



Will the Olympics Change China, or Will China Change the Olympics?

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1. Introduction

One hundred years have passed since the question now famous in China was asked, “When will China be able to invite all the world to Peking [Beijing] for an International Olympic contest...?”¹ In 2008 the Olympic Games will be hosted by the least Westernized nation in the world to yet host them. It will be only the third time the Olympic Summer Games have been held outside the West and its former colonies, and it will be the greatest-ever meeting of East and West in peacetime. It will mark a pivotal moment when China begins to take its place as a major force in global politics, economics, and culture after nearly 170 years of subordination to the Western powers and Japan.

For Chinese people the Olympic slogan “One World, One Dream” means that all the world’s peoples want a high standard of living and a secure life, and all the world’s nations want to modernize and achieve stable economic and political conditions.

But the rest of the world has regarded China’s return to its eighteenth-century world prominence in power and wealth with ambivalence. The past century has left a legacy that must be overcome. In terms of politics, Western governments still deeply mistrust China’s Communist Party, a distrust left over from the Cold War. In terms of scholarly understanding, many of the Western views of Chinese culture are still shaped by distorted ideas that were first consolidated in the 19th century in the discipline of Oriental Studies, and which then took a different shape in mid-20th century Modernization Theory and more recently in the concept of the *Clash of Civilizations* put forth by Samuel Huntington.²

In terms of popular opinion, the Beijing Olympics have been viewed as the harbinger of a new age of Eastern imperialism and the rise of the “China threat.” Editorials in Western newspapers during Beijing’s Olympic bid in 2001 revealed a high level of hostility: “China Doesn’t Deserve the Olympics,” “Unwelcome Bid from Beijing,” “Olympics Tied Up in Chinese Puzzle,” and others. The ever-popular stereotype of China’s sports boarding school system as organized child abuse produced labels such as “sports factories,” “Communist sports machine,”³ and “assembly line of pain,”⁴ and “Beware the march of China’s sinister super-race champions.”⁵ In May 2007, actress Mia Farrow spearheaded an attack on China’s support of the government of Sudan in which she labeled the Beijing Olympics the “genocide games.”

People in the developed Western countries seem fixated on the question of whether the Olympic Games will change China. Will they improve China's human rights record? Will they open up China more to the outside world? As defined by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Olympic Games are supposed to be an occasion for cultural exchange and the improvement of international understanding, a vehicle for a movement for world peace through sport – the "Olympic Movement." The assumption in the West seems to be that any cultural exchange with China should be a one-way exchange in which China learns from the West, not a two-way dialogue. Chinese people hope that the West can learn something from China through the Olympic Games, but will it?

Today I would like to address three questions: 1) Can the Olympics really bring about social change?; 2) Will the Olympics change China? ; 3) Will China change the Olympics?

2. Can the Olympics really bring about social change?

Leading up to the Games, Western politicians, human rights groups, and media commentators will use the Olympic Games as a platform for their own political agendas. Probably they will criticize the Olympic Games for failing to live up to their promise to "contribute to building a peaceful and better world." It is a necessary part of democratic society that U.S. Congresspeople and groups like Human Rights Watch use the Olympic Games as a platform to gain media attention. However, this is an instrumental use of the media and a cynical use of the Olympic Games by people who do not understand the inner workings of the Olympic Movement. In order to get beyond the superficial exploitation of the Olympic media platform, we need well-researched investigative journalism and social scientific analysis.

The IOC is not currently in a good position to respond to criticisms of the Beijing Olympic Games because it lacks solid scientific evidence to back up its claims that the Olympic Games can bring about positive social change. In recent years, the IOC itself has recognized the need for a more scientific understanding of the Olympic Games, particularly on the question of "legacy," which refers to all those things that are left behind after the Olympic Games have come and gone. And so Beijing will be the first host city to produce a full Olympic Games Impact (OGI) report. This is a research project involving collaboration between the local

organizing committee and a university in the host city, which both work together with the IOC to collect information on 150 economic, social and environmental indicators.⁶ Collection of the information for OGI begins when a city's candidacy is announced and concludes two years after the staging of the Games, a period of 11 years. Beijing will be the first host city to carry out a complete OGI for the entire 11-year period; it is being done by the Humanistic Olympic Studies Centre at the People's University. This is a big step toward understanding the Olympic Movement as a complex social phenomenon, but the OGI is largely composed of quantitative measures of economic and sports development, such as improvements in water quality, increases in sports participation, increases in open-air leisure spaces, or increases in hotel infrastructure. While OGI will attempt to measure some cultural and political changes, this will be a realm that is nearly impossible to measure.

