

The Beijing Olympics: Prospects for Human Rights and Political Reforms

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The Olympic Games, started in Ancient Greece, have always had some connection to politics and social movements. The former President of the International Olympic Committee Avery Brundage said that “sports is completely free of politics”; despite the IOC often trying to take this view, as sports have become a major part of social institutions in industrialized countries, sports and the Olympic Games in particular will always contain some political content.¹ The political side of this international sporting event gives it the significance that is conferred upon it by most nations and people. Governments have used different aspects of sports, such as boycotting events, sports propaganda, denial of visas, hosting the Olympic Games, and sports exchanges to further political aims and as an extension of diplomacy or sanctions. In ancient Greece, the Olympics were a vehicle through which various parts of the civilized world could come together in spite of differences.

Especially in the 20th century, athletics has also been a tool to validate a country’s status in the world or a particular nation’s political system and beliefs.² As early as World War I, participation in Olympic events was connected to a country’s legitimacy. Germany and Austria were both banned from the 1920 games due to their actions during the war; South Africa was similarly excluded from all Olympic Games between 1964 and 1992 because of their apartheid system.³ When Germany hosted the games in 1936, in what has been dubbed the “Nazi Games”, Hitler hoped to intimate his European neighbors with images of Germany power and unity and demonstrate Aryan superiority. His ideals were somewhat discredited, however, when African American Jesse Owens won five medals at the Games.⁴ Other nations that have used hosting the

¹ Jeremy Goldberg, “Sporting Diplomacy: Boosting the Size of the Diplomatic Corps” *The Washington Quarterly* 23:4 (Autumn 2000): 64; Martin Barry Vinokur, *More Than a Game: Sports and Politics*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 115

² Goldberg, 64

³ John Cheffers, “The Foolishness of Boycott and Exclusion in the Olympic Movement” *Olympic Review* (1984): 512

⁴ Jennifer Lind, “Dangerous Games”, *The Atlantic Monthly* 297:2 (Mar 2006): 38

Olympics to demonstrate their global image and progress include Japan, who had the 1964 Games in Tokyo, and South Korea who hosted in 1988.⁵

Yet the hosts of the Games are not the only ones who have used the Olympics for political ends; in several cases boycotts have been used against either the host country or other participants in the Olympics. Threats of boycotts or their actual implementation has highlighted injustices and brought about limited social change, but overall are more effective against smaller countries than major powers.⁶ Yet the most noticed cycle of boycotts were largely fueled by Cold War tensions between the superpowers, though started in 1976 at the Montreal Olympic Games. Overwhelmingly affected by Cold War politics, the 1980 Olympic boycott was initiated by the United States against the Soviet Union, and was indicative of a West versus East conflict. The boycott was provoked by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late December 1979; on January 20, 1980 President Carter insisted that if the Soviets had not withdrawn their troops after one month that the United States Olympic Committee suggest to the IOC they transfer, postpone, or cancel the Games.⁷ The implication was that if the IOC did not comply, the United States would not send a delegation to the Games, citing the invasion of Afghanistan as a national security threat and an aggressive action. The following week Congressional support was received for Carter's statement; the Senate resolution passed 88 to 4 and the House resolution passed 380 to 12.⁸ Although the threat of the boycott was only one of many economic and political sanctions imposed against the USSR, it was the one that held the most potential for public relations and media.⁹ As a result of the Soviets remaining in Afghanistan and the IOC taking no action, the USOC started an official American boycott in April, with the assumption the rest of the Western

⁵ Trevor Taylor, "Politics and the Seoul Olympics" *The Pacific Review* 1:2 (1988): 192

⁶ Cheffers, 512

⁷ Rob CR Siekmann, "The Boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games and Détente" in *Essays on Human Rights in the Helsinki Process* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985): 181

⁸ Siekmann, 181

⁹ Vinokur, 116

world would follow.¹⁰ The responses of both American athletes and other industrialized nations diminished the potential for a complete boycott. The athletes were firmly opposed to the boycott on athletic grounds; after years of training, keeping competitors at home was seen as a waste and several athletes later even sued for being prevented from participating in Moscow. In addition, although the United States pressured their allies, few nations actually choose to forgo Olympic participation, including in the west.¹¹ Overall, 42 countries declined the invitation to the games, 30 of which were part of the US-led boycott; the other nations who declined or did not respond mainly did so out of financial considerations. Of 146 teams, 81 attended the Games in Moscow.¹² While the bi-polar world order led the boycott to take place, the American boycott not only did not prevent the Games from occurring, but also had little effect on the Soviet's involvement in Afghanistan or processes of reform; the only real impact the Games had was to prompt retaliatory action from the Soviet Union at the Los Angeles Games in 1984.

In contrast, other than North Korea's demand they be a co-host, followed by the country along with Cuba, Ethiopia, and a few other nations' refusal to send athletes to Seoul, the 1988 Games went well in establishing Korea's place within Asia and the world. In addition, many scholars believe that if looking at South Korea's 1988 hosting of the Games, it is impossible for human rights and democracy to be ignored by actors entrenched in the Games.¹³ The large scale reform and push towards democracy that occurred in the months before and following the 1988 Games is seen to be in large part due to the pressure and attention on South Korea from the rest of the international community; though the Olympics themselves did not force the country to change, it was a major catalyst in bringing reform, the opposite of what occurred in 1980.

¹⁰ Vinokur, 187

¹¹ Taylor, 193

¹² Siekmann, 188; Goldberg, 65

¹³ Black, David R. and Shona Bezenson. "The Olympic Games, human rights, and democratization: lessons from Seoul and implications for Beijing". *Third World Quarterly* 25:7 (2004): 1245-1261.

In July 2001, the International Olympic Committee voted Beijing to be the host of the 2008 Olympic Games. From China's point of view, the Olympics gives the country a chance to show off its accomplishments in front of a worldwide audience. Others think the Olympics should be used as leverage to promote change in China's domestic and foreign actions; some have even called for a boycott of the Games due to the violations of rights and norms repeatedly committed by the Chinese government.

The 2008 Games is not the first time sports have been intertwined in Chinese politics or foreign policy. Even before relations were normalized between the United States and China, the trip of the US table tennis team to the People's Republic in 1971 helped to lay the groundwork for Nixon's visit the following year. This "Ping Pong Diplomacy" was a way to break down barriers between communism and democratic capitalism even in the midst of the Cold War.¹⁴

Likewise, Beijing plans for the Olympics to be China's emergence on the world stage. The city has been preparing for the bid since the National Games of 1987, which were attended by the President of the IOC at the time, and the 1990 Asian Games.¹⁵ Throughout the bid process China stressed its ancient culture, developing economy, and sports achievements to show the best possible aspects of modern China to the world. China aims to win the most medals of any country in attendance, and more than the United States won in Athens in 2004; overall, they hope to show the world a China that is no longer a developing country, but an industrialized modern nation.¹⁶ From Beijing's angle, the Olympics are being used to further the country's political and diplomatic goals; thus, though the IOC responds to challenges to China hosting the Olympics with statements on the separation between politics and the Olympics, it is clear the two are closely linked. In particular, much of the international community has put a focus on China's

¹⁴ Susan Brownell, *Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People's Republic of China*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 312

¹⁵ Brownell, *Training the Body*, 314, 316

¹⁶ Lind, 38

human rights record and potential changes that will be made in China's political and rights reform in the lead up and aftermath of the Beijing Games. The Olympics do provide a space to engage China over issues of international and humanitarian concern, but the extent to which the Olympic Games will push China in a positive direction is still a contentious issue – will the effects of the 2008 Games resemble Moscow or Seoul and what factors are most important in influencing the outcome of the Games

In order to answer the research question, an in depth historical analysis of past Olympic Games will first be conducted. Various mechanisms that did or did not produce human rights and political reform in past years' Games will be identified and analyzed for their effectiveness and relevance. Mechanisms to be explored may include but not be limited to the role of the International Olympic Committee, international pressure, domestic sentiments, role of corporate sponsors, Olympic athlete actions, and media coverage.

Through evaluating the impact of these Olympic mechanisms in prior Games that also had political or international significance, a framework can be established in which the 2008 Olympic Games of Beijing can be viewed. By applying this framework to Beijing and determining the existence and functioning of the relevant mechanisms for reform, prospects for the Games to affect human rights within China can be established.

Chapter One will include an evaluation of current literature on the subject of Olympics and reform, both the Games in general and as specifically related to the Beijing Games. Then, an in-depth history of Beijing's bid process will be explored, including the ways in which human rights and issues of political freedoms have been raised at various stages. Chapter Two will analyze the Montreal, Moscow, Seoul, and more recent Games to determine exactly what is likely to produce reform versus what is largely irrelevant. Chapter Three will then apply that

framework to the current situation in China leading up to the start of the Games in August 2008 to analyze the different prospects of the extent to which positive changes will result.

Chapter 1: Beyond Politics: Potential for Positive Influence

Within academic literature and the international community, it is widely acknowledged that the modern Olympic Games have a strong political component. From the revival of the Games in 1896, put forth by French baron Pierre de Coubertin, the goal was to unite humankind in a festival dedicated to athletic excellence; yet even he had motives rooted in French nationalism and hoped his country could attain international leadership through the Games.¹⁷ Schaffer and Smith argue the Games are viewed by most of the world in this light, offering both an opportunity for celebrating athletic achievements while also providing a stage on which countries interact. In their view, the Olympics have a positive and negative side; the positive side allows for countries to share experiences and operate under specific codes of engagement while the more negative side can strengthen divisions through competition, aggression, and the prospective that another country's athlete is an enemy to be defeated.¹⁸ Because of the dynamics of the Olympic Games, most scholars agree there is potential for improving bilateral relations as well as domestic conditions of participating and host countries. However, the particular ways in which Games affect politics and reform and how this is playing out as the 2008 Games in China approach remain largely debated.

