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## Cricketing Language in the Political Discourse of Pakistan

Muhammad Usman, M.Phil., M.A., B.Ed.

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### Abstract

Cricket is the most widely followed sport in Pakistan. It has, with the passage of time, become a vital part of the Pakistani society. Influencing not merely some limited social aspects, Cricket has also penetrated through much complex social phenomena like politics and diplomacy. Impetus to this is the extensive usage of cricketing language by the politicians of Pakistan in their political discourse. This not only indicates that cricket holds a greater-than-sport status in Pakistan but also posits that the political discourse, much like other discourses, is socially determined.

This paper analyses selective news items, articles and political statements etc., to indicate and tabulate a number of cricketing terminologies, metaphors and phrases being frequently used in political sense.

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## **Keywords**

Political discourse, cricketing metaphors, cricket and politics, cricket diplomacy, language, politics and society

## **Cricket in South Asia**

Sport is an integral part of the human society, whose history dates back to almost 2000 BC. It is not an activity merely for entertainment, rather an essential part of human and societal development. It infuses comprehensibility and tolerance at both individual and collective levels by promoting sportsman spirit. Not confined to only one society, sports is a universal language understood and shared by other nations, hence, becoming a medium of social, political and economic mediation.

In South Asia, Cricket is indisputably the most favourite sport. The history of this sport in the region dates back to the times of British colonization of India, as the British brought the game to the sub-continent. Today, people of Pakistan and India follow this game religiously and it has become an integral part of their shared culture. Not only in the subcontinent but Cricket has influenced deeply the cultures of other Commonwealth Nations. One such influence is on the language, where certain cricketing phrases have been borrowed for everyday use. Sports, like other social activities, influence the language of a particular society. The terminology ‘Cricket Diplomacy’ is as famous as the game itself and has been an important political tool to revitalize the diplomatic relations of Pakistan and India. Employed multiple times, the most recent example is of the World Cup Cricket 2011, Semi-Final between Pakistan and India when the Prime Minister of Pakistan visited India to strengthen the much deteriorated bilateral relations.



(The 'can do' spirit: Prime Minister of Pakistan Yousuf Raza Gillani (L) speaks with Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh during the 2011 ICC World Cup Semi-Final Between Pakistan & India at Punjab Cricket Association stadium, Mohali, India. Sonia Gandhi, the president of the Indian National Congress can also be seen. Source: Pakistan Today)

Fairclough (1989, 22) categorically describes 'language as a form of social practice' and explains what this statement suggests by further giving three points: first, language is a part of society, second, it is a social process and third, it is socially conditioned. Hence the language that a person uses has to comply with the social conditionality of acceptance and comprehension. Further, language and society are not two alienated concepts and they are deeply and internally inseparably wound.

Language being a part of the society is not externally related with society but has 'an internal and dialectical relationship'. When people listen or read or speak or write these actions of theirs are socially motivated and determined. They consequently have some social effects. Even the language of the most isolated individuals, who might think themselves to be utterly cut-off from the society, adhere to societal conventions. (Fairclough, 1989; 23)

Much like all other social practices, language is integral in the politics also. Jordan and Tuite explain politics as:

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... the struggles and cooperation, processes and structures – be they conscious, subconscious or unconscious, ideological or behavioral, rational or emotional, overt or covert – for influence, control and power over material, human beings or minds, and other information – for example, to assign categories to self and other. Politics in this sense transpires in groups ranging from the family to the supra-national – and the pattern of and ideas about those struggles and cooperation – all of which are differentially shared, transmitted through history, and created, recreated, and used by the members of a given society and culture situated in concrete time and space.

(Jordan & Tuite, 2006; 225)

Simply put, politics is the struggle for obtaining the power required to put into force a certain political and social mindset. In politics, as already discussed, language is of a vital role. All political actions are directly related and influenced by language. The most obvious characteristic of any political language is its relationship with power. The ultimate aim of a politician or political party is to implement their ‘ideology’ i.e. a set of beliefs, practices and ideas that act collectively in the interest of a particular social group or class (Luke, 1998; 366). Politicians use language in such a way that people may be attracted, resultantly, inclining them to act in a particular way, adapt the opinion and ideas of the politician without using force on the people to do so. Therefore, ‘linguistic manipulation is the conscious use of language in a devious way to control the others’ (Fairclough, 1989; 6).

