

Politics and the Olympics: Some New Dimensions

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INTRODUCTION

The advertised title of this talk could not have sounded very promising to political scientists here in Barcelona. With six years of political discourse leading up to Barcelona '92, and over three years of investigation, analysis, and polemic after these Games, there can be little left to say here on the local and regional dimensions of the theme of «politics and the Olympics».

Any Barcelona audience already knows a lot about: the politics of selecting host cities for the Games; the Olympic incitement of struggles, negotiations, and eventual collaborations among municipal, autonomous provincial, federal state, and regional political entities; the unique Olympic mobilization of political capital for urban redevelopment and infrastructure transformation; and the impetus the Olympic context provides for cultural politics, as against what we might call the politics of the everyday¹. Moreover, the publication by my colleagues at the Centre d'Estudis Olímpics at the Universitat Autònoma of their detailed empirical studies of the television communication of Catalan, Spanish, and European political realities in distant nations takes care of a key «global» dimension of «local» Olympic experience².

The best one could offer, then, would seem to be some comparative analyses with other Games. For example, we could discuss the contradictory position into which the question of «Europe» placed the Social Democratic political tradition in Norway. We could contrast the Catalan Generalitat's and the Barcelonan Ajuntament's use of «Europe» as an instrument against the Spanish center with the Norwegian socialist center's attempt to use the 1994 Lillehammer Games to convince Norwegian voters that they could have their European cake and eat it too. Faced with conservative political forces focused on a new cosmopolitan business class, the Norwegian Social Democrats sought, with very mixed results, to use Lillehammer as evidence that Norway could maintain a decades-old policy and ideology of rural community autonomy and cultural value, while simultaneously subjecting itself to EU membership and regulation³. Or we could compare Barcelona and Lillehammer with the very different political thematics of Atlanta, where the main intention is to dramatize and globalize a message of minority human rights and multicultural cooperation in the post-Cold War liberal state, in the context of failure to generate much in the way of local urban renewal.

Instead, however, I will focus my remarks on the central organs of the Olympic Movement, notably the International Olympic Committee (IOC)

executive, in their interactions with macro-political forces and trends in recent years. I hasten to reassure you that I won't return to the boring old curriculum of topics: fascist, socialist, and capitalist Olympics; government «interference» in sport; Cold War battles between «East» and «West»; terrorism; boycotts, and so on. I will discuss an important new book about the IOC and Seoul '88, which opens to public scrutiny a new dimension of Olympic geopolitical engagements. Yet I will also suggest that this text inadvertently signals an end to this WWII-through-Cold War Olympic political curriculum. After briefly characterizing the new shape of world affairs, I will conclude by describing current efforts by the IOC to rematerialize an «Olympic Movement» and to make itself more relevant in the new geopolitical environment. This to-ing and fro-ing, I will suggest, makes the Olympics a still more illuminating window into the fundamental, yet still very inchoate political dynamics in the global environment of today.

FIELD WORK UNDER OLYMPIC COVER

Political scientists, at least in the European and American institutions and traditions I am most familiar with, have rarely suspected that there might be dimensions of engagement between major geopolitical actors and the Olympics besides the conventional ones I have just listed. Professional pride in dealing with the «real» forms of modern power⁴, together with the cultural common sense of social milieus which place sport categorically into the realm of the ludic, or leisure, or idealistic, or strictly commercial domains of life have conspired to blunt the political-scientific imagination⁵.

Scholars of international diplomacy and national security might well conduct the following thought experiment. If you are a head-of-state, senior foreign affairs official, diplomat or security actor, what would describe the ideal context for you to pursue your most delicate and controversial aims and responsibilities? The answer is an environment offering maximal possibilities of same-level interaction with enemies, rivals, and allies, with a minimum of prior constraints, public awareness, and press scrutiny. Without realizing it, you have just described conditions at an Olympic Games.

