights up and cricket brings energy to daily life (P5).	Described matches as a carnival reviving morale and generating excitement that extends into multiple industries (I4).	Shared recognition that cricket events create community celebration, emotional upfitment and short-term happiness contributing to social cohesion and economic momentum
Long-Term Urban Benefits	Brief mention of investor confidence and infrastructure growth from well-hosted events (P5).	Detailed view of cricket as a marketing and branding tool generating long-term city visibility, repeat tourism and business development (I5).	Agreement that well-hosted cricket events leave behind legacy impacts such as enhanced reputation, improved infrastructure and continued tourism and business interest.

Q14: Why are sponsorships advertising and broadcasting rights so valuable to the economic success of cricket tournaments between India and Pakistan?

Table 15: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Grounded & Agreements
Centrality to Revenue Model	Highlighted that a single India Pakistan series can fund multiple levels of cricket called media and sponsorship income	Asserted that broadcasting and sponsorships form the core of cricket's financial structure in India the	Consensus that cricket relies fundamentally on commercial income and such income ensures the continuity of

	essential for survival (P1, P5).	system is unsustainable without them (I1, I5).	tournaments salaries and grassroots development.
Commercial Demand & Scale	Emphasized intense competition among advertisers and massive viewership described matches as high demand global events (P1, P2).	Observed brands queuing up for title rights and noted global penetration of television deals (I2, I3).	Both agree that India Pakistan matches create unmatched commercial demand attracting massive ad spend and international interest.
Distribution of Benefits	Stated that income from media and sponsorships flows into production houses logistics teams, broadcasters and event staff not just boards (P2, P3).	Described how revenue supports professional management upgraded facilities and better opportunities for emerging players (I2, I4).	Shared view that cricket's commercial success stimulates employment services and operations beyond just elite athletes or federations.
Emotional Branding & Engagement	Described cricket as a commercial machine built on advertising and anticipation emphasized promotion campaigns and logistical coordination (P3, P4).	Framed cricket as an entertainment package involving stories feelings ads a strategy that sustains sponsorship confidence (I4).	Agreement that cricket's economic success comes not just from game play but from narrative building emotional marketing and fan engagement.
Strategic and Long-Term Impact	Pointed out that sponsorships create financial stability and enable investment in long term infrastructure and programming (P4, P5).	Emphasized long term city branding sustained investments in youth and revenue cycles from multi-year partnerships (I2, I5).	Mutual recognition that commercial partnerships enable sustainable planning investment and growth of the sport and the cities or venues that host it.

Q15: How do cricket events help develop infrastructure and create jobs, benefiting both nations economically?

Table 16: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistan (Players' Perspective P1 and P5)	India (Players' Perspective I1 and I5)	Common Agreements
Infrastructure Development	Events trigger upgrades of stadiums, roads, lighting, and hotels. Long-term urban benefits remain after matches.	Large-scale improvements, including smart stadium tech, advanced seating, and integrated transport.	Cricket drives permanent infrastructural development, improving cities beyond the duration of events.
Employment Generation	Temporary jobs in construction, hospitality, security, and catering during events.	Large number of skilled and unskilled roles in media, broadcasting, digital marketing, and venue operations.	Cricket generates short-term and long-term employment, supporting diverse industries beyond the sport.
Local Business Growth	Shops, food stalls, and transport services experience short-term booms near stadiums.	Higher scale; local businesses, restaurants, and merchandise stores	Both nations agree cricket stimulates micro-economies in stadium neighborhoods and boosts local commerce.

		thrive throughout cricket seasons.	
Investment & Public-Private Partnership	Events attract government funding and private sponsorships to upgrade facilities and services.	Significant PPP projects; heavy investments from corporate sponsors, media houses, and tech firms.	Cricket serves as a catalyst for attracting investment from public and private sectors alike.
Skilled Workforce & Industry Growth	Opportunities in media production, event management, and technical roles are emerging.	Cricket drives a large-scale sports-tech, analytics, and broadcast industry with global reach.	Cricket nurtures a skilled workforce, promoting specialized employment in media, technology, and event operations.

