

Cricket and international politics

The first agreed rules of modern cricket were laid down in the 1720s. This makes it, effectively, the only modern sport to be established in a pre-nationalist age. For much of its history cricket has been seen as the quirky and defining game both of the English and of the British Empire. While historians divide over whether cricket was an element in some civilising mission on the part of the imperial power or whether it was simply adopted by colonial people, it is clear that the inhabitants of contemporary India, Australia, Barbados, Bangladesh and elsewhere were playing cricket long before these territories were recognised as nations. As an international sport, cricket's present is defined by its imperial past. Ten nations qualify to play Test cricket. One is England; the other nine are all former British colonies – three of which (Australia, South Africa and New Zealand) were established as semi-autonomous dominions between 1901 and 1910. These countries all had substantial native populations, but exclusively 'white' governments. Formally constituted international cricket dates from this period: the Imperial Cricket Conference came into being in 1909, with England, South Africa and Australia its only members. Test matches, it was decreed, should be those solely involving the representative elevens of these three countries. (New Zealand, the third cricket-playing dominion, was allowed to compete in Test matches from 1930 onward.) The word 'politics' rarely, if ever, entered the discourse of cricket in these times. This was essentially for two reasons: first, the convention, which was to endure until the early 1980s, that politics – here interpreted broadly to mean affairs of state – and sport should not mix, and second, because both cricket and the empire were, like the monarchy, seen in British ruling circles as being 'above politics' – that's to say, not matters for contention.¹

Cricket certainly played its part in the emergence to nationhood of former British colonies. The first white Australian tour to England in 1878, where they beat MCC, helped to build a national self-confidence among the colonists. The Federation was still twenty-three years away, wrote Chris Harte,

'but independence of the mind had possibly just occurred'.² By 1895, the Australians competed in the 'national' colours of green and gold of the gum tree and wattle, and as early as 1878 had carried bags emblazoned with the 'Australian Eleven' on them. 'It was the teams we sent to England in the 1870s', wrote the novelist David Malouf, 'that first established us, in British eyes, as a single nation, long before we had made the move to official nationhood.'³ The South Africans, too, wore symbols of nationhood such as the greenish-bronze caps embroidered with the letters 'SA' for their first Test against England in 1889, and the striped green and gold with the Springbok emblem on their first visit to England in 1894 before their amalgam into the Union of South Africa in 1910. The national project in the Caribbean, where cricket fused with politics and a collective identity, has few parallels in sport history. In 1886, a West Indian team (made up of four players from Demerara, three from Barbados and six from Jamaica) made a tour of the United States and Canada. 'It was', according to Richard D. E. Burton, 'only when they saw their cricket team in combat with that of their English colonial masters that Jamaicans, Barbadians, Trinidadians and Guyanese came to see themselves as *West Indians* possessing a common historical, cultural and political identity.'⁴ For much of the twentieth century the West Indies cricket team was a flagship for West Indian nationalism⁵ and the nationalist movement powered the campaign to have a black cricketer appointed as its captain – a campaign that gained momentum after West Indies beat England for the first time in England (at Lord's in 1950). After a successful series in Australia in 1961, the Trinidadian C. L. R. James commented that 'clearing their way with bat and ball, West Indians ... made a public entry into the comity of nations'.⁶

The first major intrusion of 'politics' upon the peaceable transaction of international cricket was the fabled 'Bodyline' tour of Australia by England in the winter of 1932–33. England's bowlers had been instructed to use 'leg-theory' (aiming at the batter's body) in order to inhibit the Australian batters, especially the prolific Don Bradman. This strategy was framed by MCC officials, including tour manager Pelham Warner, and carried out by England captain Douglas Jardine. Australian crowds, players and administrators were incensed at the tactic and the Australian Cricket Board cabled Lord's in protest. The Governor of South Australia, Sir Alexander Hore-Ruthven, J. H. Thomas, the Secretary of State for the Dominions, and the Australian Prime Minister J. A. Lyons all became involved.⁷ Enflaming Australian nationalism was the last thing the British government wanted. It had recently negotiated the Ottawa trading agreements, introducing a system of Imperial Preference. The Australian government, who were concerned about possible effects on British conversion loans and already poor agricultural prices, sought to

counter those who blamed the ‘Mother Country’ for Australia’s predicament in the global depression. MCC, under pressure from both governments and now fearful that Australia would refuse to tour England in 1934, sought to apportion blame to the ex-miner Harold Larwood rather than Winchester College old-boy Jardine. The angry fast bowler refused to make an apology, and never played for England again.⁸ Relations between England and Australia are said to have remained strained until the Second World War.

