

## “One World, Different Dreams”

### The Contest to Define the Beijing Olympics

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“One World, One Dream”—SLOGAN OF THE BEIJING 2008 GAMES

“Same Bed, Different Dreams”—CHINESE COLLOQUIALISM

The Olympics are as much about stories—many of them political—as they are about sports. The ancient Games famously included an imperative to warring city-states to cease hostilities, an affirmation of a Greek identity coextensive with civilization, and other matters beyond athletics. Political narrative also has been central to the modern Games. Particularly in the television age, the host nation, journalists, and others have sought to define the plotline of each Olympiad. Many recent Games have been entangled with weighty political themes: Nazi Germany’s rise (Berlin 1936), Middle East conflicts (Munich 1972 and Melbourne 1956), the Cold War (Helsinki 1952, Moscow 1980, and Los Angeles 1984), and host states’ political rehabilitation (Tokyo 1964, Rome 1960, and arguably Munich) or arrival on the world stage (Seoul 1988 and arguably Tokyo).

Politics and narrative are again prominent in the Beijing Games. The host regime is determined to assure a positive story, especially on politically charged issues. The 2008 Olympics have produced propaganda and mobilization efforts on a scale unseen in China since the beginning of the post-Mao Zedong Reform Era. Regime efforts, along with genuine popular enthusiasm, brought huge crowds to the streets the night Beijing won the right to host the Games (MacLeod 2001c; Pan and Pomfret 2001; *People’s Daily* 2001). Starting years earlier and accelerating as 2008 approached, Beijing authorities covered the city with

billboards and banners urging citizens to welcome the Olympics and make Beijing an impressive host city. Major, mostly state-linked Chinese companies touted—loudly, even by Olympic sponsorship standards—their support for the Games (*China Daily* 2005a; Xinhua 2004b).<sup>1</sup> Olympics-related content grew pervasive in state media and on ubiquitous television screens in public spaces. A giant countdown clock was erected at Tiananmen Square, the political heart of China, with satellite versions elsewhere. Much fanfare attended milestones such as the 500- and 365-day marks. The one-year point brought more than a million to central Beijing and a countdown by a chorus of thousands led by film star Jackie Chan and accompanied by fireworks.<sup>2</sup> China even sought out Steven Spielberg and China's most internationally famous film director Zhang Yimou for the Games' opening and closing ceremonies (Coonan 2006; *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* 2007b).

This agenda has been especially urgent and these regime efforts have been especially ardent because the 2008 Games offer potential redemption from the failure of Beijing's bid for the 2000 Olympics. When the International Olympic Committee (IOC) denied the PRC's quest to host the Games of the XXXVII Olympiad, it brought outrage, anger, and embarrassment among China's leaders and ordinary citizens (Tyler 1993b; E. Rosenthal 2000).

The 2008 Games also provide a compelling opportunity to press very different—but equally political—counternarratives. For many of the concerns that motivate international civil society organizations, foreign governments, and others, and that generate friction in international political and economic relations, China is uniquely important. On human rights issues, China combines massive scale with a notoriously poor record in matters ranging from political dissent and democratic participation; to religious, media, and reproductive freedoms; to self-determination for ethnic minorities; to social justice. On environmental questions, China's sheer size, rapid industrialization and weak regulation have made the PRC a rival to the United States in greenhouse gas emissions, home to many of the world's most polluted cities and waterways, and a source of environmental harms throughout East Asia and beyond.

For those concerned with these global issues, and for those—both foreign and Chinese—who focus on China's practices and policies, the 2008 Olympics offer exceptional conditions for bringing international attention to these matters and pressure on the PRC. The Games demand extraordinary openness in China's restrictive political and media

environment and shine a rare spotlight on Chinese circumstances that still receive disproportionately little global coverage and consideration.

For outsiders seeking to change China and Chinese reformers as well, the Games offer extraordinary opportunities to advance their broader agendas through linkage to the Olympics—whether deeply resonant or shallowly ad hoc. The Games present mirror-image opportunities—as well as risks—for a regime seeking to enhance its stature at home and abroad. On both sides, multiple actors pursuing diverse agendas and seeking to define the story of the 2008 Games can draw upon Olympic ideals in ways that range from invoking to resonating to hijacking. While struggle for control of the 2008 Olympic narrative is dramatic, confrontational, and centered on the fortnight when the world comes to Beijing, more significant effects likely will be more subtle, diffuse, and long-term.