3. Will the Olympics Change China?

The 94% approval rate that was calculated by the Gallup poll commissioned as part of Beijing's bid in 2001 showed that Beijing residents had a high level of confidence in the promises of the Games. Yet their hopes and dreams do not occupy the most prominent place in the Western thinking about the Games, which is occupied by the question of human rights. The changes that the West hopes will be brought to China by the Olympics are not exactly the same changes that the Chinese themselves hope for. Actually, the first thing that most Chinese people express when asked about their hopes is that the Olympics will present an image of a strong China to the world, display Chinese culture and history to the world, and erase the stereotype of the "sick man of East Asia." We can hope that the dreams of average Chinese people will not be forgotten in the media coverage of the Games. Beijingers are also concerned with whether the preparations for the Games will improve their quality of life. The infrastructure that is being put in place for the Olympic Games will change the face of Beijing with new monumental architecture, roads, subway lines, environmental improvements, and sports facilities. The investments in controlling air and water pollution and re-foresting the area, in particular, should improve the basic quality of life of a large segment of the populace.

3.1. The Legal Legacy

One of the most fundamental changes that might occur in China due to the Olympic Games will be the “legal legacy” of the Games. While social change can occur when a nation is pressured by international media scrutiny, enduring change is most likely to occur when it is reinforced by the rule of law. Since international law is one of the main ways of pressuring countries to conform to the Western-dominated international standards in today’s world, it is important to understand the legal foundations of the Olympic Movement.

3.2. The Olympic Charter

The Olympic Movement is guided by the *Olympic Charter* as its fundamental document, but this document is concerned with the world of sport, and does not directly address many of the issues that concern people pushing political agendas. The only human right recognized in the *Charter* is found in Fundamental Principle #4, which states, “The practice of sport is a human right.”⁷ The right to participate in sport has not been upheld as a human right either in international law or even in the United States.⁸ The Olympic Charter cannot serve as the legal basis for changing the human rights in any nation, China or otherwise. For a legal foundation for the issues that concern journalists and politicians, the main relevant legal documents are the *Manual for Candidate Cities for the Games* and the associated host city contract.⁹

In certain areas, the legal system of China is being changed in order to comply with international standards in order to make possible the organization of the Olympic Games.

3.3. Intellectual Property Rights

The protection of the Olympic marks was a very big concern of the IOC from the beginning. China also sees this as an opportunity to educate people about intellectual property rights, considered important for the development of the Chinese economy as well as its international relations, because fake imitations of famous brands have been a big problem for domestic as well as for foreign brands. The IOC was generally satisfied with protection of the Olympic marks. Large-scale production of knock-off products did take place, but they were dealt with when exposed. However, the effect was limited because people understood that the Olympic marks could not be freely used and by fall of 2007 the government crackdowns had mostly eliminated the counterfeit T-shirts and Fuwa mascots that were being sold on the streets.

However, pirated CDs, for example, were still available everywhere. Nevertheless, it was generally felt that at a minimum the Olympic Games had impressed upon the central government the importance of intellectual property protection after years of a seemingly ambivalent commitment to it.

3.4. Beijing Olympic Broadcasting Company (BOB)

Chinese law does not allow direct foreign investment in Chinese television, but central approval was given to form a foreign-Chinese joint enterprise, Beijing Olympic Broadcasting Company (BOB) to broadcast the international feed. The fact that the State Council made a decision to set aside a law that was considered very important for national security was not publicly stated; instead the official pronouncement emphasized that the decision was in accord with the laws on Sino-foreign Cooperative Joint Ventures.¹⁰ The potential problem began when the IOC decided to set up its own in-house broadcasting agency, the Olympic Broadcasting Service (OBS) as the Official Broadcaster for the Olympics (OBO) for Olympic Games starting with the Olympic Games of 2008, not imagining that this might conflict with any country's national laws. A compromise was reached. Rather than have OBS serve alone, a joint venture was established. The CEO of BOB was Manolo Romero of OBS, and its COO was Ma Guoli, the former director of the Sports Bureau at China Central Television. The President of the Board of Directors was Jiang Xiaoyu, Executive Vice-President of BOCOG, while the Vice Chairman was Hein Verbruggen, Chairman of the IOC Coordination Commission. Among the Executive Management, the Department Heads, and the Board of Directors, there were ten IOC personnel and 12 Chinese personnel, giving numerical dominance to Chinese people.

3.5. Temporary law guaranteeing media freedom to foreign journalists researching the Olympic Games

In late 2006, several new restrictive measures on journalists in China were announced. After an international outcry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs enacted a temporary law guaranteeing media freedom to foreign journalists researching the Olympic Games and "related matters" from 1 January 2007 to 17 October 2008. This law has been criticized because it does not guarantee Chinese journalists the same freedoms. Also, it has been reported that foreign journalists are being harassed by officials in local areas. Either they are not familiar with the law, or they feel the journalists are looking into topics not related to the Olympic Games – or,

what is perhaps even more likely, they have their own reasons for resisting the transparency that the center is trying to enforce. On the other hand, that such a law was instituted at all was considered to be a big step forward toward greater media freedom in China.