In the post-war era, the cricket match has been utilised as a means to express political feeling. There have been four major disturbances in the Caribbean, each seemingly triggered off by an umpiring decision but each with a strong political undercurrent: a bottle-throwing riot, for example, followed Britain’s suspension of the constitution in British Guiana in 1953. Other incidents occurred in 1960, 1968 and 1978. A Test match between Pakistan and England was cancelled in 1969 when protestors stormed the pitch in protest at Pakistan’s military dictatorship. White South African cricketers walked off at Kingsmead in 1971 to protest against their government’s stand on apartheid, whilst Andy Flower and Henry Olunga exploited Zimbabwe’s hosting of the World Cup in 2003 to condemn a ‘lack of democracy’ at home.

Cricket provides an ideal platform for political protest considering its longevity of contest compared to other sports, that its most popular form is between nations, and that these nations are all linked through their former membership of the British Empire. Issues of cricket and international politics have arisen in relation to virtually every Test-playing country during the postcolonial period. One of the first and most significant of these occurred in 1968; it concerned England, South Africa and the emergent international politics of ‘race’.

The D’Oliveira Affair

In February of 1960, the British Conservative Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, made a speech to the South African parliament in Cape Town in which he talked of a ‘wind of change’ blowing across the continent of Africa. The speech was a thinly veiled suggestion to the country’s white Afrikaner government that they abandon their policy of state racism known as ‘apartheid’. Under apartheid, South Africa’s huge black African majority was severely restricted in its capacity to earn, travel outside designated areas or associate with whites. With the United Nations now condemning racism and likely to be swelled in number by newly independent ‘Third

World' countries, Macmillan feared that an unreconstructed South Africa would become an international pariah, since undue support by 'the West' for an openly racist regime would persuade former colonies to side with the Soviet Union in the Cold War. The South African government, however, was intransigent and, during the 1960s, sport rapidly became a key weapon in the growing international opposition to apartheid – the threat of boycotts, for example, prevented 'white' South Africa competing in the Olympics of 1964 and 1968. English cricket administrators, their international game rooted in the white dominions and their sympathies reflexively with the planters and mine owners of southern Africa, were slow to appreciate these developments.

In 1960, Basil D'Oliveira, a cricketer born in Cape Town in 1931 and designated as 'coloured' under apartheid classification, migrated to England. He became a British citizen and began to play for England in 1966. He played the final Test of the English summer of 1968 (against Australia) and scored 158, apparently making certain his selection for the forthcoming tour of his homeland, South Africa. A furore broke out in the British press when he was not selected. D'Oliveira was subsequently chosen for the tour when a player originally selected dropped out; the South African government then intervened to cancel the tour.⁹ Unperturbed, MCC invited South Africa to tour England in 1970. A pressure group called Stop the Seventy Tour immediately formed and promised to bring disruption to any match the tourists might play. In May 1970, the Home Secretary, James Callaghan, formally requested that MCC call off the tour on the grounds that he could not guarantee public order. Two things are significant about this passage in the game's history. One is that, in international competition, South Africa had indeed become the pariah that Harold Macmillan had foreseen and state racism could no longer be dismissed as part of the 'politics' that must be kept out of sport. The more pragmatic and politically astute among MCC administrators will have realised that to maintain its link with white South Africa would be to jeopardise Test cricket with the West Indies and the Indian subcontinent, where apartheid South Africa was becoming a lightning rod for postcolonial anti-racist politics. The other is that English cricket was beginning to be outdone in international competition and MCC was looking to recruit England players from outside the UK. They now turned the ostracising of apartheid South Africa to their own advantage and D'Oliveira was followed into the England team by a series of white South Africans, notably Tony Greig (debut 1972), Allan Lamb (debut 1982) and Robin Smith (debut 1988).

Politics and partition: cricket on the Asian subcontinent

Between the mid eighteenth century and the mid nineteenth, India was ruled by the East India Company, whose responsibilities were assumed by the British parliament in 1858. The subsequent 'British Raj' lasted until 1947, when independence was granted. India is a vast country and the Raj could not have been sustained by the threat of force alone: the Indian nobility was co-opted and collaborated with the British occupier. This frequently entailed the embracing of elite English culture. Indian princes often sent their sons to English public schools and many relished English sports – especially cricket, a game at which a small number of them represented the 'Mother Country'.