### **The Regime's Main Narrative: Prosperous, Orderly, Normal, and Globalized China**

The Chinese regime's preferred narrative began to emerge years before the Games. It includes several strands that are broadly, if not fully, consistent with one another and Olympic ideals. First, the Olympics offer an opportunity to present China as a developed, prosperous and therefore powerful country. China's economic prowess and modernity pervade Chinese discussions of the Olympics. President and Party General Secretary Hu Jintao and other current top leaders have explicitly linked Beijing's ability to host the Olympics to the regime's central policy of promoting economic development. A year before the Games, a Politburo Standing Committee member declared that the "rapid economic and social development" China had attained under policies of "reform and opening up to the outside world" had given China the "capability and conditions to host" the Games and display China's "splendid accomplishments." When Beijing's bid for the 2008 Games was still pending, Hu's predecessor Jiang Zemin similarly cited China's and Beijing's "healthy growth" and "steady [economic] development" as a "powerful material guarantee for hosting the Games." In his 2002 New Years message, Jiang ranked winning the right to host the Olympics alongside China's WTO entry as the preceding year's key milestones in China's pursuit of prosperity through international openness and engagement (Xinhua 2006b; *Renmin Ribao* 2000; Chen J. 2007).

One of the official concepts of the Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games (BOCOG) underscores the desire to showcase China's economic advancement, promising a "High Tech" Olympics. So too does the original—and still ubiquitous—slogan of the bid committee, "New Beijing, Great Olympics." The same idea animates unofficial discussions in Beijing that express hope the Games can dispel foreign misperceptions that the capital's residents wear Mao suits, rely more on bicycles than cars, or otherwise trail the modern world (author's interviews, 2007).<sup>3</sup>

Material foundations for the "developed and prosperous China" image are in place. They are the product of three decades of post-Mao economic reforms and near-double-digit annual growth, the skewing of development to major eastern cities, and the regime's formidable ability to mobilize resources for favored projects.

China's new wealth has transformed Beijing. Almost all of the city's gleaming office and residential towers, international hotels, and luxury shopping malls are less than twenty years old. The most impressive ones are of more recent vintage. The notorious traffic jams of foreign-branded, joint-venture-produced vehicles are a phenomenon mostly of the last decade. Like many arriviste metropolises, China's capital has sprouted would-be iconic architecture. New facilities for the Games are massive and designed to impress, with a price tag of over \$3 billion and a scale that recalls the sensibilities of the emperors who created the Forbidden City. Many of Beijing's older architectural treasures—including the Imperial Palace and the Temple of Heaven—have undergone extensive restoration timed for the 2008 Games. Major infrastructure projects, including subway lines, roads, a rail link to the airport and its new world's-largest terminal, and environmental improvement projects are part of the pre-Games construction agenda as well—at a cost of \$40 billion (*Financial Times* 2007a; Abrahamson 2005; *Japan Economic News-wire* 2005).

When reality inconveniently has fallen short of image, Chinese authorities have turned to Potemkin village tactics to hide, or distract attention from, the incompleteness or the deleterious side effects of China's breakneck modernization. For an IOC visit during Beijing's unsuccessful bid for the 2000 Games, buildings along the guests' route received fresh coats of paint and slogans welcoming the Olympics. Decrepit athletic facilities were patched up. Peddlers, homeless people, and beggars were kept out of sight. Traffic restrictions were imposed, and coal-fired furnaces were shut off (despite the impact on production

and the comfort of city residents) (Associated Press 1993; Cater 1993; United Press International 1993). Although reforms responding to vote-buying scandals limited IOC visits eight years later, Beijing deployed similar tactics in its successful quest to land the 2008 Games. Authorities "greened" the city through planting trees and painting brown winter grass. They cleared the air by ordering factories to close and reprising earlier restrictions on residential coal heating. They again signaled enthusiasm with numerous banners and enthusiastic citizens (including a bicycle rally of 10,000 in central Beijing) (Byers 2001; *Japan Economic Newswire* 2001; Kuhn 2001).

To the extent that intervening years of economic growth, real estate development, and Olympics-related construction have not solved such problems (and have worsened some of them), means redolent of the 1993 and 2001 efforts to land the Games are in the repertoire for the 2008 Games. Some have been clearly and explicitly adopted—for example, limiting pollution and traffic congestion. Others are not officially acknowledged but certainly will be in the mix—for example, removing or hiding those whose presence or advocacy reveals persisting poverty and rising inequality, including Beijing-based dissidents, provincial petitioners who come to the capital seeking redress for their grievances, and migrant laborers who work in countless construction projects and other more marginal jobs in the city. Less certain is whether such measures, some of which worked reasonably well for brief site visits, can succeed when 30,000 journalists, and half a million participants and spectators, stay for two weeks.