Theories on the effectiveness of the Olympic Games as a tool for producing reform in a host country seem to hinge on whether the engagement over politics is done in a positive or negative way as well as being affected by some internal considerations. Jarol Manheim, Julie

¹⁷ Schaffer, Kay and Sidonie, *The Olympics at the Millenium: Power, Politics, and the Games*, (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press: 2000), 2.

¹⁸ Ibid, 7

Liu, and Black and Bezanson all use the case of the Seoul Olympics of 1988 to inform their general conclusions about Olympics producing reform in areas of politics and human rights.¹⁹ The positive act of hosting is what Manheim and Liu focus on as the impetus for change; Manheim argues that because hosting the Olympics is dramatic and visible, that the Games themselves have the dynamic to overwhelm those who use it. His basic assumption is that even countries who aim to use the Olympics to further their own status, as South Korea did, have to accept both the opportunity the Games provide as well as predictable political risks to the regime in power. In particular in the 1988 Olympic Games, international attention and news media increased the need for the government to formulate a clear response to concerns of political development.²⁰ Because the South Koreans were committed to staging a successful Olympic Games, and were willing to change to accomplish their goal, liberation of reform resulted from the pressure of public opinion.²¹

Yet these arguments still leave room for the importance of internal dynamics in determining whether the Olympics can and will produce lasting reform. While Black and Bezanson agree with the idea that hosting the Olympic Games does create space in which human rights and democratic notions can be framed and engaged, much still depends on how much issues are seen as a concern to various actors within the Olympic movement and also what domestic situations are already in existence. Like Manheim, they examine the importance of media and governmental pressure on a host country for reform, but also claim the amount of pressure and the roles of other actors such as non-governmental organizations, corporate sponsors, and the International Olympic Committee is crucial to letting the Olympics be a

¹⁹ Liu, Julie H., "Lighting the Torch of Human Rights: the Olympic Games as a Vehicle for Human Rights Reform", *Northwestern Journal of International Human Rights* 5:2 (2007), 213-235; Manheim, Jarol B., Rites of Passage: The 1988 Seoul Olympics as Public Diplomacy, *The Western Political Quarterly* 43:2 (1990), 279-295.

²⁰ Manheim, 292

²¹ Liu, 221

catalyst for change. In addition, when making generalizations from the case of Seoul's Olympics, Black and Bezanson are careful to point out South Korea did have a fairly strong basis for moving towards democratic elections and political openness from within, which helped to push the country to change in the lead up to their Olympic Games.²² In their view the Games alone cannot cause a country to reform and the situation inside a host country is important. When making predictions about the results the Beijing Olympics will have on China, the largest point of contention is between the power of such a large international sporting event versus the power of the Chinese Communist Party.

In her article, Julie Liu not only uses the South Korean Olympic case study to make generalizations about the Olympic movement in general, but also applies her ideas to the 2008 Games. She believes that if the Chinese government has self-reflection on its human rights record while it is in the international spotlight, reform can happen with just a small push from the International Olympic Committee or other Olympics-related body.²³ Her optimistic claim rests both on the factors of the Games themselves as well as an evaluation that would be done by the government on its own policies, thus bringing in the domestic component. Ian Buruma points to some actions the government has already taken, such as responding to the name "Genocide Olympics" used by Darfur activists by endorsing the United Nations decision to send peacekeepers into the troubled region. He uses the movement on the global scale to ask the question of whether similar pressures would indeed help domestic politics and rights violations.²⁴

Arguments that claim Olympic Games are not by themselves a highly significance source or impetus for widespread reform do not discount the importance of the Games as a political event, but rather point to instances of the Games being used in more coercive and forceful ways.

²² Black and Bezanson, 1259

²³ Liu, 235

²⁴ Buruma, Ian, "Political Games", *New York Times Magazine* (Sep 2007): 13-14.

These claims largely draw from the case of the 1980 Moscow boycott. Unlike the case of the Seoul Olympics which brought about changes in South Korea, Liu writes the boycott of the Moscow Games was ineffective at achieving its goals.²⁵ The boycott was launched largely due to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, but despite the majority of western nations withdrawing participation from the Games in Moscow, there was no reduction of troops from Afghanistan. Liu states that the USSR in fact hardened its position and increased restrictions on dissidents within the country following the boycott and that little to no positive change resulted from the efforts of the United States and its allies. In order for the Olympics to be a pathway for change, Liu believes the host should be required to adhere to the Olympic Principles rather than be coerced by other nations. Susan Brownell, who also believes reform cannot be forced, supports the idea that a legacy of reform can come through the voluntary efforts of host countries.²⁶ Neither Liu nor Brownell argue that international pressure does not have its place in the intersection of Olympics and politics, but both see the importance of non-coercive measures that allow for the host country to step forward in bringing domestic reform.

Scholars tend to agree that the Olympics at least has the potential for influencing the speed and direction of reform in the host country, though some differences of opinion exist as to the most important factors which determine reform. However, another side of the debate puts a focus on direct consequences of the Olympic Games on the rights of people within the host country. The most closely linked issue in this regard is housing rights. A research project conducted by the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) concluded that while the Olympics can have a positive effect on urban space, they can also reduce the enjoyment of housing rights of people in the host country or host city.²⁷ The study included an examination of

²⁵ Liu, 223

²⁶ Brownell, Susan, "The Beijing Effect", *Olympic Review* Beijing 2008 (2007): 52-55.

²⁷ *Fair Play for Housing Rights*, Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) (2007). <
<http://www.ruig-gian.org/research/outputs/output.php?ID=229>>

the Olympics in Athens, Atlanta, Barcelona, Seoul, Sydney, and preparations for Beijing and London. Their study showed statistics such as 720,000 people being forcibly evicted in Seoul due to construction prior to the 1988 Olympics, 9,000 homeless people facing arrest in Atlanta in an effort to clear the streets before the Games in 1996, and rising rent costs in Barcelona effectively leading to low income earners leaving the city. The study concluded that based on evidence from a wide range of Olympic Games, the impacts of hosting the Games affected people within the housing sector and did so in a way that hurt low income and marginalized people the most. Because these people generally had little to no participation in the decision making process for Games preparations, COHRE cites the Games as a direct cause for the undermining of people's housing rights. The importance of this study within the larger debate on the Olympics and reform is clear; it provides reasoning to not only look at whether or not large scale reform occurs in a host country, but also to examine possible rights violations that result from Games preparations.

Scholars from within China tend to have more pessimistic views on what the Olympics can accomplish in terms of human rights or political openness. For example, Wang Dan wrote an article in which he proposed two possible scenarios that could happen pre-August 2008. In the most hopeful case, the Chinese government would be persuaded by international opinion and in order to keep its critics abroad and internally at bay, some real changes could result. However, he seems to feel any claims of reform would more likely be rumors which would be taken back after the Games, and any leverage of Olympic actors, had ended.²⁸ Likewise, in an interview He Qinglian stated she does not feel an international event, even the size and scope of the Olympic Games, can produce motives for true change to occur in China, particularly within the realm of

²⁸ Wang, Dan, "Chinese Government's Agenda: True Political Reform or Deceptive Hype?", *The Epoch Times* (2007): 1-2.

academic and journalistic freedom.²⁹ Most Western academics tend to be focused on the potential for change, but Black and Bezanson emphasize the importance of domestic considerations again, and tend to side with many Chinese scholars in believing the Chinese Communist Party is too entrenched in power while its opponents are diffused, thus preventing long lasting reform during such an important event to regime legitimacy; in this view it would be unlikely the government would undertake any self evaluation that Liu has promoted as a pathway to reform.³⁰

While most scholars agree the Olympics can provide the potential for reform within human rights and political freedoms, exactly how this is done or how it may apply to the case of Beijing is still contested. Beijing is most often compared to Seoul, but because of the concerns people like Manheim and Chinese scholars have about the differences between the South Korean government and the current Chinese Communist Party, more exploration of this is needed. In order to better understand the dynamics of Olympic impact, it would be better if various instances of past Games were evaluated as to their similarities and differences, and therefore which factors led to reform in host countries. This would provide a more comprehensive picture of the Olympic Games themselves and how they function as a mechanism for change for all host countries.

In addition, not only the Beijing Games but the internal situation in China also needs to be a part of any analysis on what impact the Olympics will have on the country. Statements in these articles tend to be quite broad and simplify the situation, making blanket claims that the international attention will produce change or may produce change, but an argument that takes into account both the international and domestic dimensions is not often made.

²⁹ He, Qinglian, Interview, The University of Chicago Magazine Campus News (2001) 1-3.

³⁰ Black and Bezanson, 1259

Through evaluating the impact of these Olympic mechanisms in prior Games that had political or international significance, a framework can be established in which the 2008 Olympic Games of Beijing can be viewed. By determining the existence and functioning of the relevant Olympic mechanisms for reform Beijing and its particular dynamics, more accurate prospects for the Games to affect human rights within China can be analyzed.

The History and Processes of Beijing's Olympic Bid

Though the 2008 Olympics are viewed as modern China's entrance onto the world stage, China's desire to host the international games goes back to the start of the 20th century. As early as 1907, notions of being an Olympic host country were evident in China. The Chinese YMCA had a campaign that year linking physical education to strength; the campaign asked the questions of when China could send a winning athlete to the Games, when China could send a winning team to the Games, and when China could invite the world to Beijing to compete.³¹ In 1946, the Chinese National Amateur Athletic Federation decided to bid for the 1952 Games, but the outbreak of civil war in China prevented them from carrying through with the bid.³² China was absent from the Games between 1958 and 1980, though rejoined the International Olympic Committee in 1979; just over ten years later at the closing ceremony of the Asian Games in Beijing, a banner was unfurled that read "successful Asian Games, the people look forward to the Olympic Games".³³ Due to China's expanding economic growth in the 1980's and the end of the Cold War tensions, China was ready to move towards making their Olympic dream a reality.