A politician is, hence, essentially a linguistic manipulator, not always in its notorious sense, but to be able to use appropriate language at the appropriate place. With politicians appearing before and answering the questions of journalists more sophisticatedly, their outlook gets totally different while addressing rallies or masses. In this case, the language they use has to be comprehensible and acceptable to the common lot. In politics, linguistic manipulation is a helpful tool as it is a feature of political rhetoric that is employed to persuade people to act in favour of a party or individual’s political ideology. Hence, the political language uses different rhetorical devices to get the intended results. Above all, the language has to be comprehensible for the people to whom it is addressed for memorization and to disambiguate.

Rozina & Karapetjana (2009, 114) opine that though the politicians may ‘interact with society in general’, their purposes as well as the features of their political discourse may vary. The linguistic choice of a group of politician in government would be totally different from the

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one in opposition. However, before the electoral run, the primary objective of political parties is to keep their party followers loyal besides voting for them as well as winning the loyalty of other people who might have opted to vote for a different party.

Unlike the system of debates during the presidential elections in America or the electoral campaigns in the developed countries, the scenario in Pakistan is different. Politicians are more at freedom to publically criticize their political rivals in the most aggressive tone and words. In political rallies and gatherings, the speeches of the politicians are full of such examples. Evidently, the custom of paying in the same coins is widely accepted in Pakistan's politics. With the general elections coming closer, the political activity in Pakistan has increased manifold.

While politicians borrow analogies and metaphors from many a social phenomenon, they more than frequently resort to sports. The sweeping opening statement of Bryant (2012) to his article "Sporting metaphors always overrun the language of politics in the English-speaking world at electoral times ..." is more than acceptable. With Bryant (2012) referring to a number of sporting metaphors used widely in the political language of United States, this paper is restricted to discuss only the usage of cricketing metaphors, phrases and terms in the political language of Pakistan.

Kittay (1987, 4) defines metaphor as a 'trope in which one thing is spoken of as if it were some other thing and it is a ubiquitous feature of natural language'. Therefore, in order to understand a political discourse adequate knowledge of the metaphors is necessary. But as already discussed, politicians' ultimate aim is to make their selves explicable to the people and, therefore, in their discourse they use metaphors or analogies that can easily be understood by the audience. Further, to avoid clichés, political discourses are full of metaphors belonging to different source domains. Buraja (2007) identifies the following common source domains of metaphors used in the political discourse:

- i. Military domain
- ii. Theatre domain
- iii. Sport domain
- iv. Medicine domain