The hosts' use of the Games to display China's modernity and prosperity fits a pattern of the Olympics as grand spectacle and, more importantly, reprises prior Olympics' roles as national "coming out parties." The Beijing Games here resemble the Seoul Games of 1988 or perhaps the Tokyo Games of 1964. The Seoul Olympics came shortly after Korea's ascension to the ranks of lower-middle-income countries—a group the PRC has now joined (World Bank n.d.). Although Japan decades earlier had become a developed, industrialized country, the 1964 Games underscored its recovery from postwar economic devastation. The parallel to the Seoul Games has become a cliché in foreign commentary and informal discussions in China. (The analogy unsurprisingly occupies a much lower profile in orthodox Chinese commentary. PRC authorities are unsurprisingly averse to outsiders' speculative suggestions that the Games also might portend political change similar to Korea's democratization. And, like Chinese leaders before them, they

are hardly inclined to celebrate the former vassal state as an appropriate model or worthy predecessor for China in any significant international endeavor—with the limited exception of Korea’s rise as one of several “tiger” economies from which post-Mao economic reforms drew lessons.)<sup>4</sup>

For China, the link between prosperity and development is reinforced by promises of more concrete economic effects. Official sources tout the Games’ contribution to “the nationwide struggle” to achieve the Reform-Era goal of a “well-off society.” Olympics spending may add as much as 1 percent annually to Beijing’s economic growth. The impact of Olympics-driven infrastructure improvements will extend far beyond 2008 (Xinhua 2001c; Xu 2007). The rapid growth of Beijing’s economy, population, and need for infrastructure means the host city faces less danger of common Olympic hangovers of white-elephant projects and popular resentment of vast expenditures on Olympics-related projects to the neglect of other needs. A mid-course retrenchment—directed by Premier Wen Jiabao and prompted by concerns about excessive and inefficient spending and doubts about the future utility of the Games’ venues—promised to reduce such risks further (Xxz.gov.cn 2007; Ling and Lee 2007).

The Games are also expected to spur upgrading of Beijing’s service industries. Unlike resident expatriates and experienced visitors who have become accustomed to many frustrations, the foreigners who will come for the Games are expected to demand—and thus Chinese authorities, determined to win favorable press, are pushing to provide—services that meet international standards. Sectors targeted for improvement range widely, including hospitality, transportation, media, and health care (*China Daily* 2006b; Xinhua 2005b; *China Daily* 2007e).

A second central theme in the official narrative is to portray China as politically stable and orderly. All host governments, and the international Olympic authorities, want to avoid Games marred by poor organization or political disruption. This is a core (if not explicit) Olympic value, reflected in the factors considered in the site-selection process, the insistence that the Olympics are about sport (not politics), and the related mantra that the Games should not be politicized. Commitment to political order and control looms especially large for Beijing in 2008, as top Chinese officials have noted (Xinhua 2001a). The harsh measures to relocate migrant workers, provincial petitioners, and development-besieged poor urbanites are as much about securing order as showcasing prosperity.

PRC leaders also have been sensitive to the influence of Chinese dissidents, who have embarrassed the regime abroad and who, properly handled, might aid the regime's Olympic pursuits. In the most notable example, Wei Jingsheng, China's internationally best-known dissident, was released from prison during the quest for the 2000 Games, in part to burnish the regime's image and respond to foreign human rights critiques. Wei was soon jailed again, having irked authorities by criticizing to foreign media the regime's attempts to trade political prisoners for the Games, and meeting with the U.S. State Department's chief human rights official to urge continued pressure on the PRC (Tyler 1993a; Tempest 1994).

The period preceding the 2001 vote on the 2008 Games brought similar tactics. By this time, China had sent Wei into exile as part of its effort to lessen the foreign condemnation of China's human rights record that had helped scuttle Beijing's bid for the 2000 Olympics. With the 2008 site choice nearing, Chinese authorities detained known dissidents, keeping them from IOC visitors and the press, and imprisoned at least one democracy activist who signed a letter urging the IOC to press China on human rights. Authorities also reined in media, both traditional organs and newly emerging channels for heterodox opinion, including the Internet and *wangba* (Web cafes) that provided many users with access points, as well as anonymity (Faison 1997; MacLeod 2001a; E. Rosenthal 2001; Pan and Pomfret 2001). The more-immediate run-up to the Olympics—and the politically sensitive Chinese Communist Party Congress the preceding fall—brought tighter restrictions and increased harassment of political dissidents, regime-criticizing NGOs, and old and new media.<sup>5</sup>

The regime's commitment to staging a trouble-free Olympics is sometimes overstated (for example in the occasional suggestion—firmly and credibly rejected by PRC authorities—that the pre-Olympics period might permit Taiwan to move toward formal independence because fear of a Moscow or Los Angeles Games-style boycott would deter Beijing from using force to check secession).<sup>6</sup> Still, the storyline of a smooth and successful Olympics is a high priority for a regime with considerable commitment and capacity. Maintaining order and control is a particularly deeply entrenched imperative in China, where "fear of chaos" (*paluan*) is a centuries-old political trope and where the ruling regime initially drew much of its legitimacy from having ended decades of civil war, foreign invasion, anarchy, and semicolonial encroachment. Of more immediate relevance, the forcible suppression of

the Democracy Movement, the smothering of dissent during the nearly two decades since, and the ongoing repression of Falun Gong underscore the regime's ability to maintain political order and quash challenges when leaders perceive sufficiently strong reasons to do so. For the Beijing Games, the prospects for disruption are dim, at least on anything approaching the scale of the Tiananmen Democracy Movement of 1989 or the Falun Gong activities of a decade later (including the surprise assembly of 10,000 followers outside the top Chinese leadership's residence). Enforced silence predictably awaits dissidents, and expulsion, confinement, or other restrictions face vagrants, petty criminals, mental patients, rural-to-urban migrants, and other unsightly types, for the 2008 Games.<sup>7</sup> To further assure order, PRC authorities have devoted massive resources to security work for the Games. It may also help that major venues are clustered in areas removed from both central Beijing and the chronically politically troublesome university district.