³¹ Susan Brownell, *Beijing's Games: What the Olympics Mean to China*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 19

³² Brownell, *Beijing's Games*, 141

³³ Brownell, *Beijing's Games*, 38, 142

Beijing first bid to host the 2000 Olympics; the Chinese central government approved the bid in 1991 and started the process of getting the country ready for IOC visits.³⁴ However, Beijing's tactics to impress the IOC included methods such as clearing the streets of beggars, street children, migrant workers, and mentally and physically disabled people; these people were put into custody or held in repatriation campus without due process.³⁵ In the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen protests and crackdown by the Chinese government, the United States actively campaigned against Beijing's bid for the Games on account of China's human rights record. The decision for the 2000 Games was made on September 24, 1993 – the Games were awarded by the IOC to Sydney, with two votes more than Beijing. Much of the world saw Beijing's loss of the bid as a result of their human rights abuses and the shadow of Tiananmen.³⁶ China reacted with disappointment and anger; it was another five years before another bid attempt was approved by the central government, this time for the 2008 Summer Games.³⁷

For the 2008 Games, Beijing's second bid attempt was not the only new factor, but in December of 1999 the IOC also enacted a new two phase process which prospective host cities had to follow.³⁸ The initial selection phase consists of an examination of basic technical requirements of each prospective city; once the cities pass the first phase they become official candidate cities and go forward to the full bid process. In the second phase, candidate cities submit a candidature file for the IOC and have visits by the IOC Evaluation Commission, which provides its own report two months before the final voting occurs.

³⁴ Brownell, *Beijing's Games*, 142

³⁵ Brook Larmer, "Olympic Dreams; Beijing desperately wants to host the 2008 Games – but does that give the West leverage to push for more reform?", *Newsweek* (Feb 26 2001), 24

³⁶ Joe Havelly, "The Olympics: a Very Political Game", CNN.com (Jul 13 2001), 2; Siegel, 1

³⁷ Brownell, *Beijing's Games*, 142

³⁸ "Beijing 2008 Election", International Olympic Committee, <http://www.olympic.org/uk/games/beijing/election_uk.asp>

BOBICO, the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bid Committee, was formed on September 6, 1999, with the approval of the Chinese State Council. The president of BOBICO was Beijing's major Liu Qi, who led the city in preparations for the bid process.³⁹ Phase one lasted from February 1, 2000, to August 31, 2000. Beijing and other prospective host cities answered a questionnaire which was review in the early summer by a working group of external experts and IOC administration members. Beijing became an official candidate city for the 2008 Games on August 28, 2000. The other cities selected for phase two of the process were Istanbul, Osaka, Paris, and Toronto.

In phase two Beijing prepared for the visit of the IOC Evaluation Commission, which occurred between February 21 and February 24, 2001. The government in Beijing mobilized hundreds of thousands of workers, students, and party cadres to spruce up the city. Programs, such as the one for taxi drivers and subway workers entitled "Learning English to Help Beijing's Bid", were implemented to improve language and cultural knowledge in the capital city.⁴⁰ China stopped at nothing to show the IOC it was ready to host the prestigious Olympic Games. In the IOC's report in April of 2001, the views were very positive on nearly all aspects of Beijing as a potential Olympic host city. The IOC poll showed 96 percent support among residents of Beijing and other urban areas for a successful Beijing bid; China agreed to allow special importations of goods and visas for entry in the lead up to the Games, even though these measures differed from Chinese law.⁴¹ Some smaller issues, such as the choice of Tiananmen Square as the site for beach volleyball, were mentioned in the report but as alternatives existed the IOC did not foresee large difficulties on that. As for the main concerns of the IOC, in relation to the city's environmental

³⁹ "Beijing's Bid for the Olympic Games in 2008" <<http://www.chinaorbit.com/2008-olympics-china/2008-olympics-china.html>>, 1

⁴⁰ Larmer, 22

⁴¹ "Report of the IOC Evaluation Commission for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad in 2008" *International Olympic Committee* (Apr 3 2001), 60-61

obstacles, the Chinese claimed awarding them the Olympics would leave “the greatest Olympic Games environmental legacy ever”, as the Games would act as a impetus and catalyst for implementing environmental measures.

It was in the international media and among the opposition to the Beijing bid that most human rights concerns were voice during the 2008 bid process.⁴² Though the Chinese government continued to say human rights were not a political concern, but a matter of culture difference, some western politicians and organizations such as Amnesty International stated giving the Olympics to Beijing was equal to the IOC ignoring torture, political repression, summary execution, unfair detentions, and other abuses.⁴³ The United States government did remain overtly neutral on the bid itself, though many newspaper editorials leading up to the IOC decision stressed the IOC should get commitments from China that it would respect the Olympic ideals of humanitarianism, including media access and monitoring of labor practices.⁴⁴

With tensions high on both sides of the debate, Beijing and the other candidate cities for the 2008 Games had one last chance on July 13, 2001, to present their application for the Olympics before the IOC in Moscow.⁴⁵ That day, in the second round of voting, the IOC awarded Beijing the 2008 Olympic Games with 56 votes, while Toronto came in with 22 votes.⁴⁶ Jiang Zemin, then president of China, flew to Moscow the following day to meet with the IOC President, four IOC vice-presidents, and several other members of the committee. While there, IOC President Samaranch asked Jiang for a short private meeting, in which he discussed how China had an opportunity to change its international image through hosting the Games; during the meeting he also asked for a general pardon, assumed to mean for political prisoners.⁴⁷ These

⁴² Havelly, 1

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ “The Beijing Olympic Bid” *The New York Times* (Jul 12 2001), 1

⁴⁵ “Beijing’s Bid”, 1

⁴⁶ Brownell, *Beijing’s Games*, 144

⁴⁷ Brownell, *Beijing’s Games*, 144-145

juxtaposed ideas – a rising and changing China on the world scene with requests for improvements in human rights were not only a part of the bid process, but also entrenched in the international reaction and discussion since 2001.

In July 2001, the Chinese people were in a “delirious mood” at the decision they would host the world at the Olympic Games in 2008; there were celebrations across the country. Even in Taiwan, though there were fears of exacerbated nationalism that might affect Beijing-Taipei relations, there was also optimism that the Games would guarantee seven years of peace across the straits. Western newspaper editorials, however, did show some hostility similar to before the IOC decision and groups like Amnesty International encouraged China to improve their human rights policies, though the bid decision was not officially welcomed or condemned. Some of the most direct language in opposition to the IOC decision came from the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan activist groups; the Dalai Lama’s spokesperson stated in the summer of 2001 that awarding Beijing the Olympics put a “stamp of approval on Beijing’s human rights abuses”.⁴⁸ The reaction around the world was indeed mixed; even in Europe a French Parliament member likened the Beijing Olympics to Berlin and Moscow as a propaganda tool while the German Internal Minister said the Olympics would help promote democracy within the PRC. These debates have continued at an international level since 2001, and in the months prior to the Games disagreement about the lasting impacts the sporting event will bring to China still evokes issues of human rights and governance.

The modern Olympic Games have been used in negative contexts as a place to showcase war, implement boycotts, carry out protests, and even as a site for terrorist activity. Yet there is also hope in the political messages the event can provide as nations from around the globe come

⁴⁸ “Mixed reaction to Beijing 2008 Win” CNN.com (Jul 14 2001)
<<http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/14/beijing.olympics/index.html>>

together to compete and celebrate athletic achievement. In 2000, North and South Korea marched together in the opening ceremonies; though they competed separately the image of them united was a positive development for northeast Asia.⁴⁹ China has moved at a fast pace to prepare for the Games, not only in the sense of physical infrastructure but also cultivating its image in the international arena – even adopting the “Five Friendlies” as the Olympic mascots in November 2005.⁵⁰ The IOC has also become more interested in assessing the impact of the Olympic Games on host cities and host countries. Beijing will be the first host city to complete a full Olympic Games Impact Report (OGI) which covers 150 indicators from the period of when the candidacy for hosting began until two years after the Games are completed.⁵¹ The indicators that will be measure will be primarily quantitative, looking at economic growth and environmental criteria in Beijing, as it is harder to easily measure social change, cultural heritage, or political reform. Though the IOC is looking to the future for what Olympic legacies may exist, in order to better understand the impact the Beijing 2008 Games may have on human rights and political freedoms in China, it is necessary to examine the past and determine which factors may play the biggest role in connecting the Olympics to issues of rights.

Chapter 2: A Framework for Olympic Analysis

In order to best analyze the case of Beijing, several prior Olympic Games will be examined. The Olympics in Mexico City, Moscow, and Seoul Games will all be used. Before and during the international sporting events in each of these cities, the actions taken by domestic movements or the international community were aimed at the host country themselves. While in many other cases, such as the Montreal Olympics when African nations protested the

⁴⁹ Havelly, 2

⁵⁰ James Mann, *The China Fantasy: How Our Leaders Explain Away Chinese Repression*, (New York: Viking, 2000), 92

⁵¹ Brownell, *Beijing's Games*, 180

participation of New Zealand due to their rugby matches with apartheid South Africa or the raised gloved fists in a salute to Black Power by Tommie Smith and John Carlos on the podium in the Mexico City Games, action for political change was undertaken, but not aimed at the host country itself. In addition, the Games in these three cities were used by the host country for their own political purposes – to prove to the world they were ready to be accepted fully into the international community. The Games in Mexico City and Seoul, much like Beijing, took place after a period of high economic growth in the country, but without matching political liberalization. Using these rounds of the Olympic Games to analyze Beijing can provide a close comparison between factors in countries which more or less shared many large, overarching characteristics at the time they were Olympic hosts.