The significance of the Olympic Games and related international sports events as scenes for high-level political and diplomatic encounters is composed of two elements. Here is the first. Mass publics and the press today consider it «only natural» that high-level political elites attend Olympic Games. Because athletic delegations are composed on a national basis, politicians and

government officials attend «to show support for the nation». Even when they have not put it about that they are sports fans, such persons are widely assumed to wish to be where all the other dignitaries and celebrities are. As for military and state security figures, if their presence at an Olympics is even noticed, it is attributed to supervising the protection of athletes and other national delegation members, given the ever-present dangers of terrorism⁶. Finally, a kind of artificial taboo against the normal types of press and public curiosity reigns during an Olympic Games. I've many times heard state officials successfully deflect political questions about their activities in the Olympic city with a casual, «We're just here to visit the Games, let's save local political business for another time».

The second component you would have no way of knowing if you had not yourself been a credentialed guest at the Olympic Games, that is to say if you had done ethnographic field work under «Olympic cover»⁷. The deepest circle of «Olympic Family Zones» at the stadiums, administrative installations, and headquarters hotels is absolutely closed to all but «A» credentialed persons (IOC members and their families) and «G» credentialed persons, precisely heads-of-state and their staffs, top-level diplomats and government officials, IGO chiefs, military and security figures, international tycoons, some decorative international celebrities, and a number of persons whose identities are never clear to anyone. No journalists can ever get near these secured areas, and few even know of their existence. Even the approaches to these innocent-sounding «hospitality zones» are hidden and carefully and rigidly monitored.

In sum, nowhere else do such favorable conditions exist for otherwise difficult meetings -on an invisible, informal, and agenda-less basis- among such a total range of global political elites, including from nations at war or having no diplomatic relations with one another. I am sure that when diplomatic and national security historians and analysts put aside their cultural and scientific biases and explore this context, they will make some very interesting discoveries.

We already know quite a bit about state-level political activity by other sorts of actors operating under «Olympic cover», for example, intelligence and counter-intelligence personnel. It has been a more or less open secret in Olympic circles that the so-called Olympic attachés, nationals resident in the host country appointed to assist their home country delegations, have generally been secret service agents. Ostensibly there to help visiting delegations navigate the local society, their real mission has traditionally been to monitor and control all foreign contacts of athletes, coaches, and officials, preventing defections or other embarrassing incidents, and of course to attempt to «turn» each other.

Revelations in the former communist countries have made public what also was common knowledge to insiders: that secret police agencies regularly recruited athletes and other sports personnel as informants, disinformation and penetration agents. Olympic Solidarity, the IOC agency responsible for sports aid to Third World countries, for years accepted volunteer services from superpower sports personnel whose real identities and intentions had much more to do with state political agendas than with sports development. The most famous published exposé by a former American CIA agent included a whole chapter asserting an sustained Olympic CIA presence since Helsinki and detailing his own counter-intelligence operations under Olympic cover in Mexico. I have developed further information that the CIA and DIA used international sport throughout the 1960s and 1970s as a very successful cover for covert counter-insurgency training in Latin America and the Middle East⁸. Just as scores of American reviews of the infamous Agee book ignored its Olympic sections, so too former counter-insurgency sports operatives still chuckle today as to the domestic perfection in the USA of this cover. «For Americans, it's mere sport, so who would imagine, much less inquire?» Soviet authorities, of course, knew full well, and because of the Soviet state's own clearer intelligence preoccupation with sport, Soviet and Central European athletic circles and wider publics often assumed that Americans on Olympic missions were «CIA» agents. By contrast, American sports persons and wider publics assumed the «communists» were state security, but scarcely imagined that the holy «We» might be so too⁹.

Another variation on our theme is the double political and sports identities IOC members sometimes have. The best known of these here in Barcelona is probably Juan Antonio Samaranch's position as Spanish ambassador to the USSR at the same time as he was negotiating unsuccessfully for the IOC to prevent the Olympic boycotts. A more successful case might be Muhammed Mzali, who at the time he was prime minister of Tunisia also was head of the IOC commission for the International Olympic Academy in Greece and a yearly lecturer there on the theme of Islam and Olympism. One year, because of the cover of his annual Olympic visit to Greece, Mzali was able to stop in Athens for the negotiations which led to the successful evacuation through Greece to Tunisia of the PLO fighters surrounded by the Israelis in Beirut. Today, at least one IOC member who began his career as a penetration agent for a national security force continues to be financed and influential for shadier masters in today's post-Cold War era.