Q16: How do cricket events stimulate bilateral trade between India and Pakistan?

Table 17: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Agreements
Revival of Cross-Border Trade	Emphasized that cricket match's correlate with trade convoys moving again, more border shoppers and informal trade flow in goods like fan kits food and gear (P1, P2, P5).	Stated that matches re-open lines of communication between business actors and prompt traders and firms to reconnect (I1, I3 and I5).	Agreed that cricket reactivates trade relations both formal and informal, and encourages economic stakeholders to engage again.
Emotional Trust & Business Mood	Noted that cricket gives hope creates brief diplomatic ease and allows ministries or chambers to resume talks (P1, P3).	Said that cricket creates mood or momentum softens resistance and enables planning for fairs and joint ventures (I1, I3, and I4).	Both sides see cricket as a non-political signal of goodwill that encourages businesses to lower defenses and resume communication.
Sect oral Spillovers & Economic Ripple	Highlighted spikes in business for hoteliers broadcasters and service providers during match periods (P4).	Observed a domino effect across tourism textiles food exports and retail during cricket tours (I2, I3).	Strong agreement on cricket's ability to stimulate adjacent industries and create short term sect oral surges that support broader economic activity.
SMEs and Informal Supply Chains	Mentioned that small scale producers bat makers sportswear vendors stand to benefit if matches become regular (P5).	Described cross border collaboration and supply chain links reactivating casually during cricket seasons (I4, I5).	Both recognize that cricket supports small business re-engagement particularly in sports-related manufacturing and local supply ecosystems.
Facilitation of Trade Dialogue	Cricket seen as a reset button enabling ministries to initiate conversations on trade	Emphasized how matches help resume suspended business talks and facilitate	Agreement that cricket helps re-establish diplomatic and commercial

	cooperation and logistics (P3, P4).	planning for bilateral economic forums (I3, I4).	communication channels that may have been frozen due to political tensions.
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Q17: How do diplomatic relations improved by cricket events lead to stronger economic cooperation in areas like trade and investment?

Table 18: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Agreements
Trigger for Dialogue Resumption	Viewed cricket as an emotional accelerant that breaks political deadlock and brings both sides to the table (P1, P5).	Framed cricket as a pressure free icebreaker that enables natural re-entry into political and economic discussions (I1, I2).	Agreed that cricket serves as a non-political opening for formal talks reducing resistance to cooperation.
Institutional Activation	Noted how chambers of commerce issue joint statements and trade envoys become active post series (P2, P4).	Observed increased feasibility of organizing business conferences trade expos and bilateral panels after successful matches (I2, I4).	Consensus that cricket creates institutional momentum for cross border economic coordination.
Investor Confidence and Sentiment	Emphasized investor psychology how sportsmanship restores trust and opens room for economic planning (P3).	Discussed how investors respond to visuals of unity and calm, interpreting them as signs of economic opportunity (I3, I4).	Agreement that cricket improves investor perceptions making bilateral markets appear more stable and attractive.
Cricket as Emotional Legitimacy for Trade	Argued that when the public is pleased with cricket diplomacy governments feel secure enough to pursue trade (P5).	Explained how good news cycles and popular sentiment provide a public mandate for formal economic convergence (I2).	Shared view that cricket diplomacy softens the emotional climate making trade talks politically and socially acceptable.
Economic Spillover into Policy Areas	Described how cricket opens doors for stalled economic policy especially in mid-level ministerial discussions (P1, P4).	Indicated that successful matches lead to exploratory policies and renewed investment talks in telecom, tourism, and energy sectors (I3, I5).	Both perspectives reinforce that cricket fosters incremental policy alignment and economic experimentation.
Visual and Symbolic Power of Cricket	Highlighted crickets imagery handshakes shared respect as tools that generate momentum for dialogue (P3).	Stressed cricket's symbolic superiority over summits offering imagery that drives economic cooperation more persuasively (I5).	Mutual recognition of cricket's ability to visually communicate harmony shaping public imagination and diplomatic narratives.