The Mexico City Games were planned in part to present Mexico as a forward-looking modern nation that was an aspirant to the First World; it was the first major international event hosted by Mexico since 1910, and thus was their chance to show what the revolution had done for the country.⁵² Mexico City first bid to host the 1956 Olympic Games, but due to insufficient networking within the International Olympic Committee and a political feud between English and Spanish speaking IOC delegates, Mexico lost the bid. In their bid attempt for the 1968 Games, Mexico made their argument by showing the robust economic growth the country was experiencing; their GDP was growing at between six and seven percent each year in the 1960's, dubbed the “miracle years” by Mexican politicians.⁵³ With their second attempt to host the Games, they won so many votes in the first round of IOC voting that a second round was not even necessary. The country's government then set out to prepare for the Games in October 1968.

⁵² Claire and Keith Brewster, “Mexico City 1968: Sombreros and Skyscrapers” in *National Identity and Global Sports Events*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 103; Mark Kurlansky, *1968: The Year that Rocked the World*, (New York: Balantine Books, 2004), 326

⁵³ Brewster, 104

In the years leading up to the 1968 Olympics, the most obvious controversy on the horizon were the United States race conflicts and the idea of a black boycott. However, along with Mexico's economic growth the country had also been experiencing some social dissatisfaction around the late 1950's. Several movements emerged in Mexico and could be seen through peasant revolts, protests of teachers unions, a strike of doctors over Social Security, and a rather large railroad strike in 1958.⁵⁴ Yet each action was quickly ended by the Mexican government, through co-opting the activists into the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) or carrying through with arrests or killings. For example, the PRI would create peasant organizations in various villages promoted as a way for the people to make changes and air their concerns, but in reality the groups were tightly controlled by the government and only those within the party had hope of making changes in Mexico. Because the Mexican president had to step down at the end of his term, despite the absolute power he held the PRI did not view itself as a dictatorship, but rather as revolutionary. Others, however, disagreed; the one major sector of Mexican society that opposed the government but was not under control by the PRI was Mexican students.

With Mexico's growing economy and new middle class, the number of students in the country was higher than ever. Gustavo Diaz Ordaz, a very conservative president elected in 1964, was concerned about the growing student movement and their support for other social and political rights causes, but did not know how to win them over with incentives like peasants and workers.⁵⁵ Alongside the other protest movements in Mexico in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Mexican students realized they had benefits much of the population did not have. Especially concerning to them was the high spending budgeted for Olympic planning. The Mexican people,

⁵⁴ Kurlansky, 328

⁵⁵ Ibid., 334

including the students, had little chance for participating in the preparation for the Games, but realized massive governmental expenditures were reserved for the international event, rather than solving their domestic grievances; over 200 million dollars was transferred from the social services budget to urban improvement projects in Mexico City.⁵⁶ These ideas about the Olympics' economic impact were added to their prior demands for the freeing of political prisoners, freedom of speech, and freedom of association, and became a focus of the rising discontent in the mid-1960s.⁵⁷ Because the government wanted no problems during the Olympics, the students' activities became a concern; the Ministry of the Interior, which Diaz Ordaz had previously been a part, had informants to carefully monitor the student movement.⁵⁸ The demands and actions of the students remained largely small and splintered until July 22, 1968. A fight broke out between two rival high schools which spread into a major plaza of the city. Mexican police and anti-riot military troops were nearby; they provoked the students and then exploded tear gas grenades in the area. As the students retreated, the police forces pursued them and beat many in the streets. Overall, twenty students had been arrested. Due to the brutality employed by the government troops, the student movement immediately had a cause the resonated with the rest of the Mexican public.

Over the next month, clashes continued between students and government forces. They demanded those arrested in July be released and that the government move towards a more democratic system. As more students and other Mexican citizens were injured or arrested, the size of the demonstrations held grew rapidly. By the end of August 1968, the students were able to mobilize up to 300,000 people for marches in Mexico City as well as demonstrations in other

⁵⁶ Ong, 45

⁵⁷ Helen Jefferson Lenskyj. *Inside the Olympic industry: power, politics, and activism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000, 109

⁵⁸ Kurlansky, 330

Mexican states.⁵⁹ Despite media controls put in place by the government, since the PRI oversaw newspaper publications and radio broadcasts, the students used street theater to disseminate information to the public of Mexico City; they staged loud skits in market places and other crowded areas to get information out and also began utilizing silk screen posters around the city. These tactics were crucial in gaining and maintain widespread public support for the demonstrations, rather than the efforts being only student-based.

In September Diaz Ordaz made the annual *Informe* speech; he stated the violations of law and order could not be allowed to continue and that the government would “do what we have to”.⁶⁰ By this point, the international media was running coverage of the Mexican protest, including in publications such as US News and World Report, which explicitly connected the protests to the upcoming Olympic Games. During September, the violence continued to escalate, including the Mexican army firing weapons upon students for the first time.

On October 2, 1968, just ten days before the opening ceremonies of the Olympics, the students planned a rally in Tlatelolco Plaza to announce the start of a hunger strike to occur in the week and a half before the Games. The action was aimed at securing the release of political prisoners in the country in the time the international media was most focused on the country. Because it was an announcement, rather than a rally, around 8,000 to 10,000 people were in attendance, including workers, students, and local families. A group of students were on a third floor balcony from which they could address the crowd; when they started the speech, helicopters suddenly appeared at one end of the plaza and everyone in the plaza started falling as gunfire erupted from above and below. Government agents were not only in the crowd, but had also made their way onto the balcony to shoot at the citizens below. When those in the plaza

⁵⁹ Larry Rohter, “20 Years After A Massacre, Mexico Still Seeks Healing for Its Wounds” *The New York Times* (Oct 2 1988), 2

⁶⁰ Kurlansky, 338

tried to flee, they were stopped by police at every exit.⁶¹ The gunfire is said to have continued for at least two hours. The Mexican media first reported four had died, and then changed the number to 12. However, the New York Times had an estimate of 20, the Guardian in the United Kingdom said up to 325 were killed, and it was estimated that thousands were arrested in the plaza.⁶²

The International Olympic Committee called an emergency meeting about the Games; a motion was proposed to cancel the Games completely due to the violence in Mexico City, but it lost by one vote.⁶³ Had the Games been cancelled, repression of students and any other movements within Mexico would have likely increased in brutality as a result of international embarrassment. The Games continued largely as planned, with extensively media coverage of the events prior and the Games, as they were the first Olympics to be televised live in color.⁶⁴ While the government control in the country was slightly boosted in that month and the student movement dissolved, the Tlatelolco Plaza massacre is seen as the start of the end of the PRI party.

In the long run, the events of 1968 in Mexico produced a common memory among the Mexican population and affected the way the rising generation of Mexicans viewed the country's problems. The widespread and high level support for public demonstrations affected every sector of society, not just students. The factions within the ruling party continued to widen as a result of continued discussion about the events and had a loss of political legitimacy, opposite of their original goal.⁶⁵ Octavio Paz, a Mexican Ambassador and popular writer, resigned from his

⁶¹ Ibid, 342

⁶² Alfred E Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1999, 138

⁶³ Lenskyj, 109

⁶⁴ "1968 Mexico City", *International Olympic Committee*, <www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/facts/introduction>

⁶⁵ Ryan Ong, "New Beijing, Great Olympics: Beijing and its Unfolding Olympic Legacy" *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* 4:2 (Summer 2004), 45

government post as a result of the Tlatelolco Plaza events and the embarrassing international media coverage of the events. His decision prevented the PRI from presenting a unified government line on their actions, especially since Paz had fame as a literary figure.⁶⁶ President Diaz Ordaz was succeeded by Luis Echeverria Alvarez in 1970, who tried to restore more consensus-building into the PRI. He tried to bring more students, intellectuals, and others back into the system.⁶⁷ He began to free political prisoners and increased funding for higher education, despite the central role students had played in the protests before the Olympics. Although the overall process of reform was not immediate, it is widely accepted that the 1968 demonstrations were the seeds of political and human rights reform in Mexico, leading to changes within and eventual end to the PRI party rule.

The 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City provided the students with a focal point for their discontent. Rather than separate movements for teachers, laborers, students, prisoners, and so on, the recognition that the Olympics were a vulnerable point for the government as it showed its face to the world and specifically targeting government actions related to the Olympics allowed the students to mobilize a broad-based movement in 1968. Street theater and posters helped to circumvent the government's media control and attempts to prevent demonstrations. The IOC continuing with the Games was important as a way to engage Mexico during a time of transition. Coupled with international media attention about the violence, the students' demands and claims of the number of people killed or arrested in Tlatelolco were validated and showed the government it could not continue without any modifications of their rule. In this way, Mexico as the host of the Olympic Games had to reckon with a united and focused domestic movement that otherwise would have remained small, splintered, and an unknown internal issue.

⁶⁶ Borden, Kara Michelle. "Mexico '68: An Analysis of the Tlatelolco Massacre and Its Legacy" June 2005, 38

⁶⁷ Rohter, 2

Russia took part in the Olympics in the early part of the 20th century, but as a communist nation the USSR first took part in the Olympics in 1952. The country first bid to host the 1976 Games but was not elected by the IOC.⁶⁸ In 1974, the IOC awarded Moscow the right to host the 1980 Games; their hosting was to symbolize the USSR's full integration into the Olympic Movement and the decision was made purely on sports grounds, such as facilities for the competitions. The Soviet Kremlin also realized the opportunity the Olympics provided to impress their own citizens and those of other countries as the world focused on them for not only the two weeks of the Games, but also the months leading up to the event; the Soviet government was prepared to exploit the chance to host the Olympics to the fullest extent possible.⁶⁹ However, their worst fears were realized with the threat of a United States-led boycott.