FIVE RINGS AROUND KOREA

The 1994 publication of the book **Five Rings Over Korea: The Secret Negotiations Behind the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul**¹⁰ has, I believe, permanently changed conditions for political analysts of the Olympic Movement. The author, Richard Pound, is the senior IOC member in Canada, a long-time presence in the IOC's executive board, and a member of Mr. Samaranch's inner circle. The author has made the most of his privileged access to internal IOC documents, minutes, correspondence, contemporaneous conversations, and post-hoc interviews to describe and analyze key diplomatic interventions which helped overcome the geopolitical struggles unleashed by the 1981 award of the Olympic Games to Seoul, contributing to the eventually triumphant Olympic celebration in the South Korean capital in 1988. Mr. Pound has also presented an argument about the new geopolitical capacities of the IOC itself, and his detailed insider account will stand hereafter as a required touchstone for any serious academic, media, or policy analyst of «international sport and politics»¹¹.

In an opening chapter, Mr. Pound summarily reviews IOC responses to the «external» political challenges of past Olympic Games, from Berlin 1936 to the boycotted Olympics of 1976, 1980, and 1984. While rightly contemptuous of a standard media caricature of the IOC as a «moribund, antediluvian collection of aging, rich, and titled men completely unconnected with reality»¹², Mr. Pound serves up some telling anecdotes to show that the «separation of sport and politics» rhetoric of past IOC leaders was generally a fig-leaf for their own political inadequacies. Throughout this period, Mr. Pound writes, «'political' problems were beyond the ability of a part-time organization having no particular international status; the IOC was not equipped, either organizationally or by disposition, to deal with such issues. Any action by the IOC tended to be in response to a crisis or to someone else's initiative»¹³. According to the author, the IOC's reliance on state-level politicians to solve conflicts bearing upon the Games led inevitably to frustration and tragedy.

By contrast, and in the aftermath of the Los Angeles boycott, the IOC at last formally recognized that NOCs are not always politically free to discharge their Olympic duty of participation and accepted the corollary that the IOC, NOCs, and other Olympic bodies have positive duties to actively engage government entities and state politicians in Olympic affairs. The geopolitical dangers and dilemmas resulting from the award of the Games to Seoul demanded a new activism. Led by Mr. Samaranch, who is the uncompromised and uncompromising hero sub specie diplomaticus of Mr. Pound's book, the IOC

embarked on an unprecedented political voyage of high risk/high gain, not only with respect to the Seoul Olympics but to the world prestige and legitimacy of the entire Olympic Movement. The catalyst and avenue was the appearance of proposals and eventually negotiations between North Korea and South Korea over some form of «co-hosting» the 1988 Olympics. The IOC made the decision, extraordinary given its history and the stakes of this game, to itself sponsor and attempt to control these negotiations.

Over six chapters and 200 pages, Mr. Pound reconstructs in minute detail the complex and multilateral antagonisms, posturings, misunderstandings, interventions, negotiations, and executive actions which produced the four North-South meetings held in Lausanne under IOC sponsorship and supervision, the continuation of initiatives and counter-initiatives right up until the opening of the Games, and the extraordinary end-result of a Seoul Games with only seven boycotting countries. Perhaps the author's professional experience as a lawyer is responsible for his appreciation that the diplomat's art lies in the minute scrutiny and careful staging of continuously shifting adversarial situations. In any case, scholars should be grateful that Mr. Pound has resisted any temptation to scrimp on his narrative. No existing text provides more fundamental education both for Olympic analysts unfamiliar with the conduct of international diplomacy and for international relations specialists ignorant of the significance and role of the Olympic Games in their domain. Indeed, appearing amidst the continued multilateral negotiations over North Korean nuclear policy, *Five Rings* has a topicality beyond its immediate subject matter.