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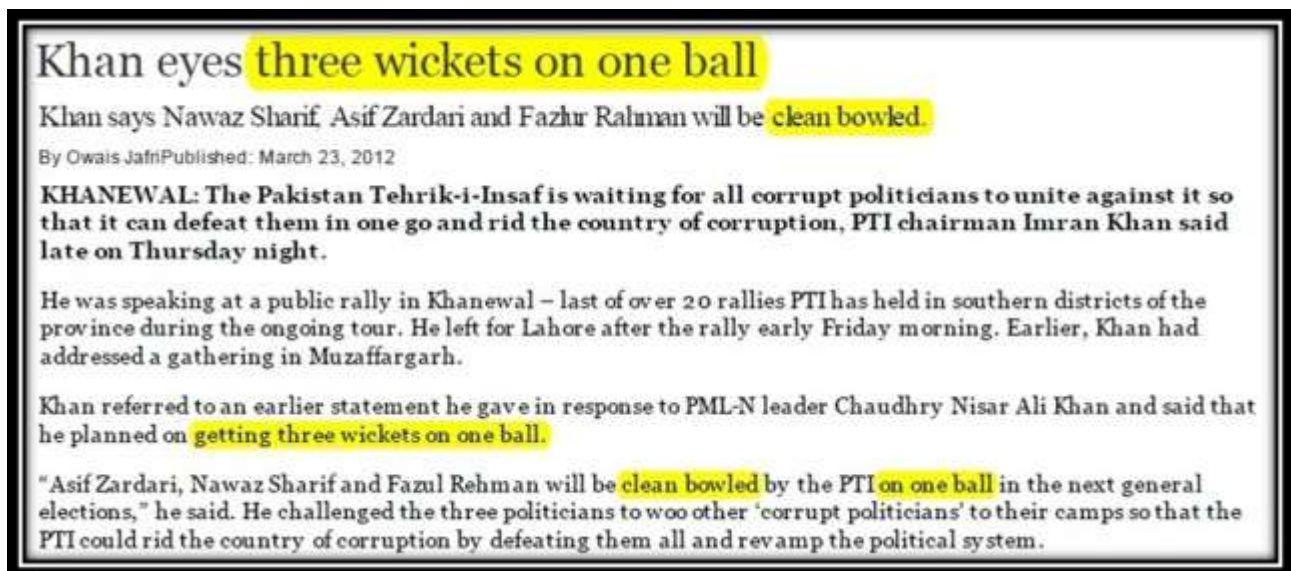
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- v. Human body domain
- vi. Animal domain
- vii. Building and Construction domain

The Cricketing metaphors can clearly be classified under the Sport domain. The frequent use of these metaphors in the political discourse further provides that these are comprehensible to the general public. To analyse the use of cricketing metaphors by the Pakistani politicians, selective news items have been taken, studied and these metaphors indicated.

For example, while addressing a rally, the prominent political leader Mr. Imran Khan cautions his political rivals and uses cricketing terminologies “clean bowled”, “three wickets” and “one ball”.



While addressing the rally at Lahore, Imran Khan used some other cricket terms and metaphors like “break the partnership”, “let them play”, “batsmen packing”, “back to the pavilion” and “throwing just one delivery”

## 'Declare assets or face disobedience'

By: [Mubashir Hassan And Iqtidar Gilani](#) | October 31, 2011

LAHORE - Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf Chairman Imran Khan Sunday asked the rulers to declare their assets within few months, failing which his party would launch civil disobedience movement to oust them.

Peoples tsunami will sweep them (rulers) away, he said while addressing a mammoth public rally at Minar-i-Pakistan, which, according to conservative estimates attracted well over a hundred thousand people from across Punjab and other parts of the country. The rally organisers said their estimate was 400,000 to 500,000 people.

The cricketer-turned-politician, who himself might be astonished to see such a large crowd before him, declared that he would **clean bold** the two parties with peoples support.

I know how to break the partnership (between PPP and PML-N), Imran threw the gauntlet at President Zardari and Nawaz Sharif, as his words had the implied meanings that both were ruling the country since long, but now he would not let them **'play any more**.

I would send the **two batsmen packing** (an obvious reference to Nawaz Sharif and President Zardari) **back to the pavilion** by **throwing just one delivering**, he said using cricket terminology. Mian Saab jaan diyo sadi wari aan diyo.

(Mian Saab your turn is over, let us have ours), Imran averred, this time addressing only to Nawaz Sharif.

Asking politicians to declare their assets within few months, the PTI leader warned that if they did not do so he would launch a civil disobedience movement to oust the rulers. He said he would also approach the Supreme Court in this regard.

Imran said his party will set up a cell to probe politicians assets abroad and within the country and expose them before the public.

Some may argue that the former cricketer and most revered captain of Pakistan may very well be expected to use such cricketing language. However, this is not the case. Use of such metaphors is not confined to only Mr. Imran Khan. Consider the example of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Shareef, twice ex-Prime Minister of Pakistan, who while talking to the media employed different cricketing terms i.e. “in form”, “throw a bouncer” and “hit outside the boundary”.