On December 27, 1979, the USSR invaded Afghanistan. Jimmy Carter, the president of the US at the time, accused Moscow of "aggressive actions" and implemented a number of economic and political sanctions. The push for a boycott of the 1980 Olympic Games had the biggest public relations value of all the western actions taken against the Soviets.⁷⁰ The United States Olympic Committee (USOC) alone could make the decision on American participation in the Games, and in January 1980 was the object of strong government pressure for the decision. On January 20, 1980, President Carter insisted that the International Olympic Committee transfer, postpone, or cancel the Games scheduled to be held in Moscow, unless the USSR removed their troops from Afghanistan within a month; he later sent a message to the USOC explaining his opposition to the US sending a team to the Moscow Games, based on international

⁶⁸ Hill, Christopher R. *Olympic Politics* 2nd Ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996, 120.

⁶⁹ Derick L. Hulme, *The Political Olympics: Moscow, Afghanistan, and the 1980 US Boycott*. New York: Praeger, 1990, 75.

⁷⁰ Vinokur, 116

law, human rights, and the national security of the United States and other free world nations.⁷¹ Soon after, the House of Representatives voted 386 to 12 to urge the USOC to press the IOC to transfer the location of the Games or to cancel the Games; the Senate approved a United States boycott of the Games regardless of whether or not the USSR withdrew their troops from Afghanistan.⁷²

At first, the USOC tried to argue the best way to deal with the situation would be for the United States to send a team to the Games and beat the Soviets within the realm of sports. However, due to public opinion and government support to withdraw, in April 1980 the USOC voted for the US boycott with a two-to-one margin, based on concerns over the invasion of Afghanistan and the status of political freedoms with the USSR.⁷³ The US thought a boycott of the Olympic Games would increase domestic unrest; with the Games being stolen from the Soviet people, it was expected they would feel betrayal and blame the USSR government policies for the lack of participation of many around the globe. As a result, they would demand the government use truth rather than propaganda and change their methods and policies.⁷⁴ The decision to withdraw from the Games was done with the assumption that Western Europe would follow the American example.

Despite the plans of the US, the Moscow boycott was not fully supported in the western world.⁷⁵ First of all, American athletes strongly opposed the action because they felt it unfairly punished them and wasted their time and effort in training. Secondly, although 42 countries declined the invitation to attend the Moscow Games, 81 National Olympic Committees did send delegations, compared with 88 at the Montreal Games in 1976 and 112 at the 1972 Munich

⁷¹ Hill, 127

⁷² Hill, 123

⁷³ Vinokur, 117

⁷⁴ Hulme, 78

⁷⁵ Taylor, 193

Games.⁷⁶ The Games continued with what was considered high athletic quality, and the United States was seen as incapable of forming a united western response, even during the Cold War.⁷⁷

As the Games ended in Moscow, the world realized the best efforts of the US and many European nations had not achieved their desired goals. The Soviets showed no signs of leaving Afghanistan and little impression had been made on the people in the USSR. Largely due to the government's propaganda efforts and controls on the media and other access to information, potentially severe internal impacts could be mitigated; the people within the country saw little connection between the invasion of Afghanistan and the Olympic boycott and had no domestic movements for change or reform leading up to the Games.⁷⁸ In fact, once the Games were underway the Soviet people were thrilled and proud of the athletic achievements and success of their country's hosting the Games. Little international media attention focused on the Games as well; there was virtually no coverage in the United States, and countries such as Britain and Japan eliminated the majority of television time originally allotted to the Games. Without real domestic or international pressure for change, and a relatively successful Olympic Games, although the USSR did not improve its prestige as planned, they had no reason to loosen their hold on power or pursue political reform.

The boycott not only was a negative action in itself, though withdrawing participation in the Games, but also caused the west to forgo positive opportunities to engage with the USSR. Attending the Games would have been an opportunity for both journalists and spectators to enter the country, impacting the economy, politics, and society as well as being able to carefully examine and report on life in the USSR. Most estimates are that between 300,000 and 400,000 additional foreigners would have traveled to Moscow for the Games had there not been a boycott

⁷⁶ Hill, 129; Siekmann, 188

⁷⁷ Hulme, 76

⁷⁸ Ibid., 78

in place; this could have been a large step in breaking down the barriers between the East and West and helping to socialize the USSR towards western norms regarding democracy and rights issues.⁷⁹ A stubborn nation like the USSR did not move towards more humanitarian goals, but in another result of the 1980 boycott staged their own action against the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

While the Moscow Games did not produce or speed up reform in the USSR, it does show a lesson as to what the Olympics aim to accomplish. The Games are an international forum where various cultures, ideas, and talents can meet and celebrate both athletics and the goodwill of mankind. Through a boycott, the participating countries go against these ideals and fail to allow common understanding or exchange work through the Olympic Movement. By not engaging the USSR, the international community left little hope for change in the Soviet Union. Engagement, on the other hand, could have impacted the country's path towards reform by producing new ideas in the country and producing domestic pressure for change. In addition, the strict controls the government put in place further prevented any demonstrations or protests within the country. With little international media attention and few challenging the government from within, the USSR was secure to maintain its current policies and stance on political freedoms, human rights, and their decision to invade Afghanistan. What the Moscow case shows is that with strict government control and a lack of true international engagement with the host country, the Olympics are unlikely to act as a catalyst for political reform.

The country of South Korea first considered bidding to host the Olympic Games in the 1970's under President Park Chung Hee; this idea was continued under the following leader Chun Doo Hwan. Both heads of government wanted to show the world the Korean economic miracle and boost the legitimacy of their rule.

⁷⁹ Hill, 129

In the 1970's and 1980's, South Korea was going through a period of high economic growth due to their modernization efforts of the late 1960's and early 1970's; their economic growth was not unlike that of Mexico a decade earlier. Politically the country had not changed as much as in its economic sector. A growing middle class which saw economic freedom began to demand more rights politically.⁸⁰ This push was strengthened in 1979 after the assassination of Park Chung Hee. Because sentiments for democracy had been suppressed under Park, South Koreans saw this as an opportunity to move towards more democratic governance. However, on December 12, 1979, a military coup was completed by General Chun Doo Hwan, dashing many hopes for democracy.⁸¹ Opposition to the coup spread as many South Korean citizens demonstrated against Chun's government. In the spring, martial law was expanded by the government and students and others in the country continued to fight against police presence. The clash reached its peak in May of 1980 when bloodshed resulted in Kwangju between civilians and the police; the citizens of the town had thrown out the military forces and taken control of the town for one week. After a few days, one early morning Black Beret troops untrained in crowd control were sent into Kwangju in the south of the country and between 150 and 200 activists were killed.⁸² Over one thousand people were arrested. The government under Chun largely reestablished control over the country by using Kwangju as an example and denounced the demonstrators as a rebellion to overthrow the government. The domestic media was silenced by the pressure of the Chun regime.⁸³

Only 17 months later, the IOC met in Baden-Baden to elect the 1988 Olympic Host.

While five cities were contesting for the Games, the two main candidates were Nagoya, Japan

⁸⁰ Bezanson, 1248

⁸¹ Bezanson, 1249

⁸² James Larson. *Global Television and the Politics of the Seoul Olympics*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1993, 159

⁸³ Chen Kuide, "Two Historical Turning Points: The Seoul and Beijing Olympics" in *China Rights Forum: 2008 and Beyond*, No. 3, 37

and Seoul, South Korea. There were several large problems facing Seoul due to concern around the world about the possibility of Seoul hosting the Games and their own situation: the tension between North and South Korea, the stability of the South Korean government because of the recent chaos, and the fact that many IOC members recognized North Korea, not South Korea, while all recognized Japan.⁸⁴ The International Olympic Committee, while only looking at the physical preparation of sports facilities in their decision, still knew some risk was involved with the vote. In the end, Seoul was selected as the host city for the 1988 Olympic Games with a vote of 52 over Japan with 27.⁸⁵ It was to be the second Olympic Games held in Asia, after the 1964 Games in Tokyo, Japan. Once the decision was announced, human rights activists and many in the west criticized the IOC; throughout the late 1970's and 1980's South Korea was largely vilified in the international media and affected the way the world looked at South Korea in the lead up to 1988.⁸⁶ During the 1980's as South Korea prepared for the Games, the IOC did take a slightly more active role on more politically-based mechanisms than they had in the past. Because of tensions between North Korea and South Korea, with the possibility of aggressive action or a boycott, the IOC wanted to preserve the continuance of the Olympic movement after the series of boycotts from 1976 to 1984. However, their involvement in the domestic political affairs of South Korea was nearly non-existent as the country continued to experience a push for the government to change. Yet the timing of the bid and Olympic preparation closely tied politics in the country to the international sporting event.

Throughout the 1980's dissatisfaction with the government continued to grow in South Korea; the movement was spearheaded by students and laborers, but also involved people in many other social groups. One of the main demands was constitutional reform for changes in the

⁸⁴ Pound, Richard W, *Five Rings Over Korea: The Secret Negotiations Behind the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul*, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 2004), 6-7.

⁸⁵ Larmer 23

⁸⁶ Pound, ix

election process, such as the direct election of the president. Thus, the dissent in the country was sparked again on April 13 of 1987, just over a year before the Games were to begin.

