**Out of the blue**

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September 24, 2021

We may not give the New Zealand cricket team the respect they would seek. The England Cricket Team will also follow the same fate. These words could be seen as hard-hitting truth and they are the conscious thoughts of every cricket fan living in Pakistan. The recent last-minute pullout by New Zealand is an episode that requires much explanation and none has been given so far.

Just minutes before the ODI was scheduled between Pakistan and New Zealand in Rawalpindi on September 17, the latter pulled themselves out and abandoned the series. Cricketing fans were expecting to see New Zealand play on Pakistani soil after 18 years. The media, especially social media, went abuzz when the news broke out. People began speculating the reason behind New Zealand’s action.

Memes began surfacing soon after the Black Caps made their way home. Indeed, in 2002, the New Zealand cricket team did return after a bomb blast shook Karachi. This time, the threat was unknown—even to the concerned authorities.

[Germans all set to vote for new parliament on Sunday](https://nation.com.pk/25-Sep-2021/germans-all-set-to-vote-for-new-parliament-on-sunday)

The security provided to them was more than adequate. The internal conditions of Rawalpindi were peaceful. What compelled the New Zealand Cricket Team to bid a premature farewell is a question deserving answers. Cricket has been linked with geopolitics—a connection that will not bode well for the sport. What if the Taliban government in Afghanistan was the reason for the Black Caps to return home?

Had this been the case, they would not have practiced for six days in Rawalpindi. They arrived on September 11 and left on September 17. Had there been a security threat, the New Zealand team Cricket Team would have either left sooner or would have not arrived at all.

Reports claim that New Zealand abandoned the tour after the Five Eyes intelligence group mentioned an imminent threat to the team. The Five Eyes is an intelligence coalition comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the US. The one common denominator between the War in Afghanistan and the Five Eyes intelligence group is the list of member countries. All five of these nations were allies during the two-decade-long war in Afghanistan.

[Pakistan condemns extra judicial killings in IIOJK](https://nation.com.pk/25-Sep-2021/pakistan-condemns-extra-judicial-killings-in-iiojk)

Another report that surfaced while this cricket debacle was being discussed was Argentina’s plan to buy twelve JF-17A Block-III fighter jets from Pakistan. Britain has maintained an embargo on Argentina since 1982 during the time of the Falklands War. Argentina could have signed a similar deal with Sweden and South Korea in 2015. The pressure from the UK over these two countries did not make way for the deal to be finalised.

Can it be that the New Zealand cricket team abandoned the series because Pakistan was on the verge of selling fighter jets to Argentina? This is doubtful, but in the world of geopolitics, decisions are made akin to how chess is played. An action taken today impacts the consequences of future actions. What if the Five Eyes intelligence cannot see Pakistan garnering positive diplomatic ties with countries far away in the west?

With CPEC moving on that is bolstering Pak-China ties with each passing day, Pakistan is also reinforcing its ties with Russia, Turkey, and Central Asian states. This will only spell Islamabad’s rise, which many “eyes” cannot digest. Cricket diplomacy, crisis through cricket, or such incidents to tarnish Pakistan will be the last resort of the powers that be.