The system that had prolonged princely rule was, according to nationalist leader M. K. Gandhi, 'perhaps the greatest blot on British rule in India'.¹⁰ This ancient aristocracy offered little to the national project, and their influence on both politics and cricket declined following independence. The government of postcolonial India would be founded on the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy, universal suffrage and freedom of speech and of the press. Its politics was dominated by the Congress Party, whose leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, was a secular nationalist and modernist. Nehru also took steps to incorporate the 'Untouchables' and other disadvantaged groups into an inclusive new India.

Pakistan, by contrast to Mother India, is a state defined from its inception by little other than its dominant religion, and has a sparse history of democratic rule – it has been governed for much of its existence by military dictatorship. From the outset Pakistan developed an identity crisis. It was hastily created out of the turmoil of partition and was so unprepared that the government did not even have any headed notepaper.¹¹ Few politicians had any experience in the affairs of state, and a territorial agreement saw East Bengal separated from the rest of Pakistan by 1,000 miles. Punjabis, Sindhis, Pathans and Balochis were urged to relinquish their historical identities and become Pakistani, ushering the new state into a modern world in which provincial division, feudalism and tribal rule would be surpassed by a diffusion of people into a new project. As with many postcolonial experiments, it failed. Fortunately Pakistan's leader Mohammad Jinnah was a cricketing enthusiast, and a quadrangular tournament in Karachi was launched and the sport promoted from schools upwards. Cricket helped to put Pakistan on the map. Test cricketer Hanif Mohammad commented after their victory against England at the Oval in 1954: 'It was a glorious moment for all of us ... The win gave Pakistan a visible identity. Not many had known about Pakistan until then.'¹²

From its inception, the Pakistani state has had a history of friction with India and the two countries first went to war in 1947, the year of their independence. When partition first took place, however, it was hoped that it would not affect cricket. The tour to Australia in 1947–48 was that of a team selected from an undivided India. However, the violence that accompanied separation ensured that not only would India and Pakistan never compete as a single entity, but that they would become intense rivals, though the friendships established in pre-partition times ensured early support for each other. The Pakistan team toured India in 1952 and the series was played in a spirit of comradeship, as it was when India reciprocated by touring Pakistan in 1955. By 1960, however, when Pakistan's cricketers toured India there were small but perceptible signs of a new politics of cricket in the two nations: in Pakistan, civilian and military politicians became increasingly involved in the administration of the national side. Between 1954 and 1963, Mohammad Ali Bogra, Iskander Mizra (successive Governor Generals of Pakistan) and General Muhammad Ayub Khan acted as president of the BCCP. Thereafter, the BCCP constitution recognised the head of state as its patron. Meanwhile, in India the national team captain, Vijay Merchant, complained that national prestige was now too important a factor in Test cricket: the series was characterised by defensive cricket and all five matches were drawn. Following India's 2–1 victory in the 1952–53 series, two five-Test series were played out without a victory for either side. A 'let's not lose to the enemy' attitude now hampered any real contest and delayed declarations and resisted run chases made for dull cricket.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) triumphed in the 1970 general election. However, in East Pakistan, 90 per cent of votes were cast for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League, which had a socialist programme of nationalisation and was opposed to Pakistan's American alliance. The Pakistani army refused to let Rahman form a government and invaded East Pakistan in 1971. India intervened and East Pakistan seceded from Pakistan to form Bangladesh. Many cricketing facilities were damaged in the war of independence, and the national stadium fell into a state of disrepair. Following the murder of Rahman, in a coup in 1975, the military took control and prioritised cricket in a restoration programme that sought to win popular support for the dictatorship and promote the national identity of Bangladesh. This initiative was supported by an MCC tour in 1976–77, in which the tourists won only one of the four matches to be played on matting, while the other three were drawn. The use of cricket as a channel for national optimism was rewarded by a crowd of 40,000 for the three-day contest in Dacca.

Cricket and conflict on the subcontinent

The last forty years have seen two vital political developments on the Asian subcontinent, both of which have crucially affected cricket: one is the rise of populist politics – usually in the form of appeals to one religious faction or another and attendant calls for ‘ethnic cleansing’ – and the other is the opening up of economic life to global forces.