## Whirlwind Sharif: 'Elections now – but not sponsored by military'

Nawaz says Zardari failed miserably, PML-N will reorganise itself in Sindh.

By Saba ImtiazPublished: December 21, 2011

KARACHI: Nawaz Sharif humorously remarked to journalists on Tuesday: “I'm **in form** today. If they **throw a bouncer** at me, I will **hit it outside the boundary**” – and perhaps followed through on the cricketing analogy by actually managing to meet a jam-packed schedule on the day.

At yet another event, he challenges his political rival Imran Khan while using cricketing terms like “T10 match” (an imitation of T20 format of cricket), “hit four runs”, “in-swing delivery” and “swing bowling”. Remember, this challenge is not of a cricket match but regarding the general elections to be held soon.

### Ready to play T10 match with PTI: Nawaz

Tuesday, December 20, 2011 5:11:25 AM | Comments (0)

**Staff Report**

LAHORE: Challenging Imran Khan, PML-N's chief Mian Mohammed Nawaz Sharif has said he is ready to play Ten10 match with PTI, adding that he would hit four runs (boundary in cricket) on the in swing delivery from Imran Khan, reports SAMAA Monday.

Recalling early days of his life, Nawaz Sharif said he would strike hard-hit facing Imran Khan's in swing bowling so much so that, at times, his (Nawaz's) strike uprooted the grass out of the ground. "It is time now to play those kinds of shots again" Nawaz vowed.

PML-N chief not only challenged PTI chief to hit four but he also challenged to play a Ten10 match in next general elections. SAMAA

And in reply the cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan says that he was a “champion” and would “clean bowled” Nawaz Sharif in politics, so he should better watch his “stumps”.

### Better watch your stumps, Imran tells Nawaz

Imran Khan says his will beat Nawaz in the matches of both cricket and politics. Addressing a rally in Kasur in the company of Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, Imran Khan commented on the last night comments by Nawaz that it was time to play 10-over cricket with Imran. Imran said Nawaz must be out of his mind to have given such a statement. He said Nawaz was a club cricketer and has challenged a champion. Imran said he can clean bowled Nawaz in cricket and politics too. The PTI chief said: Nawaz should know that Imran is better than him in the field of cricket and politics. Imran said that Nawaz' party has ruled in one form or the other for over 25 years, but has not done anything concrete.

Date: Tuesday December 20, 2011 05:15PM  
URL: <http://www.dunyanews.tv>

Consider the following statement given by a senior leader of the opposing political party criticizing Imran Khan using, yet again, a number of cricketing lexicons like “pavilion”, “12<sup>th</sup> man”, “hitting a six”, “no ball’ and “umpire”.



## Sharifs put in torture cells at Imran's behest, says PML-N

Our Correspondent

Thursday, December 13, 2012

LAHORE

PML-N central leader Senator Pervaiz Rashid has said that in all the innings of his 16 years' political career, Imran Khan, the blue-eyed boy of Musharraf, was either **clean bowled** or sat in **pavilion** like the **12th man**.

"Imran has been nurturing the desire of **hitting a six** on a **no-ball** but he should forget the era when he enjoyed patronage of a dictator like Musharraf," said Senator Pervaiz Rashid while commenting on the speeches of the former cricketer and now PTI chairman.

Senator Pervaiz Rashid, a senior politician of PML-N, said Pervaiz Musharraf, the ex-dictator in the garb of an **'umpire'** in response to the desire of his blue-eyed boy Imran Khan locked up Nawaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif and other members of the PML-N in torture cells. He said Pervaiz Musharraf sent the leaders who got elected with historic mandate in 1997 elections to in exile in 1999 besides depriving them of their basic right of contesting polls.