On Monday, 12 November 2007, the English-language *China Daily* (a government mouthpiece) set off a media storm when it published an article based on an interview with the minister of the General Administration of Press and Publication, who stated that a database was being kept on the 28,000 foreign journalists expected for the Olympics. Although the report stated that the database was to prevent imposters from posing as accredited journalists, the Western media interpreted this to mean that the information would be used to control reporters.¹¹ The huge attention given to this article demonstrates the Western press's current sensitivity to anything that might suggest an attempt at censorship. There is a spiraling feeling of mistrust between the Western media and the Chinese organizations that deal with them, who are in my opinion understandably cautious in dealing with the Western media because of their exaggerated and unpredictable reactions. One would think that the censorship of the press is the major story of the Beijing Olympics. In fact, there are many more things going on that are more important, and the restrictions that both Chinese and Western journalists encounter are not typical for people in other professions – including academics - but it often seems that the Western press is mainly interested in the things that directly affect it.

3.6. The Nagoya Resolution

For China and Taiwan, another important legal document is the IOC's Nagoya Resolution of 1979, which re-admitted China to the IOC under the "Olympic formula." In all IOC events and publications, China is known as the "Olympic Committee of the People's Republic of China" and competes under the national anthem and flag of the PRC. Taiwan is recognized as a branch division of the Chinese Olympic Committee and is known as the "Olympic Committee of Chinese Taipei" and competes under the anthem and flag of its Olympic committee. Taiwan is not allowed to use the name of the Republic of China, nor its national flag and anthem. The "One China Principle" of Chinese foreign policy allows no expression of Taiwanese separatism, nor of the existence of the Republic of China as a sovereign state. These are also preconditions in all of China's diplomatic agreements with the U.N. and the 168 nations of the world that extend diplomatic recognition to China.

Between China and Taiwan there has been a constant history of the P.R.C.'s effort to portray Taiwan as a part of China and hold it to the Nagoya Resolution, and Taiwan's attempt to subvert the Resolution. The Nagoya Resolution had a loophole: it was written in English and French, and not Chinese. The Chinese translation of "Chinese Taipei" was later resolved in discussions between China and Taiwan before the 1990 Asian Games. The result of that agreement was that "Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee" is translated as *Zhongguo Taipei Aowehui* in Mainland China, but Taiwan translates it as *Zhonghua Taipei Aowehui*.¹² Thus, during the Beijing Olympics, all official documents produced by the mainland, and the mainland media, will use *Zhongguo Taipei Aowehui*, while materials produced by Taiwan will use *Zhonghua Taipei Aowehui*. Taiwan's fight over the name was because it felt that "if you are the *Zhongguo* Olympic Committee then we simply will not be called the *Zhongguo* Taipei Olympic Committee so that we won't be roped in and turned into a local organ of the *Zhongguo* Olympic Committee, and so we insist on being called the *Zhonghua* Taipei Olympic Committee." After studying the issue, China decided that the difference of one character did not violate the "One China Principle" and so agreed to Taiwan's request.¹³

When the route of the Torch Relay was introduced in April 2007, Taiwan insisted that it could only receive the torch if it entered and exited via a third, independent country, and did not come or go directly from the Mainland or its Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macao. This would have symbolized that Taiwan is also a Special Administrative Region and part of the "one country, two systems" structure.

This tug-of-war will continue during the Olympic Games. This is an extremely important political issue in China and it is nearly impossible that there will be a change in China's position because much of the legitimacy of the Communist Party rests on it. Therefore, any move toward independence by Taiwan could provoke a military reaction in Beijing, which would disrupt the Olympic Games. Taiwan is more important to China than the Olympic Games. Even average Chinese people feel very strongly that Taiwan is a part of China, Taiwanese people are Chinese, and Taiwanese independence would be an attack against China's national sovereignty. Recently a graduate student at an institute of physical education even told me that if China were to take military action against Taiwan he would sign up for the military, and he would be honored to sacrifice his life for this cause.

3.7. How Long will it Last?

Most of the legal changes mentioned here are temporary. The freedom from customs and censorship restrictions for holders of the Olympic identity card, the freedom of reporting for foreign journalists, and the Sino-Foreign joint enterprise in television will probably all disappear a few months after the Olympic Games. However, during their existence, hundreds and perhaps thousands of Chinese people will have had a chance to work and communicate more closely with foreigners and they will have become more familiar with international practices and standards. Intellectual property protection will remain, and the system for enforcing it might be a bit better than before.

4. The Intangible Legacy

While significant, the realms in which the legal legacy might be felt are quite limited. It is not primarily through legal means that the Olympic Games could effect broad-based change - rather it is through long-term processes that will be unlikely to make headlines. At the 2002 Symposium on the Legacy of the Olympic Games organized by the Olympic Museum and Studies Centre and the International Chair in Olympism of the Autonomous University of Barcelona, it was pointed out that there is an “intangible legacy” and that culture is the ultimate source of all other legacies.

“In particular, it is necessary to point out the importance of so called intangible legacies, such as production of ideas and cultural values, intercultural and non-exclusionary experiences (based on gender, ethnicity or physical abilities), popular memory, education, archives, collective effort and voluntarism, new sport practitioners, notoriety on a global scale, experience and know-how, etc. These intangible legacies also act as a motor for the tangible ones to develop a long-term legacy. [...]