Q18: Why is cricket seen as a tool that can bring about long-term economic benefits for both countries?

Table 19: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Agreements
Commercial Predictability	Emphasized how regular matches generate stable revenue for hotels, flights vendors, and media (P1, P2).	Stated that annual cricket leads to consistent economic returns and helps businesses plan around the cricket calendar (I2, I3).	Agreement that consistent cricket enables economic planning and sustained commercial cycles across sectors.
Investor & Brand Confidence	Linked stability in matches to long term investment in infrastructure cities and sporting industries (P3, P5).	Described how regular matches reduce risk perception and help attract multinational corporate sponsorship (I3, I5).	Agreed that cricket builds trust among investors and supports long term financial commitment.
Local and Regional Economic Growth	Identified cricket's role in developing youth employment hospitality and small industries (P2, P4).	Mentioned soft tourism, cultural exchange and local development as side effects of regular cricket (I4).	Mutual belief that cricket contributes to inclusive grassroots growth and regional cooperation.
Institutional Maturity	Framed cricket as a fully-fledged economic institution not just sport affecting tourism trade and media systematically (P1, P5).	Mentioned soft tourism, cultural exchange and local development as side effects of regular cricket (I4).	Agreement that cricket operates as an economic pillar shaping both emotional and institutional environments necessary for growth.
Sustainability & Infrastructure	Highlighted the potential for infrastructure growth stadiums roads and media houses when cricket is uninterrupted (P4, P3).	Viewed cricket as a symbol of peace that enables long term planning in urban infrastructure and trade corridors (I3, I5).	Both sides confirm cricket's contribution to sustainable economic development through investment and physical/soft infrastructure.

Q19: How can cricket tournaments attract international investors and sponsors helping boost the economies of both India and Pakistan?

Table 20: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Agreements
Commercial Predictability	Emphasized that regular cricket ensures predictable revenue across tourism, aviation,	Noted cricket's consistency leads to structured business calendars helping enterprises plan annual	Agreement that routine cricketing ties foster steady and forecastable commercial cycles enabling long-term financial planning.

	media and retail sectors (P1, P2).	investments and promotions (I2, I3).	
Investor & Brand Confidence	Linked cricket stability to increased investor confidence in national infrastructure and cities attracting foreign capital and corporate attention (P3, P4, P5).	Highlighted the role of regular matches in creating low-risk environments attractive to multinational corporations and long-term sponsorship (I1, I3, and I5).	Mutual view that consistent matches generate trust in regional stability, encouraging greater domestic and international investments.
Grassroots Economic Development	Argued that sustained matches enhance youth engagement, develop local sporting industry, and create employment in associated sectors (P2, P5).	Added that continued cricket fosters tourism, hospitality and regional exchange that benefits ordinary citizens and small businesses (I4).	Consensus that regular matches contribute not just to elite revenue but grassroots economic well-being across both countries.
Structural & Institutional Growth	Portrayed cricket as more than a sport as an economic institution capable of driving urban infrastructure trade corridors, and soft diplomacy (P1, P4).	Framed cricket as part of India's soft power enhancing brand credibility, logistical maturity and institutional capability for economic engagement (I1, I4).	Agreement that regular cricket functions as a lever for institutional development and economic systematization across borders.
Sustainability & Peace Dividend	Stressed that when cricket continues uninterrupted it symbolizes peace and facilitates economic resilience a sign to investors of enduring cooperation (P3, P5).	Argued that long-term cricketing ties support economic sustainability and regional branding and increase business confidence among multinationals (I3, I5).	Shared belief that peace through sport creates lasting conditions for bilateral cooperation, foreign direct investment, and sustainable economic ecosystems.

Theme 3: Cricket as a Peace Building Tool in Conflict Transformation

Q20: How can cricket contribute to peace building efforts between India and Pakistan especially in the context of their long standing conflicts?

Table 21: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Agreements
Symbolic Diplomacy	Emphasized how player gestures like handshakes and post-match conduct humanize the other and offer emotional relief from political tensions (P1, P3, P4, and P5).	Highlighted that symbolic actions on field such as embraces and handshakes carry substantial weight in reshaping perceptions of the enemy (I1, I4).	Mutual recognition that cricket's symbolic conduct especially player interactions works as an informal yet powerful diplomatic gesture.