Mr. Samaranch's wisdom, as Mr. Pound interprets it, lay in clear recognition of synergies on the strategic level which in turn permitted flexibility on the tactical level. As long as North and South Korea were kept together at the table, the North's state socialist and anti-American allies were limited in their capacity to undermine the Seoul Games. Since a breakthrough which would bring DPRK participation might always occur, and the IOC was so boldly signaling a willingness to accommodate North Korea, space was opened for states like the PRC to develop an independent policy. At the same time, forces favorable to participation within the USSR and the East European countries were better able to hold off hard-liners within their own state-party-Olympic apparatuses. DPRK initiatives against Seoul were likewise moderated. The IOC's «historic offer» of considering the staging of some events in the North, that is, of violating a core tenet of its own **Charter** that Games are awarded to single cities only, made it difficult for critics politically schooled to see the organization as an transnational instrument of Western capitalist imperialism and anti-communism. The

consternation, real or imagined, that IOC flexibility toward North Korea was believed to be causing the ROK and the Pacific alliance further loosened the binariness of classical Cold War logic. This strategic policy left the IOC and the Seoul Olympics in maximal position to take advantage of the purely contingent outbreak of Gorbachevism which happened to ensue.

What I have elsewhere called the «participation mystique» of the Olympic Movement, a commitment to maximal international participation in the Games as its ultimate and absolute value, kept the IOC leadership oriented in line with this strategic geopolitical synergy. Tactically, it followed that Mr. Samaranch and his colleagues and advisers had a clear path of action. The concrete issues in the ebb and flow of negotiations centered on how many and which events were considered for the North, the name of the Games and the organizing committees, the location of the opening and closing ceremonies and the torch relay, the division of television and sponsorship income, and the opening of the North-South border at least to the Olympic Family. The art Mr. Samaranch displayed month after month was knowing when to appear to bend in the face of shifting and escalating demands by North Korea and her friends, and when to appear to harden the IOC's positions when the ROK, her allies, and the international sports federations and multinational corporations contracted to the Games grew overly nervous. The main challenge was thus deftly met of keeping IOC control of the agenda and not letting the negotiations be hijacked by either principal or any third party.

Perhaps the chief compass which allowed Mr. Samaranch and his advisers to move so adroitly over such complex terrain was the IOC leadership's belief from the outset that the negotiations would never lead to an agreement. Mr. Pound is perfectly direct on this point. «The IOC had to appear to be conducting the negotiations in good faith and it did, in fact, conduct them in good faith. The fact that the IOC did not believe that the negotiations could ever result in a mutually satisfactory compromise to share the Games in an equitable fashion between the North and the South was irrelevant in the conduct of the negotiations. Had they been successful, there is no doubt that the IOC would have agreed to the split venue. The IOC also did its best to create conditions that might bring about an agreement, despite its realistic political assessment that it simply would not be possible to get the North Koreans to comply with the myriad responsibilities of a host country of the Olympic Games»¹⁴.

There is much to appreciate as well as to question in Mr. Pound's account¹⁵, but I will only comment here on a more encompassing ring of the

geopolitical onion of Seoul '88 that students of international politics will find suggestively evoked but strangely unanalyzed in this book. Neither Mr. Pound nor, by his account, Mr. Samaranch seemed able to imagine that the IOC negotiations might themselves have been used as a diplomatic convenience and public «cover» for the truly secret negotiations among the real North and South Korean, superpower, regional, and free-lance geopolitical actors, concerned not just with Olympics but with deals for the eventual North-South unification, the future balance of power in the region, and what in retrospect we recognize as the end of the Cold War in East Asia.