Culture was identified as one the fundamental aspects of Olympic legacy, that could be considered as the basis for its existence and continuity. Indeed, culture was identified as not just one aspect of Olympic legacy, but as the ultimate source of all others”.¹⁴

4.1. IOC as a Teacher of Democracy?

He Zhenliang was present when the flag of the People’s Republic of China was raised for the first time over an Olympic Village in Helsinki in 1952. He was 22 years old. It would be 28 more years until it was raised again at the Lake Placid Winter Games and 32 years until it was

raised over the Los Angeles Summer Games. He Zhenliang had spent the golden years of his youth working for the sports diplomacy that finally led to China's readmission to the IOC in 1979. He was finally co-opted as an IOC member in 1981. In those years, he had no choice but to become a master of parliamentary procedure. IOC Sessions and Executive Board meetings are run according to parliamentary procedure, which may be new to people from countries that do not have democratic political meetings. Within the IOC, He became known as one of the masters of the Olympic Charter. This resulted from his years of arguing that the IOC had violated its own Charter in admitting two Chinese Olympic Committees – in essence, he learned to use the IOC's own rules against it. IOC President Juan-Antonio Samaranch praised him for his loyalty to the Charter in his foreword to He's biography.¹⁵ One of the members of the Commission on Culture and Olympic Education, which He Zhenliang chairs, described him as "the most democratic person in the IOC."

Between 1988 and 1996, He Zhenliang was a member of the Seventh and Eighth Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, one of the two representative assemblies in the Chinese central government. During much of this time the CPPCC followed parliamentary procedure in name, but all of the proposals presented to it were unanimously approved and so it was not actually democratic process in action. He took his IOC experience back to the Political Consultative Congress, where he initiated lively debates on national sport policy and was part of a general trend toward a more legitimate democratic process.¹⁶ Today, proposals in the Conference are actively debated, votes are not unanimous, and sometimes proposals do not pass at all.

5. The Most Important Legacy: People and Culture

The greatest legacy of the Beijing Games will be its human and cultural legacy. There are three themes for the Olympic Games: the High-tech Olympics, the Green Olympics, and the *renwen* Olympics. *Renwen* is difficult to translate. Blending people and culture, it is formed of the characters for 人 *ren*, "human," and 文 *wen*, "literature, culture." Normally it is the translation for the academic "humanities," and thus it is sometimes translated as the "humanistic Olympics." Actually, it has two facets, one of which might be translated as the "people's" Olympics, and the other as the "humanistic" Olympics. The "people's" Olympics

means that the Games will provide an opportunity to train Chinese people for a globalizing world. The “humanistic” Olympics means it will promote a blending of Chinese and Western culture, enriching both Chinese and global culture.

5.1. Olympic Education

Confucian tradition holds a strong faith in education as a means for creating a harmonious society. One of the main ways in which the “people’s” Olympics will be realized is through “Olympic Education” on a scale never seen before. There are academic and professional conferences, textbooks and courses for public schools and universities, educational television and radio shows, magazine and newspaper essays, internet training, and more.

After the success of the bid in 2001, Yangfangdian Primary School initiated the first Olympic education activities in China under the guidance of Donnie Pei, who received a Master’s Degree from the International Olympic Studies Centre at the University of Western Ontario, Canada, and attended the 2001 Postgraduate Session of the International Olympic Academy. In 2005, building on the model started at Yangfangdian, the Beijing City Education Commission, working together with BOCOG, expanded Olympic education programs to 200 primary and secondary schools in Beijing City and another 356 schools nationwide, which were designated as “Olympic Education Model Schools.” The “model school” system is an example of a common practice in China of designating special experimental areas (such as Shenzhen Special Economic Zone), people (such as model laborers), or work units (such as model schools) in order to promulgate new policies. If successful, these models then have the duty to expand the programs beyond their original spheres in what is called the “radiation effect.” By the end of 2007 another 395 primary and middle schools had engaged in “hand-in-hand sharing” with the Olympic Education Model Schools.

The timing was perfect for Olympic education to move into a vacuum that had been created by the recent reform of the previously standardized nationwide curriculum. The purpose of the reform was to stimulate the creativity of the school administrators, teachers, and students by giving them limited freedom to create their own class content in certain classes designated as “school-specific.” As a result of this fortuitous conjuncture, the variety of activities developed for Olympic Education was astounding, including reenacting the ancient Greek pentathlon and

the Olympic opening ceremony, forming a chorus of “Olympic Angels,” establishing a mini-Olympic Organizing Committee, learning traditional Chinese games and dances, designing Olympic playing cards, utilizing the traditional art of paper-cutting to create Fuwa mascot images, and much more.

5.2. Volunteer Training

BOCOG and Olympic scholars see the enthusiasm of volunteers as an opportunity to improve the public educational level and morality with education in Olympic history and values, traditional Chinese culture, Beijing history, public etiquette, international customs, foreign languages, and lifesaving first-aid skills. Originally 100,000 volunteers were originally slated to receive training, but after assessing the potential for shaping the next generation, BOCOG decided to multiply that number up to 500,000 nationwide. Because of the importance of foreign language skills and the goal of shaping the next generation, most of the volunteers will be college students.