People-to-People Connection	Stressed the emotional bridges formed during tours where hospitality audience interaction and mutual cheering reduce hostility (P2, P3).	Recalled warm receptions and public camaraderie during tours showing that shared experiences enable cultural empathy (I2, I5).	Consensus that cricket enhances public level emotional understanding, especially when amplified through hospitality and shared audience experiences.
Narrative Transformation	Viewed cricket as a platform that challenges political narratives and showcases players as peace ambassadors reshaping how citizens see the enemy (P4, P5).	Argued that cricket reframes the relationship from adversarial to competitive allowing for healthier national discourses (I3, I5).	Agreement that cricket can transform dominant narratives from antagonism to coexistence by portraying the other in a dignified and relatable light.
Youth and Cultural Impact	Emphasized cricket's role in shaping the attitudes of younger generations through shared admiration and respectful engagement (P2, P5).	Suggested that sport creates a culture of admiration that resonates beyond cricket particularly influencing youth perceptions (I2, I5).	Shared belief that the youth, influenced by cross-border sportsmanship may become more inclined toward peaceful coexistence and tolerance.
Limitations and Opportunities	Acknowledged that cricket does not replace diplomacy but acts as a parallel emotional language of peace with grassroots legitimacy (P1, P4, and P5).	Accepted that cricket cannot solve political disputes, but it softens the public space and fosters an environment conducive to peace (I3, I4).	Convergence on the idea that cricket cannot replace diplomacy but can meaningfully complement it by opening emotional and symbolic channels for engagement.

Q21: Why is cricket seen as an effective tool to promote peace and reconciliation especially compared to other forms of diplomacy or conflict resolution?

Table 22: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Agreements
Cricket as Emotional Diplomacy	P1, P2 and P5 emphasized the emotional resonance of cricket over political diplomacy. They spoke of shared emotions, gestures of mutual respect and national anthems stirring deep responses that soften public attitudes.	I1 and I3 focused on cricket's emotional power to engage people directly as opposed to distant political summits. I5 reinforced the idea that affection for cricket fosters empathy.	Both sides agree that cricket's emotional impact reaches hearts and minds in a way traditional diplomacy often fails to do.
Public Engagement vs. Political Detachment	P3 and P4 noted that cricket enables people to people contact and spontaneous admiration which public diplomacy often lacks. They	I2 and I4 discussed cricket's accessibility, spontaneity, and capacity to evoke sincere emotional responses often	Agreement that cricket directly involves citizens and bypasses bureaucratic distance creating space for people driven peace.

	saw players as unofficial ambassadors.	absent in formal negotiations.	
Symbolic Power and Humanization	P1, P4 and P5 described how cricket humanizes the other through on field camaraderie and respect, challenging hostile narratives.	I2, I4 and I5 emphasized how public gestures between players reshape public perception demonstrating peaceful coexistence through relatable acts.	Both groups recognize cricket's ability to shift enemy narratives and promote empathy by humanizing opponents.
Organic Peace-building vs. Staged Diplomacy	P2 and P3 contrasted cricket's authentic moments like crowd applause or gestures of goodwill with the artificiality of formal summits.	I3 and I4 echoed that idea suggesting cricket feels more real and relatable often leading to grassroots reconciliation.	Shared view that cricket's informal unfiltered nature gives it a credibility and authenticity that resonates more powerfully than political theater.
Mass Visibility and Peace Narrative	P1 and P3 emphasized how millions watch cricket, making it a potent peace narrative broadcast live. P5 added that cricket does not require high-level summits it quietly inspires peace.	I1 and I3 emphasized that cricket is a public demonstration of cooperation, seen and felt in real time by audiences across both nations.	Agreement that the visibility of peaceful interaction in cricket carries a symbolic and cultural weight that diplomacy lacks.

Q22: How can a shared love of cricket help reduce tensions and foster unity between the people of India and Pakistan?