In more quotidian but economically significant ways, PRC authorities have used their power to control citizens' and enterprises' behavior to create an impression of orderliness and cleanliness during key Olympics-related moments. They shut down factories and limited driving for IOC visitors in 2001, creating unusually clear skies and quiet streets (*Japan Economic Newswire* 2001; Kuhn 2001). Two years before the Beijing Olympiad, capital-area factories, taxi drivers, and others were on notice that their "fog"-producing and traffic-snarling activities would be severely curtailed during the Games. Factories were to close for months preceding and during the Olympics, and much of the city's workforce was to be told, or encouraged, to take vacations.<sup>8</sup> The China-Africa summit in October 2006 and a test ban on driving for 1.3 million vehicles in August 2007 provided small-scale dress rehearsals for Olympic traffic restrictions. A year before the Games, authorities announced that hundreds of domestic flights would be canceled in the weeks surrounding the Games to reduce airport delays (McGregor 2006a; *China Daily* 2007a; Harvey and McGregor 2007; Xinhua 2007). And, most expensively of all, much of the Olympics-driven infrastructure building blitz served this same goal of avoiding chaos from an inadequate transportation system.

Other official efforts also show commitment to orderly, trouble-free Games. For example, city authorities launched a campaign to improve Beijingers' manners in advance of the Olympics. Targeted behavior included booing athletes who perform badly, spitting or swearing in pub-



lic, failing to queue for buses, and using embarrassingly bad English (Xinhua 2006a; Yardley 2007b; Xinhua 2007m). Methods were developed and tested to seed clouds to reduce the chance of rain during the image-defining opening and closing days and to wash pollution from the skies (*China Daily* 2007c; Xinhua 2007i). With controversy erupting over Chinese exports of dangerous food, medicine, and toys in the summer of 2007, PRC authorities rushed to address another perceived threat to a smooth and orderly Olympics, pledging high-tech tracking and inspection systems to assure the safety of consumables at the Games (Yardley 2007c).

A third element in the preferred official narrative uses the Beijing Olympics to assert China's achievement of, or return to, international respectability and normal membership in the global community. The Olympics' utility in promoting such political rehabilitation and acceptance is not a formally recognized Olympic principle. It is understandably not stressed in official Chinese discussions. But it is an obvious power of the Olympics and figured prominently in debates over whether China should be awarded the Games and motivated the Chinese regime's desire to host.

The still-fresh memory of the 1989 Tiananmen Incident (and human rights issues generally) helped defeat Beijing's bid for 2000. The awarding of the 2008 Olympics marked zealously pursued and hard-won progress from this dismal baseline. The Games will offer further opportunities. The visual richness of the Olympics and the worldwide attention they draw provide a singularly promising chance to supplant images from 1989, such as a lone man standing in the path of tanks or an army vehicle toppling the Goddess of Democracy.<sup>9</sup>

Here, the 2008 Games can give China what the 1960 Rome Games; the 1964 Tokyo Games; and, arguably, the 1972 Munich Games (especially read against the backdrop of the 1936 Berlin Games) gave their hosts: a symbolic affirmation of the country's recovery from political pariah status that had followed odious actions. To be sure, the Tiananmen Incident and other recent PRC human rights violations pale in comparison to Axis governments' atrocities in World War II. On the other hand, China's quest for reacceptance is complicated by the continuing in power of the regime responsible for the behavior that led to ostracism.

Ongoing, post-Tiananmen human rights abuses have remained a challenge for China's rehabilitation and normality agenda. China's former recalcitrance toward the international human rights regime has

softened, grudgingly, in the face of regular critical reports from NGOs, the U.S. State Department, and others; threats by the U.S. to remove trading privileges; the remarkable (if modest and constrained) growth of human rights discourse and advocacy in China; and the partly human rights-based and temporarily successful international opposition to China's entering the WTO and hosting the Olympics.

As the role of human rights concerns in China's Olympics bids underscores, China's efforts to use the Games to enhance its normal, accepted state status partly depend on more effectively engaging the international human rights norms that have become a feature of the Olympic movement. This connection between human rights and the Games may have its roots in venerable Olympic ideals of sport free from politics and open to individual merit. It expanded through the resonance of human rights issues with Olympic tragedy and controversy at Munich in 1972, retrospectively for Berlin in 1936 and arguably in the Afghanistan invasion-linked boycott of Moscow in 1980. The tie has strengthened further through Olympics-focused efforts of human rights NGOs in recent years. The Olympic Charter and Code of Ethics now include such human rights-related provisions as preservation of human dignity, harmonious development of man, and prohibition of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, or politics (IOC 2004).