The problem of volunteers with poor English was raised by the IOC in October 2007 after the completion of many of the test events. The leaders of BOCOG put pressure on the Volunteer Department to produce volunteers with better English by the time of the Olympic Games. At the beginning of November I attended a meeting of foreign experts convened to help develop the plan for teaching English to volunteers. An oral English test (or, on a more limited basis, other foreign language test) was included among the tests used to recruit volunteers, and those students incapable of basic conversation were eliminated from consideration. The colleges in Beijing were the base for such testing, which was to be administered to as many as 80,000 volunteers to begin the selection process that would eventually produce the 40,000 volunteers needed for working with the delegations and at the venues for the Games.

The Volunteer Department did not want to utilize foreigners in the process, so no native English-speakers were involved. BOCOG employed only a small number of foreigners because of the feeling that employees must be “reliable” and it would be hard to put foreigners through the rigorous background check that Chinese people had to pass before being hired there. With respect to foreign language education, the general problem in China is that most Chinese people, even those in BOCOG, have had so little contact with foreigners that they do

not realize how low their level of English (or other language) is, and they have no practical comprehension or experience in how to teach people to reach a functional level. After discussing the IOC's complaint, it was concluded that the major problem was not that the language level was low, but that the volunteers were too shy to open their mouths. The IOC members who complained about the poor level of the volunteers' English were Africans. This was not just a language problem, it was a cultural problem, because Chinese people are often intimidated by black people. Secondly, it was concluded that the volunteers were unused to the accents of non-native English speakers. Personally, I disagreed with these conclusions and felt that the primary obstacle was still located in the problems inherent in foreign-language instruction, including an overemphasis on the written text and inadequate and sometimes even ridiculous vocabularies of Olympic phrases.

As a result of the lack of experience with foreigners, the level of misunderstanding of foreigners in the Volunteer Department was extremely high. I was even asked about the proposed English translation of the slogan for the volunteers, "Volunteer's Smile, Beijing's Image," because the people in BOCOG had heard that foreigners did not see a smile as a sign of friendship and warmth - in fact they had heard that for foreigners a smile was a bad thing!

5.3. The Promotion of Cosmopolitanism and English

The demand to produce official documents in English and French and the need for people who speak foreign languages has placed a particularly heavy burden on China. The painstaking process of translating Chinese drafts into English and French, the two languages required by the IOC, kept many people awake into the early hours of the morning whenever deadlines approached. Many BOCOG employees are studying English. Those officials in BOCOG and the Beijing municipal government who do not speak English are at a disadvantage in dealing with the almost weekly visits from the IOC and the International Sport Federations. Beijing Vice Deputy-Mayor and bid committee member Wang Wei, who had received an M.A. in English from the University of Iowa, quickly rose in the hierarchy of BOCOG. The next generation of Beijing's top leaders – and perhaps even leaders of the central government - will be more cosmopolitan because of the Olympic Games.

The general command of English in the city will rise slightly as everyone from volunteers to hotel employees to taxi drivers is expected to study it. While some people might question whether the learning of a little English might have any lasting effects, it is actually part of a larger process in which everyday people start to see themselves as members of a global community.

5.4. Intense International Media Scrutiny

During the Games it is expected that 21,600 accredited media and around 10,000 unaccredited media, or a total of nearly 32,000 media, will be swarming around Beijing. Journalists being what they are, we can be sure that they will not all be looking for whitewashed stories. Dissidents and critics will gain more media attention than they would otherwise have had. For two weeks China will be open to the world as never before.

Academic studies have shown that Western media coverage of the Beijing Olympics has been more dominated by political topics than coverage of other Olympic Games.¹⁷ Chinese regard the politicization of the Western media as hypocritical since the West has constantly criticized Chinese media for their political bias, and since 1978 the reduction of the political content of Chinese media has been considered one of the accomplishments of the policy of opening up to the outside world.

Chinese culture places a great emphasis on respect for the dignity of people and nations. "Face," *mianzi* – personal prestige or dignity – is central to social relationships, and there is a big difference between public behavior and language and that which takes place "behind the scenes." "Family shame should not be made public," *jia chou bu ke wai yang*, is the saying used to illustrate this.

Personally, I have always been surprised by how open Chinese people are (to me). I have found it much easier to learn about the inner workings of high-level Chinese organizations than American organizations, but this is because I speak good Chinese and have developed connections in the Chinese sports world for 22 years. By definition any statement made to a journalist is public and therefore the rules of "face" apply, and so journalists are never allowed backstage, so to speak. There is a highly-refined protocol between a host and a guest; this also

extends to Chinese conventions for the expression of mutual respect between states, which historically was more highly developed than that of the West.¹⁸ Negative media reporting during the Games will probably make some Chinese people angry because it is as if a host invited a guest to his home and the guest then criticized the host. In the Chinese tradition, host-guest meetings are highly ritualized, and are not supposed to be occasions for straightforward debate. There is a general feeling that the Western media are not interested in the new construction, the rising standard of living, or the economic achievements of the past decades – the things that matter most to Chinese people. Reporting that serves the West's appetite for "curiosities," highlighting China's differences with the West rather than its commonalities, is considered disrespectful to China and to the Olympic ideals. At the same time, negative reporting could spur new and sometimes painful levels of self-reflection as China sees itself through the eyes of the rest of the world.