Table 23: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Agreements
Cricket as a Shared Cultural Space	Emphasized cricket as an emotional and unifying cultural force watched passionately across the subcontinent (P1, P4). Saw it as a rare shared thread connecting people beyond politics.	Described cricket as a mirror of culture and a borderless moment that fosters familiarity knowledge and reduced fear (I1).	Agreement that cricket operates as a cultural bridge creating shared moments that transcend political divides.
Emotional Parity & Human Connection	Highlighted shared emotional highs and lows during matches as well as mutual admiration between players and fans (P2, P3, and P5).	Stressed universal reactions to key cricket moments joy disappointment admiration proving common humanity (I2, I3, I5).	Consensus that shared emotions and mutual respect erode hostility and humanize the other side.
Opportunities for Informal Diplomacy	Viewed cricket interactions as informal diplomatic gestures handshakes, applause, sportsmanship helping shift public perceptions (P3, P4).	Argued that organic un-engineered cricket bonds can be more impactful than formal diplomacy creating space for	Shared belief that informal gestures in cricket act as grassroots diplomacy often more

		citizen-level dialogue (I4).	effective than official political meetings.
Narratives & Perception Shifts	Saw cricket as a way to replace narratives of hostility with those of shared passion appreciation and respect (P1, P5).	Noted that cricket creates human centered stories of friendship, teamwork and respect which replace divisive political narratives (I5).	Agreement that cricket reframes the image of the other into one of a fellow sports enthusiast, reducing entrenched animosity.
Grassroots Peace building	Linked cricket's passion to breaking down barriers among citizens, creating opportunities for connection without political interference (P2, P4).	Emphasized cricket's role in popularizing reconciliation among the masses by directly engaging citizens (I3, I4).	Agreement that peace through cricket starts from the ground up with citizen interactions forming the base for long term understanding.

Q23: Why do you believe that cricket matches or tournaments can serve as a bridge for peaceful communication during political crises?

Table 24: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Agreements
Cricket as an Informal Diplomatic Platform	Saw cricket as a safe neutral space enabling leaders, fans and media to interact away from political hostility (P1, P2). Matches served as symbolic gestures that disagreements need not dictate the whole relationship (P2, P3).	Viewed cricket as an informal forum where leaders can meet publicly delegations exchange visits and media highlight common passions rather than divisions (I1). Even small gestures like handshakes were seen as politically symbolic (I2).	Consensus that cricket creates informal low-stakes opportunities for dialogue that can soften hostility and prepare ground for official talks.
Symbolism and Visual Messaging	Emphasized the visual power of sportsmanship handshakes embraces and respectful conduct as cues for public reconciliation (P4, P5). These images shift focus from antagonism to human connection.	Strongly stressed the potency of symbolic acts (I2, I5) where simple on field gestures can ease public tensions and influence opinion in favor of cooperation.	Agreement that cricket's visual cues and symbolic moments are vital tools in reshaping public sentiment during tense periods.
Emotional and Cultural Connection	Positioned cricket as a medium for reframing perceptions rivals not enemies through shared cultural enthusiasm (P4). Hospitality reciprocal respect and human contact were highlighted as trust builders (P2, P5).	Emphasized cricket's emotional appeal as more human and relatable than politics (I4). Identified sport as a shared language capable of fostering empathy and unity (I5).	Mutual belief that cricket's emotional and cultural impact fosters empathy reduces fear, and strengthens interpersonal bonds across the border.

Conflict De-escalation Role	Asserted that cricket could serve as a catalyst for backchannel diplomacy breaking political deadlock and allowing renewed talks (P3).	Highlighted cricket's ability to temper hot tempers by channeling nationalist emotions into dignified competition (I3).	Agreement that cricket helps defuse tensions, offering an alternative narrative that promotes stability.
Media and Narrative Shift	Saw cricket as a chance to redirect media attention from conflict to sportsmanship and shared celebration (P1, P5).	Noted cricket's role in giving journalists new, positive storylines that replace antagonistic coverage (I1).	Both sides recognized cricket's narrative shaping power influencing public perception towards peace and cooperation.