In India, the first premiership of Nehru’s daughter Indira Gandhi (1966–77) was marked by populist appeals to the peasantry over the heads of the land-owners. Rising unemployment, and slum and sterilisation programmes antagonised India’s poor and its Muslim minority. In the 1980s, leading political parties abandoned secularism and began to make open appeals to voters on the basis of ethnic and religious affiliation. However, this strategy encouraged separatist movements – notably in the Punjab, where Sikhs were campaigning for their own state; Gandhi was shot dead by two of her own Sikh guards in 1984.¹³ In 1992, amid a mass mobilisation against Muslims, the ancient mosque at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh was destroyed by a mob. Subsequent years saw the steady rise of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party or ‘Indian People’s Party’), a Hindu nationalist and openly anti-Muslim party; it formed India’s government between 1998 and 2004. In 2002, in the province of Gujarat, nearly 800 Muslims died in rioting after a train carrying Hindus was stopped and burned, apparently by Muslim attackers.

India began opening up to the world economy during the premiership of Rajiv Gandhi, but this process was accelerated during the 1990s in the wake of the Gulf War of 1991, which raised both oil prices and government debt. Loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) arrived in return for cuts in public spending. A period of economic growth followed, India’s western and southern states became very prosperous and the western cities of Bangalore (the heart of the Indian computer industry) and Mumbai (site of the Bollywood film studios) came to typify what Barbara and Thomas Metcalf have described as a ‘consumer-driven [India] nearly indistinguishable from that of Western Europe or the United States’.¹⁴ Its wealthy middle class is estimated to be around 150 million in number,¹⁵ but India’s poor, living on the equivalent of a dollar a day, is twice that.¹⁵ Moreover, India, along with Pakistan, had detonated a nuclear bomb in the late 1990s, giving a feeling of national virility to its ruling elite and globally minded middle class. Stanley Wolpert captures the contradictions of contemporary India thus:

So the giant wheel of India’s fortune and misery rolls on, now reflecting the wealth and wonders of globalised prosperity that bring salesmen from the world’s strongest and richest nations to New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Bangalore

offering their most modern consumer goods of peace and deadliest weapons of war to a billion heirs of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal, while leaving the poorest third ... to scavenge for rotting leftover scraps of food, drinking Mother Ganga's waters, green with the ashes of countless generations.¹⁶

The consolations for that poorest third are chiefly ethnic identity – often entailing an increasingly embattled religious faith – and cricket. For Mihir Bose, cricket provides ‘valuable distraction from their appalling poverty and struggle to survive’.¹⁷ (In 2002, Syed Saleem Shahzad wrote similarly of Pakistan: ‘In a country as ethnically diverse as Pakistan, it has been said that the two things that bind society together are the Urdu language and cricket.’¹⁸)

Cricket can act as a means through which the animosity between the two nuclear protagonists is played out. Contests were suspended between 1961 and 1978, a period in which the two nations fought two wars with each other, and in the 1990s, when Pakistan was accused of sponsoring cross-border terrorism in Kashmir. Relations were resumed in 2004 due to a process initiated by the countries’ governments rather than the respective cricket boards.

‘As globalisation strides forward’, commented Mike Marqusee, ‘the search for national identity becomes ever more desperate and ever more dominated by hostility to perceived national enemies, both within and without the country’s borders.’¹⁹ Whilst the BJP-influenced Indian regime permitted football and table-tennis contests, they banned cricket matches against Pakistan. ‘We see cricket not as just a game’, said the Sports Minister, ‘but as a symbol of the nation’s sentiments.’²⁰ When a Pakistan tour of India was finally permitted in 1999, it was accompanied by fervent and hostile nationalist threats from the Indian far right, who opposed all links to Pakistan because of the conflict over Kashmir. Pitches were dug up, the Indian Cricket Board’s offices were attacked and further violence threatened. The far-right Hindu nationalist party Shiv Sena, now part of the ruling coalition in New Delhi, opposed the tour and called for public vigilance to ensure that all Indian Muslims were supporting India. ‘It is the duty of Indian Muslims’, argued their leader Bal Thackeray, ‘to prove they are not Pakistanis. I want to see them with tears in their eyes every time India loses to Pakistan.’²¹ After more disruption at Eden Gardens during the Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) Test (capacity 100,000) the ground was cleared and the players finished the game in front of an empty house.