5.5. International Networks Formed by Corporate Sponsorships

In summer 2005 I was in Qingdao (Tsingtao) for the Tsingtao International Beer Festival. Tsingtao Beer was also celebrating the fact that it had just been designated the domestic beer co-sponsor, with Yanjing Beer, for the Games. I was surprised to find that our hotel in Qingdao was full of Americans from my home city of St. Louis, the headquarters of Anheuser-Busch Beer Company, the makers of Budweiser beer. The Americans were there because Anheuser-Busch, the global beer sponsor of the Beijing Games, is a partner of Tsingtao Beer. I learned that most of my Chinese hosts had already visited St. Louis many times. They told me that they felt they had much to learn about how to use American marketing techniques to maximize the sponsorship.

Chinese people are proud that the Chinese personal computer company Lenovo is the first TOP sponsor that is a Chinese company, and it is also working with a foreign partner to learn how to maximize its sponsorship.

Olympic corporate sponsorship is a means for Chinese companies to learn Western marketing strategies with one goal, of course, being to increase their ability to move into non-Chinese markets.

6. Will China Change the Olympics?

Although Chinese people believe that the result of the Games will be a “combination of East and West,” if the Olympic Games are only a one-way process in which China learns from the West, then the cultural exchange will not be truly mutual.

The second goal of the “humanistic Olympics” is to display Chinese culture to the world. Actually, there is a great deal that Chinese philosophy could contribute to the philosophy of Olympism, in particular a Green concept of the relation between humans and nature, *tian ren he yi*, “humans and nature as one.” Chinese wushu (martial arts) expresses the traditional concept that “humans and nature are one.” It links humans with the environment through *qi*, “vital energy, breath,” which is a kind of energy that flows through the human body and the landscape. It teaches a “green” sports philosophy that could be a new contribution to Olympism, which lacks such a concept.

However, it is not easy for a non-Western nation, even one with such a strong cultural heritage as China, to propel the Olympic Movement to become universal. The IOC’s decision not to include wushu as an Olympic sport even after two decades of effort by the State Sports Commission to promote it internationally (discussed below) is one example. China’s difficulty in promoting its own traditions within the context of the Olympic Games illustrates how slowly change comes to an international organization like the IOC and the global cultural event over which it presides. If China cannot increase its presence in global Olympic culture, then the prospects are even worse for other non-Western nations.

6.1. Eurocentrism in the Olympic Movement

If we were able to put aside the “clash of civilizations” and “China threat” hysteria to carry out a less paranoid and more measured assessment of the past 100 years as well as projections for the future, it would reveal that global politics and culture are still Western-dominated and will continue to be in the near future. The IOC has been numerically and politically dominated by Western European countries since its inception. Currently the percentage of European members of the IOC is 42%, with Western European members at 33%. However, most of the increase outside the West has been in the number of African members (from zero to 18%) since 1960, while the proportion of Asian members has remained relatively constant since

World War II. In 1945, Asia constituted 18% of IOC membership with 10 members; in 2006 it constitutes 20% of IOC membership with 23 members. When the PRC was founded in 1949 there were three IOC members in China. In 2007 there are four Chinese members: two members in mainland China, one in Taiwan, and one in Hong Kong.

6.2. Numbers of IOC members by continent and percentage of total membership¹⁹

Also, about 80% of International Sport Federations have their headquarters in Western Europe, while only 6% have headquarters in Asia.

Region	1894	1920	1945	1960	2006
Europe	12 (80%)	35 (66%)	31 (55%)	30 (47%)	48 (42%)
Western	10 (67%)	27 (51%)	23 (41%)	24 (37%)	38 (33%)
Eastern	2 (13%)	8 (15%)	8 (14%)	6 (9%)	10 (9%)
Asia	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	8 (14%)	7 (11%)	17 (15%)
Africa	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	20 (18%)
Middle East	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	6 (9%)	6 (5%)
South/Central America	1 (7%)	6 (11%)	9 (16%)	11 (16%)	13 (11%)
North America	1 (7%)	6 (11%)	4 (7%)	4 (6%)	5 (4%)
Oceania	1 (7%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	4 (6%)	5 (4%)
Total	15	53	56	64	114

6.3. The Problem of Wushu

There are only two sports of clearly non-Western origin on the Olympic program: judo was added for the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo, and taekwondo for the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul. After the beginning of the era of reform, the Chinese State Sports Commission began an attempt to promote wushu worldwide with the eventual goal of seeing it included in the Olympic Games. There was always an assumption that since Japan and Seoul were able to have “their” sports added to the Olympic program when they hosted the Games, if China ever won the right to host the Olympic Games, this would also be the moment that wushu became an Olympic sport.