Q24: How do the emotional and cultural ties to cricket enable it to transcend political divides between India and Pakistan?

Table 25: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Agreements
Cricket as Shared Cultural Identity	Emphasized cricket as a deep rooted part of national culture and collective childhood memories (P1, P5), framing it as a binding element of identity beyond politics.	Identified cricket as a mirror of shared culture and history with mutual recognition of players, commentators and cricket traditions across borders (I1).	Agreement that cricket is culturally embedded in both societies and serves as a unifying element in national consciousness.
Common Emotional Experience	Highlighted that fans from both countries experience the same thrill, drama and respect for good performances regardless of nationality (P2, P3).	Stressed that emotional responses cheers, groans and celebrations are almost identical across borders underscoring deep emotional cohesion (I2, I5).	Mutual belief that cricket creates a shared emotional landscape that fosters empathy and reduces hostility.
Cross-Border Respect & Admiration	Noted instances of mutual appreciation e.g. Pakistani players admiring Indian hospitality and Indian fans appreciating Pakistani performance (P4).	Provided examples of fans applauding rival players achievements as evidence that respect can transcend politics (I3).	Consensus that public acts of respect and admiration in cricket serve as powerful gestures of goodwill
Humanization of the Rival	Cricket provides opportunities to interact in positive contexts shifting perceptions from the other to relatable individuals with shared passions (P4).	Emphasized that cultural familiarity language, celebrations traditions humanizes the rival, breaking down stereotypes (I4).	Shared recognition that cricket softens rigid identities enabling citizens to see each other as people rather than enemies.
Transcending Political Narratives	Asserted that cricket can override political animosity by creating spaces where	Described cricket as a space where shared emotions and cultural	Agreement that cricket offers a rare platform to bypass political rhetoric

	respect and admiration coexist (P5).	bonds can dissolve political narratives and promote unity (I5).	and highlight common humanity.
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Theme 4: Cricket and Youth Engagement for Sustainable Peace

Q25: How can cricket programs targeting youth help create lasting peace between India and Pakistan?

Table 26: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Agreements
Early Exposure & Bias Prevention	Stressed that engaging youth cricketers before political biases set in helps them view each other as teammates, not enemies (P1).	Emphasized that joint youth programs cultivate familiarity before nationalist narratives take hold, fostering mutual respect (I1).	Agreement that early contact in sports can pre-empt prejudice and create a cooperative mindset for future relations.
Cultural Exchange & Friendship Networks	Highlighted how youth tournaments allow players to experience each other's cultures, reducing hostility in the long term (P2).	Pointed out that tournaments facilitate sustained friendships and cultural learning, building durable goodwill (I2).	Consensus that repeated cultural interactions in youth cricket promote empathy and dismantle stereotypes.
Character & Value Development	Asserted that cricket instills discipline teamwork and respect values transferable to peaceful cross border coexistence (P3).	Noted that cricket nurtures problem solving and communication skills, which naturally extend to intergroup understanding (I3).	Shared belief that sport based values is essential building blocks for peaceful adult relations.
Resisting Political Indoctrination	Argued that youth cricket bonds can resist later political narratives of hostility (P4).	Agreed that these personal ties operate as organic peace roots that withstand divisive propaganda (I4).	Strong agreement that interpersonal friendships forged in youth are a lasting peace asset.
Positive Youth Engagement & Cooperation	Saw cricket as a constructive outlet that channels youth energy toward cooperation rather than negativity (P5).	Viewed cricket as a platform for ambition, unity, and optimism, countering cycles of conflict (I5).	Agreement that youth cricket programs can shift the next generations focus toward shared goals and cooperation.

Q26: Why is youth engagement in cricket considered an important tool for peace building in both countries?