Recognizing the seriousness of international discontent and concern, Chinese Olympics authorities assured wary Olympics decision makers and decision influencers that awarding Beijing the Games would promote human rights in the PRC and bring Games-specific changes in such key areas as press freedom, especially for foreign media. These arguments and promises helped China land the Games but have limited prospects for wider effect. Poor implementation, continued abuses, and tighter controls (some Olympics driven) have produced a torrent of criticism as the 2008 Games draw near (Xinhua 2006f; Tian 2007; Dickie 2007a).<sup>10</sup>

For China, the rehabilitation-and-arrival theme extends beyond recovery from Tiananmen and later human rights problems. Beijing's successful bid to host the Games, and the Olympics' placing the host city at the center of world attention, are seen as bringing closure to China's "century (and a half) of humiliation" that began with the Opium Wars, the shattering of a Sinocentric world order, and China's relegation to the margins of the international system. While this issue has not been central to official views, it is a significant theme, espe-

cially common in unofficial and foreign discussions of the Beijing Olympics and China's rise more generally. It likely also helps explain the seemingly outsized importance that the Games appear to have for China's leaders (C. Smith 2001; Frank 1993; Chen J. 2007; Xu 2007; author's interviews 2007).

Addressing environmental problems is also part of the "normal" or "conforming" nation strand in the officially preferred narrative. China increasingly draws international opprobrium for failing to engage this set of international norms. It faces criticism and alarm for having rejected the Kyoto accords, allowing its waterways and urban air to become among the world's most polluted, threatening the environment and public health of its neighbors and, on some views, using lax pollution controls as an export subsidy.

The Olympics bring special pressures, incentives, and opportunities for China to address its environmental rogue status. Environmental issues have distinctive ties to the Olympics. The environment formally joined culture and sport as international Olympic themes in the 1990s. Environmental concerns and the Games are broadly and informally linked by the connection between sport and public health and the impact of pollution on the Olympics' many outdoor events. And Olympics officials early and often raised the environment as a serious concern for a Beijing Games (Cha 2007; United Nations n.d.; *China Daily* 2007b; IOC 2004; World Health Organization 2005; Japan and China 2007).

Against this problematic backdrop, PRC authorities made a "Green" Olympics one of the Beijing Games' official concepts. They have adopted and publicized regulations incorporating international "green" standards and pursued cooperation on Games-specific environmental measures with the United Nations Environmental Program and environmental protection authorities abroad. They have made and emphasized pledges to minimize energy use and adopt solar energy, water recycling, and other green technology for Games-related building projects, transportation, and other activities during the Games. They have touted campaigns to plant trees, directives to curtail or close (permanently or temporarily) polluting factories in the Beijing area, convert capital-area power plants from coal to cleaner fuels, and restrict driving during the Games. Some of these undertakings have been costly and somewhat effective. They command greater official attention and extra public resources (totaling several billion dollars) partly because they seem vital to the regime's Olympic story that China is a

responsible and respectable participant in an increasingly important aspect of the international system (Xinhua 2006c; *China Daily* 2005b; *China Daily* 2004c; Xinhua 2007n; Landsberg 2007b; MacLeod and Wiseman 2007).

Prospects for success remain questionable, however. The measures are small relative to China's problems, both of substance and image. Some of the commitments surely will be honored in the breach or will prove inadequate (Harvey and McGregor 2007; *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* 2007c). The latter problem was underscored when, with a year to go, the IOC warned it might postpone endurance events if pollution remained severe (Blitz and Dickie 2007). Other pledges risk diminished impact because they may be recognized as only symbolic (seeming green without being green), temporary and local (reducing haze and traffic jams only in Beijing and only during the Games), or cost-shifting (moving factories elsewhere in China).

Intellectual property plays a similar role in the official Olympic narrative of China's international normalcy and conformity. The PRC has faced mounting criticism for being ineffective or unwilling to implement international norms—and China's WTO-related commitments—for the protection of intellectual property rights (IPR). China's behavior has brought growing calls for action, including chronic complaints from foreign companies and industry groups and the United States' initiating long-contemplated WTO proceedings before the one-year mark in the countdown to the Games (Puzzanghera and Iritani 2007; USTR 2007).

Like human rights and the environment, IPR is a special concern of the Olympics that poses serious risks and possible opportunities for the Beijing Games' hosts. Olympics-related IPR protection has become a major IOC focus. Selling sponsorship rights and licensing Olympic logos are highly lucrative and vital to paying for costly Olympics operations. China's broader record of rampant piracy has compounded such concerns for the 2008 Games.