These are but a few examples of how politicians use cricketing terminologies, metaphors and language in political discourse. Based upon such discourses, a number of cricketing terms, phrases and metaphors have been indicated and tabulated as under, mentioning their cricketing sense and the political sense in which these were used:

TERM / PHRASE	CRICKETING SENSE	POLITICAL SENSE
12 <sup>th</sup> man	An extra player who is not included in the playing side. Usually acts as a substitute fielder	A politician or political worker who is not actively involved in politics.
A fixed match	A match wherein players of one team are bribed to play poorly and deliberately lose.	Reference to rigged elections, or where rigging is expected.
Back foot	A shot that batsmen play by putting their weight on the foot closer to stumps.	A defensive or retreating political stance or strategy.
Back to pavilion	The grandstand or dressing room where the batsman goes after dismissal.	A mocking phrase in politics depicting a finished career of a politician. Intension to end a politician's career or tenure.

TERM / PHRASE	CRICKETING SENSE	POLITICAL SENSE
Break the partnership	To dismiss either of the two batsmen playing together. Partnership is the number of runs made by the pair.	Intention is to end the coalition of two political parties or individuals.
Call/Draw stumps	Declares that the game is over.	Refers to put an end to a political regime, tenure in office, or career of a politician.
Clean bowled	Bowler knocking the stumps without the ball touching bat or pad or batsmen	Usually refers to a total defeat of a politician. This term is mostly used in elections or at a particular political issue.
Damp wicket	A wet pitch/wicket that helps spinners but goes against the batsmen.	Depicts less favourable political conditions for a certain political party or individual.
Front foot	A stance in which batsmen plays a ball by putting their weight on the foot closer to the bowler.	An offensive or aggressive political stance or strategy.
Good / Bad innings	Innings is a player's or team's turn to bat. Good innings is more runs, while few runs are a bad innings.	The tenure of a politician at an office or his career. In most cases, the reference is bad innings.
Hit a boundary	A shot by the batsmen in which the ball hits/crosses the boundary after rolling or bouncing to get four runs.	To get a political success.

TERM / PHRASE	CRICKETING SENSE	POLITICAL SENSE
Hit a six/sixer	A shot by the batsmen in which the ball crosses the boundary without a bounce or roll. Most runs obtainable on a legal delivery.	Ultimate political success. Normally synonymous to 'clean sweep' in elections.
Hit a no ball	Playing a no-ball is risk free for batsmen. More runs can be obtained on the next ball on which also the batsmen cannot be dismissed.	Intention of politician to do 'safe politics' i.e. win maximum support with little to risk.
Home ground	When a team plays in its own country or city, it is said to be playing at its home ground.	Refers to a politicians own / native constituency.
Out for a duck	When a batsman is dismissed without scoring a run, he is said to be out for a duck.	Political failure at the very start of a political career or campaign.
Send the batsmen packing	When a batsman is dismissed and returned to pavilion.	Depicts the end of a politician's tenure in office or political career.
Stumped	A way of dismissal in which the ball hits the stumps.	To get politically hampered. Refers to a major setback faced by a politician or a party on a certain issue.
Swinging yorker	The pitching of a swinging ball just between the bat and feet of batsman in an attempt to clean-bowled.	To face challenging political conditions. May be at a province or constituency. Or on a certain issue.

TERM / PHRASE	CRICKETING SENSE	POLITICAL SENSE
Throw a bouncer	A fast short pitched delivery that rises up to the batsman's head. A difficult delivery to play. Often dangerous.	To give tough time to the opposing politician or political party.
Two / Three wickets on a ball	As a rule only one wicket can be taken on one ball. Multiple dismissals can't be possible on one ball.	A synonymous phrase to "killing two (more) birds with one stone". Used to show a political determination to outclass multiple oppositions simultaneously.

This paper attempted to present that the language used by the politicians of Pakistan is full of cricketing metaphors, phrases and terms, indicating that this political language adheres to the socio-cultural aspects. The linguistic manipulation by the politicians is an important tool in political rhetoric as politics is essentially the persuasion of people to support and act in accordance with a specific political ideology. Politicians, being a representative of the general public, tend to show their ability to appreciate the popular culture. Cricket being an important part of Pakistani society has now become more than merely a sport. It has left its mark on all spheres of society and, importantly, on diplomacy and politics, as depicted by the extensive use of cricketing terminologies, phrases and metaphors in the political discourse.

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