Table 27: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1–P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1–I5)	Common Agreements
Early Engagement &	Argued that engaging youth early ensures they	Emphasized that youth are curious and open to	Consensus that early exposure to positive cross-border

Perception Shaping	view Indian players as companions or healthy rivals rather than enemies (P1, P2).	forming emotional connections before political bias takes hold (I1, I4).	interactions prevents the formation of hostile stereotypes.
Friendship & Cultural Familiarity	Highlighted that junior tournaments and exchanges foster friendships and cultural understanding that endure into adulthood (P2, P4, P5).	Pointed out that shared hotel stays and youth tournaments create bonds that outlast political tensions (I3, I5).	Agreement that sustained interpersonal relationships at the youth level creates a durable base for peaceful coexistence.
Character Development Through Cricket	Noted that youth cricket instills discipline, respect and teamwork values transferable to peaceful inter-societal relations (P3).	Saw cricket as a tool for building mutual respect and recognizing life similarities between Indian and Pakistani youth (I3).	Both see cricket as a medium for teaching transferable virtues that strengthen social cohesion.
Long-Term Peace Dividend	Framed youth cricket as a future investment today's junior players become tomorrow's peace advocates and policymakers (P4, P5).	Linked youth cricket to sowing seeds for peace that will bear fruit decades later (I2, I5).	Shared belief that youth involvement has a compounding effect on future inter-country relations.
Neutral & Positive Engagement Platform	Viewed cricket as a safe politically neutral space where youth can connect without ideological interference (P1, P3).	Stressed that sport provides an honest apolitical context for genuine connection and friendship (I2, I4).	Agreed that cricket acts as a non-political medium to nurture mutual understanding and break down mistrust.

Q27: Why do you think youth focused cricket initiatives can be more effective in promoting peace than traditional diplomatic efforts?

Table 28: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players Perspectives (P1-P5)	Indian Players Perspectives (I1-I5)	Common Agreements
Early Intervention & Shaping Perceptions	Youth have not witnessed wars firsthand early cricket exposure fosters positive impressions of the other side before hostility develops (P1, P2).	Engaging youth before suspicion forms addresses root causes of mistrust, creating an emotional connection early on (I1, I4).	Both sides agree that early engagement through cricket is critical to preventing entrenched political animosity.
Building Long Term Relationships	Friendships from youth tournaments often last into adulthood becoming informal peace channels (P3, P5).	Friendships and informal bonds persist even during political breakdowns offering a lasting foundation for dialogue (I2, I5).	Mutual recognition that sustained personal relationships are more resilient than official diplomatic ties.
Character Development	Youth cricket instills discipline, teamwork and	Young athletes adapt quickly and resolve conflicts easily	Shared belief that cricket nurtures

& Peace Values	respect which carry into civic life (P3, P4).	reinforcing peaceful interaction patterns (I3).	transferable virtues that underpin peaceful coexistence.
Neutral, Collaborative Environment	The cricket field acts as a peace classroom encouraging cooperation through shared goals (P4).	Shared objectives in cricket naturally reduce tension and foster mutual dependence for success (I4).	Agreement that cricket offers a safe apolitical setting for genuine cooperation
Symbolism & Cultural Impact	Youth exchanges and joint play symbolize friendship and mutual acceptance creating positive public narratives (P5).	Unscripted gestures like exchanging jerseys or bats hold deep symbolic value and inspire goodwill (I5).	Consensus that symbolic acts in youth cricket influence public sentiment and help counter hostile narratives.

Q28: How can cricket help young people in India and Pakistan see each other as partners rather than adversaries in their shared future?

Table 29: Comparative Discussion

Category	Pakistani Players perspective (P1–P5)	Indian Players perspective (I1–I5)	Common Agreements
Skills for Cooperation	P1 sees cricket as a training ground for problem solving in peace contexts.	I3 stresses development of emotional intelligence under match pressure.	Both recognize cricket as a space for acquiring soft skills necessary for cooperation.
Empathy and Mutual Respect	P2 emphasizes empathy from shared emotional experiences.	I1 focuses on constructive rivalry fostering mutual respect.	Shared experiences whether in victory or loss transform perceptions from adversarial to respectful.
Shared Goals and Collective Identity	P3 highlights common objectives creating unity.	I4 notes role models inspiring youth to adopt similar respectful attitudes.	Shared objectives and role models work together to create lasting identity shifts among participants and fans.
Informal Diplomacy	P4 values unscripted interactions off the pitch.	I2 praises direct communication without political filters.	Informal unfiltered exchanges enable deeper and more authentic cross border bonds.
Long-Term Cooperation Potential	P5 views cricket as a gateway to broader bilateral projects.	I5 sees it as a neutral platform that survives political strain.	Both see cricket as an enduring connector that can outlast and outmaneuver political breakdowns.