In April 1987, President Chun announced that discussions about constitutional reform would be postponed until after the Olympic Games and that the election to take place in December of that year would still be done under the electoral college.⁸⁷ Mass demonstrations resulted and quickly escalated. On the same day as the announcement, over 4000 students protested. By four days later, they had mobilized 160,000 students in total. Apart from the students and workers, many ordinary middle class citizens also joined in active dissent in reaction to Chun's announcement.⁸⁸ A main factor of these demonstrations was strength through having a broad social base, even more far reaching than the protests in the early 1980's. By June the entire country was being affected by the movement, especially after Chun declared Roh Tae Woo the candidate for the presidential elections in the end of the year, which was seen as handing him the presidency without change. One million people marched in Seoul in support for a constitutional amendment and across the country over 8.3 million South Koreans engaged in some sort of protest during June.⁸⁹ Yet the domestic pressure was not the only source of discomfort for Chun's government; on the eve of the Olympics the international media provided worldwide coverage of the South Korean demonstrations and encouraged the Korean people while waiting for an answer from the government.

It is widely believed that because of the media attention and the spotlight on Seoul in 1987 as a result of their hosting the Olympics the following year, the government was forced to respond to the people in a way that accommodated their demands; this occurred instead of either ignoring them or repressing them, which would have likely been the result without the pressure

⁸⁷ Chen Kuide, 37

⁸⁸ Hill, 162

⁸⁹ Chen Kuide, 37

on the eve of the Games.⁹⁰ While before the age of television and the start of the telecommunications revolution the stage on which the Olympics was held was small, after television coverage of the Games became a norm, the international media was a new force with which host countries had to reckon.⁹¹ Because the government had to create conditions that would allow the Seoul Olympics to proceed successfully, the demands for change were answered by Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae Woo.

The media presence and knowledge the world was watching was a catalyst for change; the South Korean people knew they had gathered the attention of the world and throughout June did not retract any of their demands. At the same time, the government began to frame their discussions and statements in a way that reflected their acknowledgement that the domestic pressure and world's scrutiny before the Olympics meant change had to occur. On June 29, 1987, Roh Tae Woo made an announcement that he, as the presidential candidate for the ruling party, accepted the demands of the opposition including a direct election and political amnesty for the opposition leader Kim Dae Jung. During his speech, known as the June 29th Declaration, he explicitly mentioned the Olympic Games several times, stating that the "Olympics are around the corner" and that action must be taken to "prevent national disgrace".⁹² The reform program to be implemented also included the release of political prisoners, guarantee of fundamental human rights and the rule of law, and tolerance towards multiple political parties. Later that year, major amendments were made to the Korean constitution and the December 1987 elections proceeded with a democratic and direct election for the president.

The media coverage of the Games themselves mirrored the increase in television coverage South Korea received in 1987 and 1988. With participation reaching 159 National

⁹⁰ Robert Siegel, "Analysis: Beijing Bids for 2008 Olympic Games", All Things Considered – NPR (Jun 13 2001), 1

⁹¹ Senn, xviii

⁹² Larson, 161

Olympic Committees, the Games were heralded a success after the boycotts of the most recent Games and commanded the world's attention.⁹³ The lack of participation from North Korea and a handful of other communist nations was not seen to negatively impact the Olympics. For the opening ceremony in Seoul, 51 million viewers worldwide were tuned into to watch.⁹⁴ More than 160 nations broadcast coverage of the Games with a total of 10,500 hours of television.⁹⁵ After the Games, the political process resumed quickly and there was no backlash against those who had demonstrated prior to the Games.⁹⁶

Naturally, it cannot be said the Seoul Olympics caused the political liberalization in South Korea. Some factors, such as the economic growth bringing urbanization and a breakdown of traditional values were occurring regardless of the Games. However, several factors directly related to the Olympics combined to create a catalyst for political and human rights reform. First, the government wanted to use the Games to increase their own legitimacy and show off the country's economic success to the world; thus, it made the government vulnerable to criticism resulting in their own media spotlight. Secondly, a widespread domestic movement including citizens from all sectors of society pressed for specific reforms and changes. The media attention focused on South Korea and international engagement with the country in the lead up to the Games then created conditions in which the government had to respond to the will of the people. Without the Olympics, the domestic support may have been strong but there would have been no timeframe in which the people felt acting was critical and the government would not have received so much international attention; although in the long run changes may have eventually resulted, the quick pace in which political liberalization occurred was impacted by the hosting of

⁹³ "Harmony and Progress in the land of morning calm", *International Olympic Committee*, <
www.olympic.org/uk/news/olympic_news/full_story_uk.asp?id=2316>

⁹⁴ Richard Sandomir, "Olympics: Roundup; Television: Viewership Stays Even" *The New York Times* (Aug 15 2004), 1.

⁹⁵ Larson, 5

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 245

the Olympics by Seoul. The relationship between South Korea's reform and the Olympic Games in Seoul is closely linked in terms of timing and in pushing the government to make more immediate change towards democracy and human rights in Korea.

Comparing the Games in Mexico City and Seoul, while contrasting them with the Moscow Olympics, shows that there are several dynamics surrounding a large international sporting event such as the Olympics that when present allow the event to act as a catalyst towards political and human rights reform in the host country. In all three of these cases, the governments of the host country wanted to use their hosting of the Olympic Games to show off their accomplishments on the world stage or otherwise use the Games for more legitimacy and respect for the ruling administration. While it seems this factor is not sufficient for reform, as it existed in the USSR despite little change occurring post-Olympics, it does make the government more vulnerable to protest actions of their people or the international community; a challenge to a country hoping to make the best impression possible helps condition their response. In addition, in each case the IOC not only elected these three host cities despite the political risk the decision held, but also in the face of crisis decided to allow the Games to continue to be held. As the Moscow boycott showed disengagement from a country can lead to a loss of opportunity to promote political reform or spread ideas, the small but significant IOC role in carrying out the Games is also important.

However, the two most important factors of the Olympics in regards to provoking reform are giving a focal point for domestic unrest and the large amount of international media coverage to the host country before and during the Games. A government may not have to respond directly to criticisms from outside the nation; however, when its own people are demanding change

something has to be done to either concede to their demands or suppress the movement. In both Mexico City and Seoul, large scale demonstrations took place in the one to two years leading up to the countries' Olympic Games. While these types of movements can exist in isolation from a major international event, in Mexico many of the complaints were due to Olympic preparations themselves; street theater and other information dissemination tactics helped mitigate government controls and propaganda, allowing the movement to be sustained. In Seoul, the government's announcement that discussions on constitutional reform would be postponed until after the Games incited mass marches throughout the country. The Games in both cases provided a limited time in which the people could act, and thus increased the intensity of mobilization. Coupled with the domestic actions, international media attention helped to give strength to the opposition while preventing a government crackdown on the activists. Especially in Seoul, once television coverage of the Olympic Games had become popular, the government felt compelled to switch policies rather than jeopardize their Games and risk international censure with a harsh reaction to their citizens' demands. In Moscow, the people were under strict media control, felt they too had a stake in the Games, and were inundated with propaganda, so there was no widespread domestic push for governmental change at the time the Games occurred. With the USSR under tight control and the boycott leading to a dramatic reduction in television coverage of the pre-Games period and the Games themselves, the possibilities for political or rights reform were greatly diminished.

While the specific internal dynamics and international diplomatic relationships each country has differ, using these factors can help determine the extent to which a country's political liberalization and human rights guarantees may be affected by their hosting of the Olympic Games. Turning to Beijing, evaluating the government's motives, domestic people's

sentiments, and international media attention concerning the Games, as well as statements made by the IOC, are crucial to understanding any possible connections between the 2008 Olympics and China's own processes of political reform.

Chapter 3: One World, One Dream: Perspectives on Beijing's 2008 Games

Beijing plans for the Olympics to be China's emergence on the world stage. The city has been preparing for the bid since the National Games of 1987, which were attended by the President of the IOC at the time, and the 1990 Asian Games.⁹⁷ Throughout the bid process China stressed its ancient culture, developing economy, and sports achievements to show the best possible aspects of modern China to the world. China aims to win the most medals of any country in attendance, and more than the United States won in Athens in 2004; overall, they hope to show the world a China that is no longer a developing country, but an industrialized modern nation.⁹⁸ From Beijing's angle, the Olympics are being used to further the country's political and diplomatic goals; it puts China on an equal plane with past Olympic hosts and secures China's standing as a major power in the world. Despite this, the Games still provide a major channel through which the international community can engage with China. Unlike the tensions in 1980 leading up to the Moscow Games in which the west lost an opportunity to have cultural, athletic, and even possible political dialogue with the USSR, China and the world will come together in August of 2008.

The government in Beijing is fully aware that hosting the Olympic Games provides not only opportunity for the country and their own benefit, but also opens China up to the world in a way it has never experienced, including the potential to make the regime vulnerable to attack.