PRC authorities have sought to assuage those worries and, in turn, avoid reinforcing an important count in the international indictment charging China with shirking global rules. Across Beijing, specialized stores and booths have sprung up, prominently and apparently accurately proclaiming that they sell "officially licensed" Olympics products and offering them at premium prices. PRC authorities have pledged increased IPR enforcement, adopted Olympics-specific IPR regulations, declared that those rules "meet usual international practices"

(*China Daily* 2004a; PRC State Council 2002), launched contests to increase popular knowledge of Olympics-related IPR laws (*Xinhua* 2007j), devoted a disproportionate share of antipiracy enforcement efforts to Olympics knockoffs, and publicized enforcement successes.<sup>11</sup> Authorities clearly are sensitive to reports of Olympics IPR piracy, apparently believe that they may face significant costs if they fail to follow through on high-profile commitments to improve IPR protection, and surely are solicitous of the interests of state-owned or state-affiliated enterprises that produce licensed Olympics merchandise.

Here too, the impact of promises and efforts is doubtful. Unlicensed Olympics paraphernalia has been on offer from street hawkers many months before the peak demand that will accompany the Games. Officially touted crackdowns on Olympics counterfeiters are still few relative to the likely scale of 2008 Games-related piracy. And the authorities' moves face a skeptical international audience that may well regard publicized efforts as being more about image than efficacy.

A fourth theme in the officially favored narrative is a "globalized" China (to be inferred from an apparently globalized Beijing). This element is facially consistent with international Olympic norms of internationalism and universality. It is also imbedded in the Beijing Games' principal slogan, "One World, One Dream," which tellingly enjoys a special place as a giant billboard at the most heavily toured—and photographed—part of the Great Wall. One of the Games' official themes—a "Humanistic" or "People's" Olympics—emphasizes benevolent cultural and social implications of the Olympics and similarly signals cosmopolitanism, harmony, and universality.<sup>12</sup>

Much that supports the "normal" and "accepted" nation strand also serves this element of the regime's preferred interpretation of the 2008 Games. The claim that China is "globalized" is a key aim of the PRC's self-congratulatory embrace of international norms—generally and in specifically Olympics-related moves—on issues ranging from intellectual property to environmental protection to labor standards.

Similarly, developments that support the officially preferred Olympics story line of China's economic prowess also help the regime's claim to cosmopolitanism. Because foreign trade and investment have loomed so large in China's rapid development and because coastal urban China's burgeoning consumer class has a strong taste for foreign brands, the advertisements (many of them invoking the Olympics) that festoon the capital's main roads and shopping areas are mostly for internationally famous companies. In the Olympics context, the

regime has not left this visible commercial face of internationalism at risk of shabbiness. As the Olympics-driven urban facelift that followed the awarding of the Games began in 2002, city officials ordered the removal of down-market signs (including some of longtime Olympics sponsor McDonald's) (Xinhua 2002).

Many of the most recent additions to the architectural backdrop for such signage also embody the regime's globalization narrative. Prominent examples include controversial French architect Paul Andreu's National Theater with its flattened, reflective dome and Rem Koolhaas's "twisted arch" headquarters for China Central Television. Major Olympic venues are similarly internationalized. The main stadium for the Games, designed by the Swiss firm Herzog and de Meuron, has an open-weave facade that has prompted the moniker "bird's nest." While this popular nickname evokes Chinese cuisine, the design is not discernibly Chinese. A leading architect at the local firm that collaborated on the project tellingly described the stadium as "such a good, modern design that it would be accepted and liked by Chinese culture" because of those virtues, not because of its Chineseness. Another Chinese architect with a major role in the project similarly described the stadium as "a very bold design for a nation that wants to prove itself part of the international family, to show we share the same values." Australia's PTW Architects' fanciful natatorium evokes blue bubbles—and the sobriquet "water cube"—and has no discernibly Chinese features (Pomfret 2000; *South China Morning Post* 2007; *China Daily* 2006c; Watts 2007). This internationalization of building styles has displaced former mayor Chen Xitong's more nativist directives that prompted oft-tacky Chinese motifs on many buildings from the 1980s and early 1990s.

These changes to Beijing's cityscape have been so striking that that they have generated a backlash. Local companies and officials have attacked foreign brands' outdoor advertisements for overwhelming Chinese competitors (Xinhua 2005c). Chinese architects, officials, and commentators have lamented displacement of Chinese aesthetic traditions and criticized foreign-designed projects for not fitting their environment. Such charges (along with concerns about cost and safety) were sufficiently powerful to bring retrenchment of key projects and reconsideration of the rush to foreign styles (Xinhua 1993b; Hawthorne 2004; *China Daily* 2004b). Chinese celebrities' contributions to packaging the Beijing Games also have supported the cosmopolitan theme but without drawing nationalist critiques. Some of the most prominent

roles, tellingly, have gone to movie actor Jackie Chan, basketball star Yao Ming, and film director Zhang Yimou—whose appeal goes far beyond the Chinese world and much of whose fame comes from accomplishments in non-Chinese settings.