DISCUSSION

Pakistani Players' Perspectives

P1–P5 agreed that cricket functions as a soft power tool fostering emotional bonding, mutual respect and symbolic trust even amid political tension (Table 4.3). They highlighted cricket's role in enhancing national image through sportsmanship and cultural pride (Table 4.4) and emphasized its economic significance

noting bilateral series generate substantial revenue from broadcasting, sponsorships and tourism (Table 4.5) reinforcing avenues for peace (Ramsbotham et al., 2016; Murray, 2012).

Indian Players' Perspectives

I1–I5 similarly viewed cricket as a neutral platform where rivalry replaces enmity, fostering cultural understanding, emotional bonding and shared appreciation of skills (Table 4.3). They stressed its commercial impact with matches generating global revenue, boosting trade, tourism and infrastructure (Table 4.5) while promoting collective identity and values of fairness and pride (Table 4.4) supporting sports diplomacy and cultural cohesion (Murray, 2012; Ramsbotham et al., 2016)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study highlights cricket's multifaceted role in India–Pakistan relations demonstrating its significance as a tool for informal diplomacy, soft power, economic engagement and peace-building. Interviews with former players reveal that cricket transcends political tensions, fostering cultural, economic, and interpersonal linkages often inaccessible to formal diplomacy.

Cricket operates as an unofficial diplomatic channel where symbolic gestures such as jersey exchanges social interactions among teams, and brief political encounters create politically neutral spaces that align with Montville's Track II diplomacy. While these acts alone cannot resolve entrenched disputes they build trust soften public perceptions and prepare a conducive environment for potential formal negotiations.

Simultaneously cricket functions as a soft power instrument while reinforcing a shared South Asian identity. Players perceive the sport as a shared language fostering mutual admiration reflecting Nye's notion of soft power and Levermore's sports diplomacy framework. Cultural exchange through cricket challenges divisive narratives promoting collective identity and counterbalancing rhetoric that emphasizes conflict.

Economically cricket generates significant revenue through broadcasting, ticket sales, sponsorships and tourism stimulating related sectors and enabling cross-border business networking. These benefits support liberal peace theory highlighting how interdependence provides incentives for maintaining sporting ties and bilateral cooperation. Symbolic and practical outcomes are closely intertwined, reinforcing cricket's diplomatic utility.

Cricket also contributes to peace-building by humanizing opponents and fostering interpersonal connections. Joint training, informal interactions and sportsmanship cultivate empathy and respect consistent with Lederach's conflict transformation framework. Although cricket alone cannot resolve political tensions it lays the groundwork for reconciliation by challenging stereotypes and strengthening interpersonal and societal bonds.

The study's findings emphasize the intersection of diplomacy, cultural cohesion, economic engagement and peace-building. Cricket's symbolic, economic, and social dimensions mutually reinforce one another illustrating its capacity to act as a bridge between India and Pakistan. Methodologically the research foregrounds insider perspectives offering nuanced empirical insights that advance understanding of sports diplomacy. Empirically it identifies concrete mechanisms shared rituals, admiration across borders, economic activities and personal interactions that sustain bilateral engagement while highlighting emerging avenues such as youth and women's cricket and digital platforms.

In conclusion cricket transcends the realm of sport to function as a multi-layered instrument fostering dialogue, cultural understanding, economic collaboration and peace-building. By integrating theoretical perspectives with player-driven evidence this study presents a concise model of cricket diplomacy offering actionable insights for scholars and policymakers. Future initiatives leveraging cricket can promote mutual understanding, sustain engagement and support reconciliation in high-conflict postcolonial contexts both within South Asia and globally.

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