New growth areas: commercialism and terror

The combined effects on cricket culture of the growing prosperity of a swathe of Indian society and the increased mayhem on the subcontinent

wrought in the name of religion have been considerable. The growth of the Indian economy and its business elite became the basis for a challenge to English hegemony in international cricket administration. The International Cricket Conference (renamed in 1965 as successor organisation to the Imperial Cricket Conference) was reconstituted in 1989 as the International Cricket Council, and in 1994 established a separate commercial arm based in Monaco. In 2005, it moved its main offices from Lord's in north London, the historic centre of the game's governance, to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, a non-Test-playing country. By then powerful figures from Indian commerce had begun to wield greater influence within the ICC, evidenced notably by the election of the Calcutta construction magnate Jagmohan Dalmiya to the presidency in 1996. This growing hegemony was strengthened, in the opinion of many cricket people, by the awarding of Test-playing status to Bangladesh, a presumed voting ally for India, in 2000. In the 2006 Spirit of Cricket lecture at Lord's, former New Zealand Test player Martin Crowe claimed that Bangladesh (and Zimbabwe) were 'being kept on the international stage for political reasons'. He also referred angrily to 'the way the Asian subcontinent has taken a stranglehold on world cricket'.²²

India's grip on world cricket's purse strings has been strengthened by the development of the sport for Indian television, and recently the rise of the IPL, both of which are dealt with elsewhere in this volume. Several national cricket boards have raised concerns with the IPL about possible conflicts over player development and availability, though most have succumbed to the lure of the rupee, most notably Sri Lanka, who in return for a loan from the BCCI called off their tour of England for May 2009 because it clashed with the IPL.

During this same period Pakistan has descended further into religious-political chaos. Despite its initial opposition to General Pervez Musharraf's regime, the United States supported the military dictatorship largely to bulwark its purported 'War on Terror'. This war was waged chiefly against the Muslim Taliban in Afghanistan, a group that had received US funding during the Cold War and Pakistani political support and military training thereafter. Since most Muslim terror groups operated from inside Pakistan, the country was now apparently the central locus both of the problem and of the attempt to combat it. Formally, cricket had remained in the hands of the government: Musharraf, like previous military rulers, chaired the Pakistani Cricket Board. But a series of attacks made Pakistan unviable for top-class cricket. Notably, in May 2002, a car bomb was detonated in front of the Karachi hotel where the New Zealand team were staying, killing thirteen people. New Zealand called off the tour within hours of the attack. Recourse to neutral venues was increased. Pakistan now played a home series against

Australia partly in Sri Lanka and partly in Sharjah, after Australia's refusal to tour over security concerns. In 2008, a spate of suicide bombings and a terror attack on Mumbai, which killed 170 people, deepened the crisis and, in March 2009, a bus carrying the Sri Lankan cricket team was fired on in Lahore. Seven people died and a number of players were wounded. The attack in India resulted in the second IPL tournament being relocated to South Africa. Since the early 2000s, Pakistan cricketers have therefore played most of their international cricket on foreign soil (Sharjah, Colombo, Dubai, Toronto, England) and will not play at home in the foreseeable future.

Cricket, the postcolonial and the politics of boycott: the case of Zimbabwe

Southern Rhodesia, as Zimbabwe was then called, became a self-governing colony within the British Empire in 1923. The white British settlers who governed this colony had been attracted by the mineral deposits (it is, for example, the world's largest producer of platinum) and the farmland, where the main crops have been tobacco, maize and soya. The white Rhodesian government declared unilateral independence from Britain in 1965 and proclaimed itself a republic in 1970. A prolonged guerrilla war fought by the two principal political factions of the black majority – the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) – resulted in independence in 1980. After much strife ZAPU and ZANU merged in 1988 and the country has been governed since independence by Robert Mugabe, former leader of ZANU and once feared by the British government to be a Marxist. Since the early 1990s, Zimbabwe has seen increased political unrest provoked by government repression, massive inflation and the compulsory redistribution of arable land to black Zimbabweans.

Cricket has been played in Zimbabwe since the 1890s. While it has remained predominantly a white game, it grew in strength after independence, and Zimbabwe was granted Test status in 1992; the country's first black player, Henry Olonga, made his debut three years later. In 2004, a dispute roughly parallel to the political wrangle over land broke out over political intimidation and selection of the national cricket team. The chief executive of the now overtly politicised Zimbabwe Cricket Union demanded more black players. National captain Heath Streak and a number of other white players in the national side resigned.