The book itself attributes the original suggestion of sharing events between Seoul and Pyongyang to then Italian foreign minister Giulio Andreotti in independent conversation with the ROK government. The South and North Korean governments quickly mobilized, not just with respect to the IOC but with their allies around the world. Even before the IOC membership was officially notified of these proposals, actors ranging from Fidel Castro to the senior Soviet, Chinese, and American leaderships were significantly engaged. Mr. Pound only mentions that «rumors» of secret North-South negotiations were reaching the IOC well before the decision to sponsor talks in Lausanne was taken. Figures like premiers Nakasone of Japan and Zhou Ziyang of China, George Schultz, Frank Carlucci, and James Lilley of the United States, and Mikhail Gorbachev, Edouard Shevardnadze, and Viacheslav Gavrilin of the Soviet Union make only cameo appearances in **Five Rings**. Finally, in Pound's descriptions of the IOC talks, the members of the Korean delegations are listed, with official sports titles, but there is little evidence of any IOC effort to discover who these persons really were in the North and South Korean political environments¹⁶. Though privately informed of other widespread «rumors» at the time, for example, of the secret presence of scores of Soviet government advisers and even of important North Korean political figures in South Korea between 1986 and the opening of the Games, neither the IOC executive nor Mr. Pound in later preparing his book bothered to inquire carefully. Mr. Pound makes the point of how extraordinary it was for South Korean political authorities to trust the IOC with negotiating what was (and remains) the most important question of Korean national existence. Unfortunately, the author and presumably the IOC did not pause very long to wonder whether that trust really was so absolute. In par, this was surely because Roh Tae-woo's adroit leadership had succeeded in winning IOC confidence, and Mr. Samaranch and the rest of the IOC «politburo» -Alexandru Siperco of Romania, Aswini Kumar of Pakistan, the Senegalese Kéba M'Baye, and the Chinese He Zhenliang-satisfied themselves with the IOC's new significance and interaction at the heads-of-state level.

What I am suggesting is certainly not that this new IOC political importance and influence be trivialized or underestimated. I believe that Mr. Pound is absolutely correct in his analysis of this dimension of the geopolitical importance of the IOC. The world of academic political science and international politics does indeed have some catching up to do in its appreciation of this new situation of mutuality between the international state system and important NGOs (or QUANGOs -quasi-non-governmental organizations) like the IOC. What I am arguing is that there appears to have developed another, complementary dimension that should not be ignored by either the IOC or political scientists. Precisely because of its increased political capacities, the IOC may now be of new interest to state security and foreign policy actors as a witting or unwitting instrument in the pursuit of their policies.

But, of course, in the aftermath of Seoul, both world politics and the particular geopolitical engagements of the IOC rapidly changed. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of communist governments in Eastern Europe, and the shift of attention to de-centered regional and infra-national conflicts outside of the old bi-polar ordering of the Cold War system have contributed to rearranging the very concepts, much less the practices of «geopolitics» today. The awarding of subsequent Olympics to Barcelona, Lillehammer, Atlanta, Sydney, and Nagano - relatively uncontroversial and insignificant places from the standpoint of international geopolitics, at least by comparison with Seoul- can be seen to have left the IOC with little opportunity to exercise and deploy its new political capacities at this level. After the defeat of the PRC-Beijing initiative for 2000, and with a potential vote for Cape Town 2004 still years away¹⁷, the IOC's political engagements have so to say fallen back to the level of what I earlier called the «old curriculum of sport and politics». At the same time, the IOC, like many other governmental and non-governmental actors in a newly decentered «world system», has suddenly found itself confronted by and struggling for legitimacy among a new set of forces, notable those styled «new social movements» in the jargon of political sociology.

THE «WORLD SYSTEM» TODAY

Few today seem to disagree that we are in the midst of rapid structural change in the world system. Among the factors cited by political scientists are new forms of «decentered» or «disorganized» capitalism and the weakening of the nation-state model from several directions at once. Post-WWII military

alliances like NATO are in the throes of reconception and realignment in the aftermath of the Cold War and in the face of crises like Bosnia and the Gulf. Simultaneously loosed from Cold War discipline and faced with shrinking or unpredictable big state markets, weapons dealers, security merchants, technology brokers, and military consultants roam the world in a newly competitive and entrepreneurial search for customers of any sort.

New supranational political entities and trade compacts, like the EU and NAFTA, are eroding the conventional powers and prerogatives of foreign ministries and national executive branches. Claims of increased autonomy among historical regions and minority populations, as here in Catalunya, elsewhere in Europe, and in Canada and Sri Lanka, are challenging the federal state from within. In certain cases, like Greece, EU requirements are forcing a radical devolving of administrative and electoral power from the central government to the provinces and districts. In my own country, conservative politicians and populist movements now sound just like old Marxists, in their calls for a «withering away» of the central state. Everywhere, state-centered nation-building either seems to have finished its work -as in South Korea, Thailand, and Taiwan- or else to have abandoned the project completely before the goal was even neared, as in Nigeria, Rwanda, and other African countries. As a consequence, those few cases where the classic process of nation-building seems still to be the order of the day -South Africa or Burma, for example- attract a world attention that scarcely recognizes itself to be as much nostalgic as progressive.