This official narrative of universality and globalization that echoes and appropriates established Olympic ideals also serves a broader Chinese foreign policy agenda. The Olympics story line of a cosmopolitan, internationalized China dovetails with the PRC's drive to assure skittish neighbors and a wary world that China's inexorable "rise" will be a "peaceful" one in which China will continue to emphasize its own economic development; deepen engagement with the outside world; and eschew "hegemonism," "imperialism," and other modes of dominating other states or abusing its new power. Chinese Olympic rhetoric has picked up these themes, stressing that the Games will help make Beijing and China more internationally open, and adopting as one of the organizing committee's three official themes a "People's" or "Humanistic" Olympics that will have transformative and internationalizing effects on China's citizenry (Zheng 2005; Xinhua 1993a; Moon 2006).

Efforts to weave the strands of development, stability, normality, and globalization into an effective narrative for the Beijing 2008 Games have faced significant challenges. Among the difficulties are the weakness of empirical foundations for some key claims, and the themes' uneasy coexistence with another, very different dimension of official China's preferred vision of the Games.

### **The Regime's Other Narrative: Chinese Nationalism**

Nationalism is a familiar element in the Olympic experience and—though less so—Olympic ideals. It has particular force and volatility for the Beijing Games. While the most audible parts of the official narrative have stressed international cooperation and assimilation and domestic prosperity and order, nationalism has always been central to China's Olympic quest. It predictably comes more to the fore as the Games approach.

Partisan patriotism may not be among the Olympics' most lofty values, but it is an important facet of the Games, especially for the host nation. For the 2008 Beijing Olympiad, the Chinese regime has cast

winning the right to host the Games and staging a smooth and successful Olympics as major points of national pride and signal moments in China's rise as a great power. A chest-thumping tone pervades discussions of the Olympics as a reflection of China's recent accomplishments and return to international prominence and acceptance.

Against this background, Chinese successes at the Games are sure to bring much official triumphalism, both reflecting and feeding popular sentiment and perhaps pushing beyond the point that serves the regime's longer term interests and reflective preferences. China's status as a major and rising sports power and the Games' typical home court advantage promise many occasions for celebration of Chinese on-the-field accomplishments and China's pursuit of first place in the medal count. Long before the Games, public displays in Beijing celebrated Yao Ming, 2004 hurdles gold medalist Liu Xiang, and other Chinese athletes alongside Jesse Owens and other stars of past Olympiads.

Other Chinese characteristics of the 2008 Games may amplify the ordinary Olympic temptations of nationalism. Head-to-head competition between PRC and U.S. teams invites jingoistic responses, especially given two backstories. The approach and arrival of the Games of the XXIX Olympiad recall the United States' role in denying Beijing the 2000 Games and political efforts in the United States that opposed awarding China the 2008 Games. Some of that opposition continued long after the IOC's site selection and included pointed (if futile) calls in Congress, among NGOs, and elsewhere for a boycott of the Beijing Games (Lengell 2007; *Los Angeles Times* 2007; *China Daily* 2007d; Smith 2007; Perlez 2001; Xinhua 2001b; Schweisberg 1993; Xinhua 1993c).

The Games will unfold against the backdrop of China's rapid and self-conscious rise as a great power and official and popular chafing at perceived American efforts to deny China its rightful place in the world or to subject China to unfair standards and unwarranted criticisms. Key irritants are unlikely to abate before the Games: a cavernous bilateral trade imbalance; charges that China has not allowed its currency to appreciate adequately; concerns about shoddy and dangerous Chinese exports; Washington's characterization of China as less than a "responsible stakeholder" in the international system on matters ranging from economics to human rights to international security to public health; and sharp disagreements over the propriety, necessity, and motivation of China's quest for a blue-water navy, satellite-killing weapons, information warfare capacity, and other military capabilities. The nationalist strand in the Chinese official narrative and the developed and pow-



erful China theme that PRC authorities also press (and that, in any event, will be inescapably on display at the Games) are a heady combination that may provide ample fodder for the "China threat" school of PRC critics in the United States.

The likelihood of Sino-American conflict-fueled nationalism becoming a major element in the Olympics story line will rise if these or other aspects of U.S.-China relations become foci of the American presidential campaign and party conventions that will be held nearly opposite the Olympics, or if PRC leaders—or unforeseen events—increase such issues' political salience (Luce and Ward 2007). Once accepted, China's invitation to President Bush to attend the 2008 Games promised some assurance on this front, but at the risk of greater U.S. attention to the Games and, in turn, greater impact on U.S. opinion and policy of any developments that depart from the Chinese regime's preferred Olympic narrative (Stolberg 2007).

Japanese Olympic successes and direct competition with Chinese athletes could become another flashpoint for Chinese Olympic nationalism. Bilateral relations remain chronically troubled, and clashes have erupted after matches between Chinese and Japanese teams in recent years and brought international expressions of concern about what they portended for 2008 (Makinoda 2007; McNeill 2004; McGregor and Pilling 2004).