However, Beijing was awarded the Olympic Games at the same IOC Session at which Jacques Rogge was elected president. One of the planks in his platform had been the control of gigantism in the Olympic Games. Actually, the main motivation for this initiative was one that was intended to benefit the Third World: due to the huge size of the Olympic Games, only a few cities in the world were capable of hosting them, and it was becoming ever more difficult

for cities outside the developed West to aspire to host them, particularly in Africa, which had never hosted an Olympic Games. President Rogge established the Olympic Programme Commission in 2002 to study the sports on the program with the goal of reducing their number. The Commission established 33 criteria for inclusion in the Olympic program, based on which they decided to consider five sports in addition to the 28 sports already on the program: roller sports, squash, golf, karate and rugby. Further information was sought from the International Federations governing these sports. Thus, as early as 2004 wushu had been eliminated from consideration as an Olympic sport. Adding insult to injury, from the Chinese perspective, the Japanese martial art of karate was preferred over wushu and was submitted to a vote of the IOC, but failed to pass. One of the arguments for karate was its popularity: the World Karate Federation was established in 1970 and had 173 affiliated national federations in 2007, while the International Wushu Federation was established in 1990 and had 112 affiliated national federations.²⁰ The 2008 Olympic program was finalized in April 2006.

7. Expressions of Chinese Culture

Chinese culture will be expressed in the starting time of the opening ceremonies (8pm on 8/8/2008), the layout of the Olympic Green along the north-south axis of Beijing according to the principles of *fengshui* (geomancy), the cultural performances in the opening and closing ceremonies, and in other ways.

7.1. The starting time

The opening ceremonies for the Beijing Olympics will begin on the eighth evening hour of the eighth day of the eighth month of the year 2008. "Eight" is an auspicious number in traditional Chinese culture. The Eight Taoist Immortals were the traditional Chinese equivalent of today's Western Superheroes. The pronunciation of the word for "eight," *ba*, sounds like the word *fa*, which is the first character in the words for *fazhan*, "development," and *facai*, "to become wealthy." These two words have defined China's effort to modernize in the last century and are the main elements of the "dream" that is referred to in the slogan, "One World, One Dream."

7.2. The Use of Fengshui

The opening ceremonies will take place in a stadium that is located on the northern end of the north-south axis of the city of Beijing. On roughly the same axis, as one moves south, are the Asian Games Village, the Forbidden City, and the Temple of Heaven. Since ancient times, Chinese cities have been laid out on a north-south axis according to the principles of *fengshui*. Since the auspicious power (*qi*) of the famous monuments will flow upward from the South - which is the most auspicious of the Four Directions - toward the Olympic Green, which will face them, the location of the stadium and Olympic Park on that sacred axis should not only ensure a successful Games, but also should help channel good fortune into the city of Beijing for the future. The Beijing Municipal government had been retaining that choice spot for the Olympic Park since Beijing's first Olympic bid in 1993.

7.3. The Cultural Performance

BOCOG considers the opening ceremonies to be the most important opportunity to show Chinese culture to the world. It is widely agreed that the opening ceremonies at the Athens Olympic Games were very successful. But the rest of the world was already familiar with the history of "Western civilization," so the images in the Athens ceremonies were easily understood. China faces the challenge of presenting cultural symbols to a global audience largely unfamiliar with them. There was discontent with the Beijing segment choreographed by the famous film director Zhang Yimou for the closing ceremonies in Athens because many Chinese felt it catered to Western stereotypes. Particular disapproval was expressed toward the musical performance by women playing traditional Chinese instruments and dressed in the iconic traditional dress, the *qipao* - but with a twist: the *qipaos* displayed the traditional mandarin collar and side-closing frog buttons, but they had extremely short mini-skirts. This was felt by some observers to sacrifice authenticity to a blatant use of eroticism. Also, the child sitting on top of the great red lantern that rose out of the stage was said to be an advertisement for his own film, *Raise the Red Lantern*. In summer of 2005, the ceremonies were opened up to a bid competition. Zhang Yimou's film company applied as well as that of another famous director, Chen Kaige, and others. Eventually Zhang Yimou was re-designated as the choreographer.

Some people, however, recognized that maybe Westernized Chinese culture can be better appreciated by non-Chinese, akin to the phenomenon that Westerners tend to prefer Westernized Chinese food over the more authentic version, which is more heavily flavored and may consist of things that Westerners do not usually eat. There was also discussion about how “Chinese” the cultural segments should be. The result was a serious public reflection about what exactly “Chinese culture” is, which will help shape a new vision of it for the twenty-first century. Since China’s top leaders were at least aware of Zhang’s choreography and perhaps officially approved it, in light of the ensuing public discontent, they are probably re-examining their own conceptions, too.

8. Are We Ready?

Few people are seriously asking the question: Will China change the Olympic Games? In the West, there is more concern with the question: Will the Olympic Games change China? The Chinese slogan for Beijing’s bid, xin Beijing, xin Aoyun, “New Beijing, New Olympics,” was translated into English as “New Beijing, Great Olympics.” Members of the bid committee felt that non-Chinese might not understand how China could create a “new” Olympics. China hopes that it will help to make room in the Olympic Games for different cultural traditions, but is the West really open to that possibility? Are we truly ready for “One World, One Dream”?