⁹⁷ Brownell, 314, 316

⁹⁸ Lind, 38

Thus, the Chinese government is taking no chances in terms of media coverage, and has used strict measures and massive propaganda efforts to keep domestic sentiments under their control. Beyond monitoring Chinese newspapers, television, radio, and other information sources, many efforts have also been made to limit foreign journalists and delve into the plans of foreign activist organizations, despite promises of allowing free press before and during the Olympic Games. In September 2006 new measures were implemented for foreign journalists reporting from China, allowing fewer restrictions as long as the agency was approved and the news coverage was not damaging, among other specifications.⁹⁹ Restrictions that were lifted included needing permission to report from places other than a base city or having heavily specific approval for travel throughout the country. In early 2008, it was thought the new rules may even be extended past the original expiration date of October 17, 2008.¹⁰⁰ However, because the list of information that cannot be released is so far reaching, even news that might demean China or hurt its reputation, many international NGOs have cited these new rules as merely a gesture trying to cover up continued media control of even foreign reporters working within China's borders.¹⁰¹ In an effort to preemptively head off any demonstration or protest before or during the Games, the Chinese government is also said to have been conducting their broadest intelligence collection ever, looking into the activities of both domestic and foreign groups as a precaution against being caught off guard.¹⁰²

One of the main sources of media and transfer of information in China is the internet; blogs and short videos allow for individuals to express their opinion in a space harder to control

⁹⁹ "Measures for Administering the Release of News and Full Information in China by Foreign News Agencies" People's Daily Online (Sep 10 2006), < http://english.gov.cn/2006-09/10/content_383755_3.htm >, 1

¹⁰⁰ Kate Holton, "China May Extend Eased Press Rules", The Guardian, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport>> 1

¹⁰¹ "HRIC Statement: China's Foreign News Rules Spell Trouble for an Open Olympics", Human Rights in China (Sep 11 2006), <<http://hrichina.org/public/contents/30669>>

¹⁰² Moises Naim, "The Battle of Beijing" Foreign Policy 163:96 (Nov/Dec 2007), 96

than a newspaper or television broadcast. The internet is used to both communicate and to directly organize within China and around the world, including with international organizations and non-governmental organizations that otherwise would not be allowed to operate domestically. However, despite the low-tech methods often employed by the government, they are able to prevent the internet from becoming a forum producing a real challenge to their regime. For example, in a study done by the Rand Corporation it was found that China focused on creating an environment of self-censorship, or producing the idea that because they are being watched, people will be less likely to try to express a critical view in the first place.¹⁰³ Through methods such as surveillance, confiscating computer equipment, and using informers, the government has been relatively successful in keeping dissent on the internet from becoming a widespread protest movement in the country, much the same as print media. While the technological options open to reformers are much more sophisticated today than the silk screen posters and street theater in Mexico City, the countermeasures implemented by the government can quickly keep up to maintain control of the flow of information in the country.

In addition, beyond negative actions in media controls, to get people involved in the preparation for the Games the Chinese government has stressed the positive role of the “People’s Olympics” as one of their three main focuses for the Beijing Olympics.¹⁰⁴ Included in this notion is the idea that importance should be placed on the collective or whole of society and duty owed to it, rather than on individuals; this also helps counter criticism on human rights standards, which focuses on specific and personal freedoms of each person.¹⁰⁵ The nationalism and support of the Chinese people for the Games is genuine; from the high percentage of backing the bid got

¹⁰³ Michael S. Chase and James C. Mulvenon, *You’ve Got Dissent!: Chinese Dissent Use of the Internet and Beijing’s Counter Strategies*, (RAND, 2002), xiii.

¹⁰⁴ Ong, 46

¹⁰⁵ Kirsten Sparre and Jakob Staun, “The Olympic Games as a Force for Social Change” Play the Game.org, 1

during the time in which Beijing was a candidate city for the Games to the English classes many service sector workers in Beijing are now involved in, the people of China feel a part of the Olympic movement and are looking forward to hosting the world at a successful Games.

Partially as a result of media controls and propaganda campaigns, not only prior to the Olympic Games but often as a normal precaution, there is no widespread or broad based movement for political reform within China as there was in Mexico or South Korea before they held the Olympics. While there are labor strikes or peasant protests reported from China, actions against government policies or demanding greater rights and privileges tend to be localized and fragmented from other causes or groups. In Mexico City, students and others rallied around Olympic spending, government brutality, and the need for reform; in South Korea a new wave of protests was spurred on when Chun Doo Hwan announced discussions for constitutional change would be postponed until after the Olympics. In China, there is no unifying cause for the public to support; many see the economic benefit the Games will bring to the country as well as the international prestige. Those who do have grievances have not networked with others in such a way that broad-based movement can quickly result which incorporates all sectors of the society. The lack of a large domestic movement towards democratic reform, popular elections, or guarantees of civil and political rights is a major factor missing from the equation of reform in the pre or immediate post Olympic period in China. No movement close to the demonstrations seen in Mexico City or Seoul is expected for China in the near future. If there were such a movement that unexpectedly started to emerge, the CCP government is also in a more robust and strong position than either President Chun's administration in South Korea during the late 1980's or the PRI government in Mexico in the late 1960's.¹⁰⁶ In fact, the media and propaganda measures implemented much more resemble the USSR prior to the 1980 Games, overall

¹⁰⁶ Black and Benzanson, 1258

preventing domestic disturbance or demands for political change. The Chinese government is too well established while domestic dissent remains largely weak, thus there is no basis for a movement towards electoral democracy or a change of governance from within the country, an important dynamic needed to start meaningful political reform.

In March 2007, unrest in Tibet became the largest uprising from the area in 20 years; while the international community looks to this as a possible impetus for change in China, a closer inspection of the government response, media controls, and domestic sentiments provides an example of how these factors in the country stop massive demonstrations that would lead to political liberalization pre-Olympics. In the first week of disturbances, while the global media began running stories on the violence in Lhasa, the Chinese official news agency Xinhua had only published two very short stories mentioning the events in Tibet; one story covered the shops which had been set on fire while the other mentioned vehicle fires and a few injuries. Nothing more was said in the domestic media and the majority of Chinese citizens remained unaware of the extent to which the world was watching Tibet at that point.¹⁰⁷ In the international media, nearly every article connected the unrest in Lhasa and other Tibetan areas of China to the upcoming Olympic Games; the world waited to see how the government would respond to the monks and other Tibetan people – with violence or with accommodation.¹⁰⁸ Yet within the country, once the population became aware of what was occurring and the way the international media portrayed the events, the reaction was outrage. Seeing Tibet as an area liberated by the CCP and as an area with historical ties to China, the government's actions in quelling the protests were actually met with widespread approval in most parts of China.¹⁰⁹ Criticisms instead

¹⁰⁷ "Chinese media silent on Tibet", BBC Online (Mar 14 2008) <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7296597.stm>>, 1

¹⁰⁸ Shirong Chen, "Tibet Poses Dilemma for Beijing", BBC Online (Mar 14 2008) <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7297249.stm>>

¹⁰⁹ Edward Cody, "Beijing's Crackdown Gets Strong Domestic Support", *Washington Post* (Mar 16 2008), A12.

were aimed at the western media and outsiders infringing on the sovereignty and internal affairs of their nation, including outrage that the western media did not acknowledge that the shopkeepers killed in Lhasa were of Han Chinese ethnicity. In addition, apart from tightly controlled domestic coverage of the events, the Chinese government refused to let foreign journalists into the region and forced those already in Lhasa to leave, thus using media controls to prevent any news but their own to be broadcast. These restrictions on the travel of journalists went against the Chinese implemented media freedoms rules implemented for the period before and during the Games.

Compared to the western reaction in 1979 to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, even the international community has shown some restraint in their response to the Tibetan protests. As President Carter quickly turned to the idea of a boycott in early 1980, Bush confirmed that he was still planning to attend the opening ceremony of the Beijing Games in August.¹¹⁰ While several European leaders changed their travel plans and started to talk about a boycott, by the end of March the European Union decided strongly against a boycott of the Games, and instead focusing on celebrating athletics and engaging with the Asian nation.¹¹¹ Around the same time, a small group of journalists and diplomats were able to visit Lhasa on a controlled tour. While the situation in Tibet is one of the main human rights or political issues well known and supported throughout the world, within China it simply does not resonate with the Chinese population. In addition, because these actions are compared with Tibetan protests in 1989, nearly 20 years ago, it shows that even relatively small-scale disturbances such as these are not frequent occurrences in the country. Therefore, while many point to the recent incidents in Tibet as pushing for change in China, through media silence and a lack of domestic support, these demonstrations are

¹¹⁰ Lachlan Carmichael, "Tibet Crisis Won't Dissuade Bush from Attending Olympics" AFP (Mar 20 2008), < <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5i3hPNxWVeKCLCn6-Tc0vltpkOwIQ>>, 1

¹¹¹ Oana Lungescu, "Call for Olympic Boycott Rejected" BBC Online (Mar 28 2008) < <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7319147.stm>>

unlikely to have a lasting impact on Chinese politics before the Olympic Games in August. Rather, the case stands as a representative example of the internal dynamics of China in the pre-Olympic period.

While the domestic demands for reform and information flows in China are currently very different than the dynamics in Mexico and South Korea that allowed the Olympics to be a catalyst for political reform, the IOC role remains similar. Keeping with their avoidance of overtly political issues, the IOC has refused to respond to inquiries about China's human rights record.¹¹² In addition, as a reaction to the violence in Tibet, the IOC President Jacques Rogge said "it was right to award the Games to China", as it would open up the country to the ideas of the Olympic Movement and also subject the country to media scrutiny. While the lack of IOC action in response to concerns over China's political liberalization process is disappointing to many, at the very least it still provides for engagement with the country, which was lacking in the Moscow 1980 Games. Like for the Mexico City or Seoul Games, the willingness of the IOC to continue with the Games in the face of international pressure and domestic disturbances allows for interaction to take place and is a positive step for influencing China's reform.

While China lacks the domestic sentiments for reform, the factor that is a major part of the 2008 Olympics is international media attention surrounding the Games. Already, in countries like the United States and in western Europe, China is featured daily in the international news. Many of the stories are concerning economic development, politics, and changes in Chinese society, but in 2007 and 2008 most stories at least mention the preparations for the Olympic Games. In addition, during the Games themselves it is expected that 21,600 accredited media journalists and up to 10,000 unaccredited reporters will be in Beijing to cover the sporting events

¹¹² "In the Interest of Transparency..." China Rights Forum: Inspiring Change No. 4, *Human Rights in China* (2007), 72.

and city life.¹¹³ Worldwide, over 4 billion people are expected to watch Olympic coverage on television, the internet, or on mobile phones.¹¹⁴ In Sydney, around 3.6 billion people watched at least part of the Games and Athens set records even higher. Beijing will have the most available coverage, due to increased technology for mobile viewers, and is also expected to reach the most people worldwide of any previous Olympics. International media is and will be an important part of the Beijing Olympics. The influx of journalists and foreign spectators will have an impact on Beijing and the rest of the country through cultural exchange and free flow of ideas. The Olympics will also likely lead to an increase in tourism to and media coverage of China after the Games end, thus continuing this impact of the Games long past August 2008. However, at the same time, because there is no large scale domestic movement for reform that the media can latch onto, the dynamics of Mexico City or especially Seoul are unlikely to occur. International media can pressure China's government to a certain extent on rights issues and reform related to their promises for the Olympics and within normal media scrutiny, but without pressure from below China will be able to sideline critics with claims of non-interference and sovereignty over their internal affairs. There is no domestic movement which international media can push the national government to respond to or accommodate, thus the interaction of these two factors will not resemble Mexico City or Seoul and the path to reform sped up by the Olympic Games.