With Streak's resignation, increased talk of human rights abuses by Mugabe's regime and England due to tour Zimbabwe in 2004, a press campaign for a cricket boycott of Zimbabwe was mounted in England. The New

Zealand government let it be known that a Zimbabwean team, due there the following year, would not be welcome. In the British *Daily Telegraph*, Donald Trelford summarised a report by the ECB as saying ‘that Robert Mugabe’s regime is so far beyond the pale in terms of torture, oppression and denial of the rule of law – a view shared by the Commonwealth, incidentally, to which nearly all cricket-playing countries belong – that for England to go there would be seen as condoning or endorsing evil’.²³ Zimbabwe remained an issue in the cricket world: England captain South Africa-born Andrew Strauss, for example, told a large audience at Lord’s in June of 2008 that, should Robert Mugabe remain in power, several England players would not be prepared to play against Zimbabwe the following year.²⁴ However, Mugabe remains head of state in Zimbabwe and commander of the country’s armed forces, notwithstanding a power-sharing agreement in 2008 with his principal political opponents, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), and there has been no boycott.

The controversy demonstrated a number of postcolonial realities, many of them identified by Mike Marqusee, doyen of writers on the politics of cricket: ‘the hypocrisies on all sides’, he wrote, ‘defied enumeration’.²⁵ It was now the English cricket authorities, along with the Conservative Party and the right-wing press, all former champions of the belief that politics should not intrude upon sport, who were propounding the opposite view. Moreover, having been willing to sustain friendly relations with a white national cricket board that practised racial discrimination, they now proposed to suspend relations with a black cricket board for apparently doing the same thing.

A similar position was adopted by the African National Congress, whose supporters, in the days of apartheid, had called for ‘no normal sport in an abnormal society’. Now, as the government of South Africa, Zimbabwe’s main trading partner, they declined to intervene. They appeared happy to support Mugabe’s contention that Zimbabwe’s problem was simply with the outmoded colonial arrogance of the British. But, in the postcolonial world, Zimbabwe was beholden not to Britain, but to institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank who, for all countries, had made often drastic cuts in public spending the condition of any loan. Mugabe had made the necessary cuts (helping to worsen the poverty in Zimbabwe, of which so many were now complaining) and the call of the MDC, the Zimbabwean trade-union movement and human-rights organisations for wider sanctions against Mugabe had had no response. Indeed, part of the ECB’s case for refusing a boycott was that 300 British companies still traded with Zimbabwe and British Airways flew regular flights to the capital, Harare.²⁶

The political realities of life in the global economy were further driven home in Dubai and London. At the ICC, the 'Asian bloc' voted against expelling Zimbabwe (although Zimbabwe did agree to secede temporarily from Test cricket in 2004) and the ECB were reminded of their legal-financial liabilities were they to default on any fixture. This enabled the 'New' Labour government to take a moral stance on the issue while stressing that it had no powers to intervene.²⁷

Some saw this as political hypocrisy – calling for action in the full knowledge that it would not be taken. Others wondered why there was no talk of boycotting Pakistan, governed throughout the hue and cry over Mugabe by a military dictatorship. In Pakistan itself, Test cricketer turned politician Imran Khan took the argument of double standards further and suggested a boycott of England:

... how can it be that England is obsessing over the morality of playing cricket in Zimbabwe at precisely the same time that it – along with the United States – is leading the world to the brink of a grossly unjust and potentially catastrophic war against Iraq? Doesn't Mr Blair's acute sensitivity to the plight of the Zimbabwean people look just a little ironic next to his apparent readiness to vaporise thousands of Iraqis? A little rich, even?²⁸

Cricket and globalisation: the improbable case of China

The People's Republic of China was established in 1949 under the rule of the Communist Party. Between the late 1960s and the late 1970s party chairman Mao Zedong promoted the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, a peasant-based anti-elitist movement aimed at undermining China's emergent class of managers and mandarins. Following Mao's death in 1976, China embraced capitalism, while maintaining Communist Party rule. As the world's only command capitalist economy with an un-unionised workforce subject to government instruction, China became a magnet for foreign capital and, by the turn of the twenty-first century, it was a leading economic power. Like India, China has a huge population (around 1.3 billion people), a thriving market for consumer goods such as mobile phones, and a growing middle class with significant disposable income. Unlike India, but like most countries outside the old British Empire, it has no cricket tradition to speak of: cricket in China had hitherto been largely confined to expatriates. What China has in common with all societies administered by a communist party is a strong, government-sponsored sport culture and a policy to pursue success in international sports competitions. A clear consummation of this policy was seen at the summer Olympic Games of 2008, staged in the Chinese

capital Beijing, at which Chinese competitors won fifty-one gold medals, the most of any nation.