Notes

¹ The question is found in C.H. Robertson, "A Plan for Promoting Missionary Activity among Association Boys," *Annual Reports of the Foreign Secretaries of the International Committee, October 1, 1909 to September 30, 1910* (New York: International Committee, YMCA, 1910), 192; see also Andrew Morris, *Marrow of the Nation: A History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1-2.

² In my opinion and that of many other area specialists, Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* utilized outdated ideas of "civilization" that had been discarded by scholars who actually specialized in the Middle East and Asia, many of them stimulated by the work of Edward Said. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1997); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978). An influential Modernization Theorist whose views on East Asia were off-base was Talcott Parsons, himself influenced by the work of Max Weber, whose view of East Asia was also shaped to fit his theories. Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* (New York: Free Press 1951), translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth; Talcott Parsons, *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966).

³ Brook Larmer, "The Creation of Yao Ming," in *Sports Illustrated* (September 26, 2005), 66.

⁴ Hannah Beech, "The Price of Gold," in *Time Asia Magazine* (August 16, 2004): <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,678686-1,00.html> (July 14, 2007).

⁵ Donald Trelford, "Talking Sport: Beware the march of China's sinister super-race champions," posted on [Telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk), 12 September 2004: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/main.jhtml?xml=/sport/2004/09/13/sotalk13.xml> (accessed 6 January, 2008).

⁶ "Measuring Global Impact," *Olympic Review: Official Publication of the Olympic Movement*, June 2006, 2.

⁷ 2004 *Olympic Charter* (Lausanne, International Olympic Committee, 2004), 9.

⁸ James A.R. Nafziger, *International Sports Law*, 2nd ed. (Ardsley, New York: Transnational Publishers, Inc., 2004).

⁹ *Manual for Candidature Cities for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad 2008* (Lausanne, Switzerland: International Olympic Committee, 2001).

¹⁰ Official website of Beijing Olympic Broadcasting: <http://www.bob2008.com/about.html> (July 15, 2007).

¹¹ Fox News online: <http://www.foxnews.com/wires/2007Nov12/0,4670,ChinaReporterDatabase,00.html> (accessed November 18, 2007).

¹² *Zhongguo* and *Zhonghua* both mean “China.” Both words are composed of two Chinese characters. The first character, *zhong* (中), is the same in both words, but the second characters are different. *Zhong* means “center,” *guo* (国) means “country,” *Zhongguo* (中国) literally means the “central country,” and is a name for China. *Hua* (华) means “China” and *Zhonghua* (中华) is another denomination of “China” for Chinese people.

¹³ Liang Lijun, *He Zhenliang and China's Olympic Dream*, translated by Susan Brownell (Beijing: Beijing Foreign Languages Press, 2007), 354-55.

¹⁴ “Conclusions and Recommendations,” *International Symposium on Legacy of the Olympic Games: 1984-2000*, Joint Symposium of the IOC Olympic Studies Centre and Olympic Studies Centre, Autonomous University of Barcelona, November 14-16, 2002 (Lausanne: Documents of the Olympic Museum Collection, 2003), 2, at: <http://www.olympic.org> (June 2007).

¹⁵ Liang Lijun, *He Zhenliang and China's Olympic Dream*, translated by Susan Brownell (Beijing: Beijing Foreign Languages Press, 2007), ix.

¹⁶ Liang, *He Zhenliang and China's Olympic Dream*, 510-11.

¹⁷ Dong Xiaoying et. al., “*Aoyunhui yu guojia xingxiang: Guowai meiti dui sige aoyun juban chengshide baodao zhuti fenxi*” [The Olympics and national image: An analysis of the themes in reportage on four Olympic host cities in foreign media], Beijing University, unpublished manuscript.

¹⁸ See, for example, James Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

¹⁹ Figures drawn from Allen Guttman, *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p 263-271, and “Members” at: <http://www.olympic.org>, (June 18, 2006).

²⁰ “Karate,” “wushu,” official website of the International Olympic Committee: <http://www.olympic.org> (June 2007).

Will the Olympics Change China, or Will China Change the Olympics?

"One hundred years have passed since the question now famous in China was asked, 'When will China be able to invite all the world to Peking [Beijing] for an International Olympic contest...?' In 2008 the Olympic Games will be hosted by the least 'Westernized' nation in the world to yet host them. It will be only the third time the Olympic Summer Games have been held outside the West and its former colonies, and it will be the greatest-ever meeting of East and West in peacetime. It will mark a pivotal moment when China begins to take its place as a major force in global politics, economics, and culture after nearly 170 years of subordination to the Western powers and Japan.

For Chinese people the Olympic slogan 'One World, One Dream' means that all the world's peoples want a high standard of living and a secure life, and all the world's nations want to modernize and achieve stable economic and political conditions (...)"

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