Meanwhile, in the G-7 countries, both civil society and the state are embroiled in the «problem» of national boundaries which seem more permeable than before. The rhetorics gushing forth -whether of «xenophobia» and cultural incommensurability in Europe¹⁸, or of work without social service costs in the U.S.- seem in some cases to have thrown us back to the early 20th, if not to the 19th centuries. These new debates on «immigration» suppress much discourse about the 50 million or more permanent refugees in the world. No one seems able to recognize, much less to conceptualize and analyze the phenomenon of growing millions of persons -both elites and wage-working transhumants- who hold dual citizenships and for whom nationality has become little more than a bureaucratic inconvenience or a «life-style» choice. This development is perhaps the most auspicious sign of all. If the de-ontologization of nationality is indeed a wave of the future, then we shall know for certain that «post-modern identity» is something new and not just high-modernism in more fashionable intellectual clothing¹⁹.

NSMS AND NGOS IN THE PRESENT GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

A large literature, emanating mostly from Europe but also influential in North America, has lately explored the growing importance of «new social movements» (NSMs) in this altered geopolitical regime: feminism, environmentalism, immigrant and gay rights movements, for example. Given the continued importance of political parties in Europe, as social institutions, agenda-setting devices, and signs of legitimacy in political space, some of these NSMs have give birth to political parties, like the Greens, with consequent tensions and polemics with «originalist» movement leaders who wish to stay outside of the formal political system. In my country, where political parties are comparatively unimportant, NSMs have chiefly made their presence felt through the courts, legal institutions being the most important structural engines of our system.

The transnational aspect these NSMs are increasingly taking on is an especially interesting phenomenon. As evidenced by such international mega-events as the Rio Conference on the environment and the Beijing Women's Congress, formerly small-scale and community-based movements like ecology and feminism have developed into transnational actors still rooting themselves in civil society, but now capable of mobilizing, even often coercing, national governments, intergovernmental institutions like the UN and the EU, and global media. The tri-partite structure of these events is very interesting and revealing. It is «the movement» which gives them their motive and moral force, while the meetings themselves are divided into the «official» intergovernmental and the «unofficial» or «quasi-official» parallel meeting of NGOs. Though there is considerable traffic of persons, issues, and resources between them, each side acts to preserve the boundary. The states do not wish to seem to be abandoning their authority to the NGOs, while the NGOs risk delegitimation among their constituents by to close an association with the normal global system of nation-state interactions. In effect, the NSMs are no serving as a kind of matchmaker bringing together (but separately) NGOs and IGOs concerned with their issues. This same paradigmatic structuring was apparent in the recent Euro-Mediterranean meetings here in Barcelona, but with a transformation. Since «Euromed-ism» is hardly itself a true movement, it was the NGOs Conferència Mediterrània Alternativa which brought out the ecologists, anti-racists, feminists, and gay rights activists for meetings and demonstrations.

NGOs, of course, have a much longer history than NSMs, at least if one grants the apologists and academic analysts of these movements their definitions

of «new». But, as any reader of Max Weber would expect, probably all major NGOs historically derive from some «movement» of greater or lesser self-consciousness and social significance. This includes the IOC itself, as the historical titration of something called «The Olympic Movement». The founder of the modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin, never wavered in his insistence that international sports contests were only to be powerful means to the real ends of this Olympic Movement: peace, intercultural education, and international understanding²⁰. Recent historical scholarship has demonstrated how much more thoroughly than heretofore known, Coubertin and the early IOC were embedded in the international peace and education movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries²¹.

IOC members today are mostly ignorant of this history, but at least some worry that they have ceased to shepherd a movement and have become an institution and even an industry. At the Olympic Centennial Congress in Paris, for example, one senior IOC member, a household name and a key independentista in his Latin American country, noticed the crowd on one side of a fashionable Paris hotel lobby and the few gathered on the other side. «Today», he lamented, «there are more and more who believe in Olympic sport; there are fewer and fewer who believe in the Olympic Movement».