China had received regular visits from representatives of the ACC, anxious to promote the game in the region, but, until 2003, the Chinese authorities had shown no more than polite interest. They now embraced it, however, joining the ACC in 2004, becoming an affiliate member of the ICC a year later and devising a five-year plan for cricket development. This plan is not, as might have been expected, for specialist academies, but for a full-scale integration of cricket into the curriculum of Chinese schools – 150 in the first instance – across nine cities: Beijing, Shanghai, Shenyang, Dalian, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Chongqing, Tianjin and Jinan.²⁹ The Chinese Cricket Association's goal is to have 15,000 players by 2009, 60,000 by 2012 and 150,000 by 2020. It is believed that China hope to have a team good enough to do well in cricket's World Cup, and perhaps even to gain Test-playing status, by 2020, whilst the prospect of challenging India at Test level provides the ultimate motivation.

A number of factors lie behind this move. In an improbable invocation of Victorian values, government spokespeople have extolled the character-building virtues of cricket, which in China has been given the name 'shen shi yun dong' ('the noble game'). It is also stressed that cricket relies more on skill and strategy than on strength, making it more suitable to the average Chinese physique than, say, rugby. It is also seen as a game offering equal opportunities to males and females. But there is, of course, more to it than that. The Chinese government seeks markets and regional prestige. This helps to explain its huge investment in the Caribbean for the 2007 World Cup. Of the eight venues constructed or refurbished for the tournament, China assisted in the construction of five, providing more than 1,000 workers and more than \$140 million. Chinese aid also paid for roads, schools, hospitals and other infrastructure improvements in recent years, earning the allegiance of many nations in the process.³⁰

As well as overseas markets and influence China will have an eye on the communications revolution evolving in neighbouring India. As Ian McCubbin, a lawyer specialising in Chinese–Australian affairs and advisor to the China Central TV network, said recently: 'I don't think the success of cricket in China depends on having hundreds of thousands of people playing it in the park on a Saturday afternoon. I think it depends on promoting it as a television product. Look at India, and the commercialisation of cricket there. There is no reason why that can't happen in China. It's a growing economy, it's a changing economy, but it's also an economy that is becoming an avid consumer of western culture.'³¹ This view was affirmed in the business magazine *Forbes*:

An estimated 100 million Chinese watched the basketball competition at the Athens Olympics, so there is a latent market to be tapped. China would be an attractive market for the ICC's official sponsors, LG Electronics, Pepsico, Hutchison, HeroHonda, India Oil and Cable & Wireless. The ACC already has HSBC, Standard Chartered and Indian Oil sponsoring its regional tournaments. Other potential sponsors include companies like General Motors, which already spends millions of dollars sponsoring golf in China.³²

Conclusion

Cricket emerged from myriad forms of bat and ball games played out when the demands of agricultural life allowed. It became codified and institutionalised in England and exploited as a means to promote a certain way of life with the notion of authority, power and knowing one's place at its heart. Thus, cricket was always political, and, through its unravelling via the British Empire, it was always international. Because it has been so central to the nationalist project, contemporary cricket has been subsumed by politics, especially in the developing world, where sport has provided the level playing field that economic and military might could not. This means that in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and India governments are formally involved in the running of cricket and regularly intervene. In South Africa, the African National Congress has demanded the selection at Test level of more black cricketers, while failing, as its critics might argue, to effect the radical social changes they promised before taking office. In the Caribbean, individual governments of countries such as Trinidad and Tobago are currently pressing individual Boards on the possibility of playing international cricket independently of the West Indies – a move that many feel would be at the cost of collective strength. The governments of Australia, Britain and New Zealand meanwhile continue to provide guidelines as to whom their respective teams should play. But, pitted against this system of institutional politics lies the might of mammon, especially in the case of the IPL and the potential influence of China (and possibly the USA). In the era of globalised networks the future of cricket will be determined by numerous conflicting interests, where the primary interest lies, in many cases, not in the aesthetics and longevity of the sport itself, nor, of course, in the nation-state.