Looking from the factors of government motives and actions, domestic sentiments, international media coverage, and the engagement of the IOC and international community, no past Olympic Games can completely match expectations for Beijing. In terms of the Olympics being China's official debut to the world, it is similar to Mexico City, Moscow, and Seoul. Yet while the international community is participating in the Games, engaging with China, and

¹¹³ Brownell, *Beijing's Games*, 190

¹¹⁴ "Beijing Expects four billion TV viewers for '08 Games" Reuters (Jun 13 2007) <
<http://www.reuters.com/article/sportsNews/idUSPEK13174420070613?feedType=RSS&rpc=22>>, 1

making the Beijing Olympics a feature in the media, much like the situation prior to Mexico City and Seoul reforms, in terms of media control, propaganda, and domestic sentiments, the elements of the Beijing Games more closely resemble those of the Moscow Olympics. Comparing and contrasting the dynamics of the Games in Beijing with the factors surrounding these past Olympic cases, including the important agents which influenced the ability of the Olympic Games to act as a catalyst for reform, has important implications for the Olympic legacy in China.

Conclusions

A former president of the International Olympic Committee once said “sports is completely free of politics”; yet whether one examines the overall implications of the ancient or contemporary Games, it is clear the Olympics is more than a pure celebration of athletic excellence and achievement. Olympic host countries have used the opportunity of inviting the world to attend the Games to display history, culture, economic development, and society; Japan in 1964 and South Korea in 1988 both saw the Olympics being held in their country as part of their full acceptance into the international community. Likewise, the Olympic movement has also been used for more outright political demonstrations and boycotts and as a platform for protest; the 1972 Games in Munich are most remembered for the death of Israeli hostages captured from the Olympic village. Yet the Olympics have not only been a static forum for athletic competition, political tension, and interaction between the world’s nations; the Games are also cited as a movement that can push a host country towards political reform and the improvement of human rights.¹¹⁵ The Games are so visible throughout the world, that even governments and countries that try to use it for their own advantage can be overwhelmed by the

¹¹⁵ Manheim, 279-295

factors such as domestic pressure and international media attention leading up to and during the Olympic events.

Approaching the Beijing Games in 2008, the debate over the impact the Olympics may have on Chinese society is daily featured in international news and discussed by scholars. While each host country has its own unique traits and history that impact its own hosting of the Olympic Games, it is useful to look at past Olympics to see what factors of the country and Olympics were brought together in producing or preventing political reform.

Through an analysis of the Olympics held in Mexico City, Moscow, and Seoul, several factors surrounding the Olympics come to light as important in producing reform; the absence of these factors diminish the potential for the host country to undergo reform as a direct implication of the Olympic Games; identifying these factors at work in Beijing sheds light on prospects for changes in China.

For Mexico, the USSR, and Seoul, the Games were to show off the countries' accomplishments and allow the nation to step onto the world stage. While the governments aimed to use the Olympics towards building up their own strength, it also made them somewhat vulnerable to demands of their own citizens or the international community. Yet for these countries, a smooth preparation process was not always the end result; the combination of world engagement with the host country, international media attention, and domestic demands for reform are shown to be crucial in leading to changes within a host country's political system.

In Moscow, due to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Cold War tensions, the majority of the west boycotted the Games; the US-led effort was aimed to produce an expansion of liberties in the USSR as well as force the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. However, neither of these goals were accomplished. On the contrary, many scholars believe the west lost

the chance to send representatives into the country, influence Soviet mindsets, and use the media to scrutinize Soviet society. It is well documented that media coverage prior to and during the Moscow Games was much lower than originally planned for as a result of so many western National Olympic Committees not sending a delegation of athletes.¹¹⁶ Thus despite the Olympics being held in the USSR, a lack of international engagement combined with little media attention and no domestic push for reform allowed the Games to continue without any major course of reform following.

The Mexico City and Seoul Games, however, were both catalysts in each respective country's liberalization process. In both instances, the world took the positive step of engaging with the country and sending Olympic teams to compete. In addition, with Mexico City being the first Games to be broadcast live in color and the Seoul Games occurring in the midst of the telecommunications revolution, international media coverage of both Games were high. Thus, when domestic unrest began to erupt prior to the Games, the world paid attention and the media coverage forced each government to begin to respond to their people's demands. In Mexico City, a massacre just ten days before the country's Olympic Games produced outrage among the general population; the protests aimed at spending and governmental policies before the Games were the start of delegitimizing the rule of the PRI. People from across social and class boundaries joined together in these protests, producing viable opposition sentiments to which the government had to respond.

These same factors played out similarly in Seoul; international media attention on demonstrations following the government's announcement to postpone discussion on constitutional reform was essential to the government switching its stance. The combination of domestic unrest and international attention produce a "boomerang effect", projecting the

¹¹⁶ Hill, 129

demands worldwide and then coming back to bear on the government from above as well as below. Without international media coverage, these types of demonstrations could have been crushed by the government through any means necessary with little repercussions on their rule and authority worldwide. The media then helped the domestic citizens' voices to be heard and taken seriously by their government. Therefore, from these three case studies it can be theorized that when the world engages with an Olympic host, rather than boycotting, and both strong domestic sentiments for reform and a high level of international media attention exist, the Olympic Games can and have acted as a catalyst for reform in the host country.

Likewise, the Beijing Olympics are seen by the country as its debut on the world stage; the Games will help China display its economic market and trade potential, spread its culture and history, and help it move towards its aim of regaining its prior great power status. It is therefore important that the world is engaging with China; dialogue and exchange, as well as respecting China's own hopes for the Games, is important for progress to be made in political liberalization. The country is featured daily in the international media, in terms of economic and trade news, political situations, and also a focus on human rights and civil liberties within the country. However, the major factor missing in the case of the Beijing Olympics is widespread domestic unrest that is mobilizing broad sectors of the Chinese population.

Domestic protests and dissident activities do occur in China. However, through media control, propaganda, and a culture of self-censorship created by the government, no issue has yet come to the forefront to unite the Chinese population in demanding governmental or political reform. Even the recent protests in Tibet, while capturing the attention of the international community, are objected to by the majority of the Chinese people, who then support government actions to quell the demonstrations. Without Chinese people's own push for more human right

and liberties, the government has little reason to move in that direction as the Olympics approach. When other nations or the media spotlight human rights concerns, the Chinese government can easily respond with their strong notions of sovereignty and territorial integrity; these concepts are largely understood and supported by the Chinese people in relation to issues over Taiwan and Tibet, and thus can easily be used by the government in regards to other international demands. While the Olympics created a timeframe for reform and a focal point for demands in both Mexico City and Seoul, the lack of broad-based domestic unrest and dissent in China is likely to be an essential factor in keeping the Beijing Games from becoming a major catalyst for reform.

Though unlikely, there is still time for factors to change between now and the opening ceremony on August 8, 2008. The current protests over Tibet within that region and in the international community seem unlikely to push a large segment of the Chinese population to demand change. However, if a small or medium-sized Chinese protest was met with a violent response from the government or a crackdown was directed at a broader range of Chinese citizens, such as students, laborers, and other locals like in Mexico City and Seoul, a wide sector of the population could band together and begin to demand better civil liberties and rights as a response. Alternatively, if a domestic issue rose peacefully to the forefront of political and societal debate for which a majority of Chinese citizens felt strongly about, especially if connected to the Olympics or preparations for the Games, a united effort for change could quickly be established and have a large impact within China. Without a strong push domestically before the Games occurs, however, the international media attention and world's engagement with China will not be sufficient to produce South Korea-like political changes.

While it seems a course of fast paced human rights or political reform is unlikely in the lead up or immediate aftermath of the Beijing Games, this does not mean the Olympics will not impact the country at all. The Olympics is providing China with an opportunity to be at the center of global media's attention like never before, and in a relatively positive light. Athletes and spectators representing around 200 National Olympic Committees will travel to China to take part in the festivities of the Games. After the Games it is expected tourism to China will increase, and with China being a major trading partner of the United States, European Union, Japan, Southeast Asia and other regions, cross cultural exchange and dialogue will continue; over time, these factors may help shape China and infuse the population with ideas of what changes the Chinese people themselves would like to see in their lives and governance. Thus, the Beijing Olympics in 2008 may not be a sole catalyst for fast paced reform, but is one part of a long process of China opening itself up to the world as well as allowing in the international community.

In early 2008 the International Committee more than once defended its decision to award Beijing the Games and proclaimed that Beijing's successful bid did display and still displays strong sentiments of support in the IOC.¹¹⁷ The world will be watching as the Olympics proceed in Beijing and will continue to keep China on the radar of international economics, politics, social interactions, and even sports. In the same vein, the impact the Olympics can have on a host country is often related to politics and issues of reform, but it does not stop there. From now and for years to come, the economic, social, political, environmental, and overall legacy will continue to be studied in the aftermath of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.

¹¹⁷ "Beijing Decision Defended by IOC" BBC Online (Feb 8 2008)
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