In the last three years, there has been a perfect flurry of efforts from the Lausanne headquarters to associate the Olympics with and to get the IOC represented in NSM contexts. The IOC sent an official representative to the Rio World Environment Summit. His program was to insist that the new sensitivity to environmental preservation in construction of Winter Games installations, the ecology thematics of Lillehammer and Nagano Games, and the environmental activism of former Olympic champions demonstrated how Olympism and ecologism were intrinsically related. Jacques Cousteau was made a chief ornament of the Paris Centennial Congress, and politicians with strong environmental agendas, like US Vice-President Albert Gore, have been invited to address other Olympic meetings with this theme in mind.

The IOC has also been trying to revive connections with the «peace movement». Prodded perhaps by Norwegian athletes' and governmental efforts toward «Olympic Aid» to war-ravaged Sarajevo, the IOC quickly jumped to display its own concern, most dramatically through Mr. Samaranch's plane trip there from Lillehammer. In perhaps its greatest success to date and one which illustrates a new mood of cooperation with the established IGOs, the IOC this year convinced the UN General Assembly to pass a resolution backing the idea of

the «Olympic Truce», or cessation of all hostilities around the world during a Games. Though any actual historical connection to ancient Greek practice is dubious at best, this idea has allowed the IOC at least to invoke something of its old connections to philhellenism. So obsessive have such efforts become that the IOC is turning up in very odd places, including a last minute effort to horn in on the Euro-Med conferences here in Barcelona. In alliance with another NGO, the International Olaf Palme Foundation, the IOC scheduled a day-long conference to discuss «the potential of the Olympic spirit as an instrument of peace in the [Mediterranean] zone». (In the event, only eleven people attended, and the program was shortened).

International feminism has presented much greater difficulties for the IOC. These tensions illustrate the broader collision between transnational NSMs and NGOs/ QUANGOs like the IOC, which remain based on the nation-state model of recruitment and representation. Of course, the IOC has for many years been increasing sports events for women in the Games and the number of its own female members. It has held conferences and mounted museum exhibitions on the theme of women in sports. Recently, it has even been willing to demand fulfillment of quotas for women officers in its partner NOCs and IFs (International Sports Federations), where the record of gender equity has been particularly abominable. Threats of removal from the Olympic Movement and program for non-compliance have been issued by the IOC, a high-risk strategy, but one the leadership felt it must embark on in order to display its commitment to feminists inside and outside sport.

But French and American groups and NGOs within the Northern Hemisphere feminist movement have lately increased the stakes, publicly demanding that the IOC deny Olympic participation to all countries which do not send female athletes to the Games. Aimed primarily at conservative Islamic nations and certain countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, these demands place the IOC uncomfortably between «universal human rights», on the one hand, and «respect for multicultural integrity» on the other. The IOC is now struggling with how to respond in the debate over feminism and feminist imperialism, a world-wide debate, as the UN Beijing Congress on women made perfectly clear.

There are several ways to interpret these developments. Cynics will see them as the IOC's attempt to deflect world-wide criticism that it has become more a creature and agency of the global sports industry of television and commercial sponsors than anything resembling a social movement, or even as treatments for

the personal reputation of the IOC president in sectors of the European press. Partisans will, by contrast, see them as sincere attempts to return to and to better serve Olympism's original and core commitments as a movement for peace and international education. I have suggested the additional factor of frustration for Mr. Samaranch and his politburo that the IOC's new geopolitical competence and accomplishments represented by Seoul have not received due credit, whether in the form of Nobel Prizes or UN honors, in academic circles and the press, or as general prestige augmentations for the organization. Normal response to rapid changes in the world system, notably the new significance of regional organizations and new social movements at the expense of the global system of nation-states model offers a third interpretation. Doubtless, there is some truth in each of these points of view which, taken together, illustrate very well the larger political and social processes in the world of the late 20th century.

What this analysis clearly does help us immediately grasp is the significance of Cape Town to the IOC and the Olympic Movement. If the vote for 2004 were to be taken tomorrow, there seems little doubt about its outcome. Whatever the political, infrastructural, economic, and technological problems these Games will offer, only Cape Town offers the IOC a chance to place simultaneously on the world stage its geopolitical, human rights, and international peace and development capacities, credits, and commitments.