NOTES

- 1 Mike Marqusee, *Anyone But England* (London: Aurum Press, 2005), pp. 74–75.
- 2 Chris Harte, *A History of Australian Cricket* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1993), p. 105.
- 3 Richard Williams, 'We Hate You England, We Do', *Guardian*, 28 October 2003.

- 4 Richard D. E. Burton, 'Cricket, Carnival and Street Culture in the Caribbean' in Hilary McD. Beckles and Brian Stoddart (eds.), *Liberation Cricket: West Indies Cricket Culture* (Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 89.
- 5 See Hilary McD. Beckles, *The Development of West Indies Cricket Volume 1: The Age of Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1999).
- 6 C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London: Serpents Tail, 1994), p. 261.
- 7 Laurence Le Quesne, *The Bodyline Controversy* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1983), pp. 67–71.
- 8 See Duncan Hamilton, *Harold Larwood* (London: Quercus, 2009).
- 9 See Peter Osborne, *Basil D'Oliveira: Cricket and Controversy* (London: Sphere, 2005); Jon Gemmell, *The Politics of South African Cricket* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 146–54.
- 10 Charles and Sharada Dwivedi, *Lives of the Indian Princes* (London: Century Publishing, 1984), p. 18.
- 11 Scyld Berry, *A Cricket Odyssey: England on Tour, 1987–88* (London: Pavilion Books, 1988), p. 87.
- 12 Gideon Haigh, 'The Making of Epics', *CricInfo*, 2 October 2004, www.cricinfo.com/magazine/content/story/142119.html (accessed 31 March 2010).
- 13 Barbara Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 254–60.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 297.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 286.
- 16 Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 497.
- 17 Mihir Bose, *A Maidan View: The Magic of Indian Cricket* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1986), p. 41.
- 18 Syed Saleem Shahzad, 'It's Just Not Cricket Anymore in Pakistan', *Online Asian Times*, 29 June 2002, www.atimes.com/ind-pak/DF29Dfo3.html (accessed 13 March 2010).
- 19 Mike Marqusee, *War Minus the Shooting: A Journey Through South Asia During Cricket's World Cup* (London: Heinemann, 1996), p. 268.
- 20 Quoted in Ramachandra Guha, *A Corner of a Foreign Field: The Indian History of a British Sport* (London: Picador, 2002), p. 431.
- 21 David Hopps, 'The Game Neither Side Dare Lose', *Guardian*, 7 June 1999.
- 22 Martin Crowe, '2006 Cowdrey Lecture', www.lords.org/laws-and-spirit/spirit/mcc-spirit-of-cricket-cowdrey-lecture/2006-cowdrey-lecture-full-text,1197,AR.html (accessed 21 March 2010).
- 23 Donald Treford, 'ICC Will Have to Accept Anti-Mugabe Sentiment', *Daily Telegraph*, 16 February 2004, www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/cricket/2373198/ICC-will-have-to-accept-anti-Mugabe-sentiment.html (accessed 14 March 2010).
- 24 'Strauss Hints Players Might Boycott Zimbabwe Matches', www.cricinfo.com/england/content/story/354344.html, posted 11 June 2008 (accessed 14 March 2010).
- 25 Marqusee, *Anyone But England*, pp. 341–43.
- 26 Paul Kelso, 'Cricket Defies Call for Zimbabwe Boycott', *Guardian*, 15 January 2003, www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2003/jan/15/politics.cricket (accessed 28 March 2010).

- 27 'Blair Calls for Zimbabwe Cricket Tour Boycott', *Guardian*, 30 December 2002, www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2002/dec/30/politics.cricket (accessed 15 March 2010).
- 28 'Who's the Real Villain?', *Guardian*, 24 January 2003, www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2003/jan/24/cricket.iraq (accessed 15 March 2010).
- 29 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China_national_cricket_team (accessed 16 March 2010).
- 30 Daniel Erikson and Paul Wander, 'China: Cricket "Champion"', *American Dialogue*, www.thedialogue.org/page.cfm?pageID=32&pubID=274 (accessed 21 March 2010).
- 31 'Australia Pushes China for Cricket', undated, <http://stg.cricketnext.com/print/33446-13.html> (accessed 16 March 2010).
- 32 Paul Maidment, 'China's Cracking Cricket', 10 March 2005, www.forbes.com/2005/09/30/china-india-cricket_cx_pm_1003chinacricket.html (accessed 16 March 2010).