Taiwan's Olympic role—always nettlesome for China—is more problematic at a PRC-hosted Games. For decades, China has grudgingly endured Taiwan's participation under the name "Chinese Taipei." At a Beijing Games, however, the prospect of Taiwanese athletes competing as representatives of an entity distinct from the PRC, or standing atop medal platforms on mainland Chinese soil, puts Chinese authorities to harder choices. In this setting, China's customary acquiescence risks implying greater PRC acceptance of Taiwan's status in an event at which competitors typically represent sovereign states, not lesser entities. Given the broader nationalist tenor of the Olympics for China, temptation and pressure to push back may be formidable, despite the cost to China's efforts—at the Games and more broadly—to appear accommodating and nonbellicose. This prospect will loom larger still if Taiwanese athletes, media, or politicians cast Taiwan's Olympic participation or successes strongly in Taiwanese nationalist terms.

Here too, broader politics, including election politics, likely will play a role. A new president will have taken office in Taiwan three months before the Games. If past patterns hold, the campaign will have in-

cluded conflict over Taiwan's relations with the mainland and whatever initiatives concerning the island republic's "status" the retiring "pro-independence" incumbent Chen Shui-bian will have undertaken during his final months in office. Among these is a ruling-party-backed proposed referendum for the early 2008 balloting that calls for Taiwan's entry into the United Nations. This long has been anathema to Beijing (which insists that Taiwan is ineligible for what the PRC characterizes as a states-member-only organization), and the referendum is among the reasons offered for pressing a tough line on Taiwan policy at the Chinese Communist Party Congress held ten months before the Games.

Well before the Games, the Taiwan issue and the nationalist strand in China's Olympics agenda already had produced friction. In early 2007, controversy erupted over whether the Olympic torch would pass through Taiwan on its way to the opening ceremonies. Beijing offered, and Taipei rejected (and negotiations for a mutually acceptable alternative arrangement failed to resurrect), the flame's journey through the island as part of a final, intra-Chinese segment that also would include the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions.<sup>13</sup>

Tibet too has become part of an Olympics-related and politically charged nationalist narrative concerning a region of disputed Chinese sovereignty. Beijing Olympics organizers pointedly included Tibet as a domestic leg of the torch relay and as the source of one of the Games' mascots. Chinese authorities reacted sharply to efforts to use the Olympics to display Tibetan opposition to China's rule, quashing Olympics-and-Tibet-related protests and restricting foreign media access to the region (Macartney 2007; Yardley 2007e).

Chinese nationalism—or at least Chinese culturalism—pervades official symbols and slogans of the 2008 Games, sometimes in ways not obvious to outsiders. This is particularly significant as an attempt to define the meaning of the 2008 Olympics because culturalism and nationalism long have been closely linked in China and because Chinese political discourse remains highly attuned to metaphor and symbol.<sup>14</sup>

The logo for Beijing 2008 is a human figure evoking an Olympic athlete and incorporating a stylized variant of the ancient seal-style version of the character *jing*, as in Beijing. (To some observers, it resembled not *jing* but *wen*, referring to culture [*wenhua*]*—*implicitly Chinese culture.) The logo provoked nationalism-related criticism on two fronts: some complained that the design attempted to make a universal event excessively Chinese; others attacked it for being insufficiently nation-

alist in snubbing the rest of China in favor of Beijing (BOCOG n.d.a; Fang 2004b; Fang 2004a).

Olympic medals will feature the logo and incorporate rings of jade—the quintessential Chinese stone and symbol of honor, virtue, and fortune—in descending levels of quality on the gold, silver, and bronze medallions (Gao 2007). The *fuwa*—the omnipresent and insufferably cuddly mascots for the Games—are an oppressive mélange of Chinese symbols, leavened with Olympic icons. The five creatures represent the carp, panda, Olympic Flame, Tibetan antelope, and swallow. Each is color coded to one of the Olympic rings and one of five basic elements that mostly track traditional Chinese cosmology.<sup>15</sup> Each is also associated with a traditional Chinese blessing. The mascots’ names take kitschy national-culturalism further still: Beibei, Jingjing, Huanhuan, Yingying, and Nini use mandarin Chinese’s dense homophony to echo the venerable tourism slogan, *Beijing huanying ni* (Beijing welcomes you!) (BOCOG n.d.b; Gao 2005).

This pervasive cultural symbolism extends, with more subtlety and less media hype, to the Games’ physical setting. As references to the influence of the “five elements theory” on the design of the Olympic village underscore, traditional motifs are hardly absent. The Olympic Green follows principles of Chinese geomancy (*fengshui*). The Games complex is laid out to extend and remain harmonious with the capital’s ancient north-south axis—an orientation that the founders of the People’s Republic once sought to pivot with the postrevolutionary construction of the broad east-west boulevard that passes before Tiananmen. Construction for the Games also has unearthed archaeological finds, which are always occasions for officially sanctioned expressions of national-cultural pride (Xinhua 2004a; Xiao 2002; Yardley 2007a). Cultural nationalism is also reflected in the vast Olympics-driven restoration program for the city’s imperial-era architectural treasures, and in plans for elaborate—even by Olympics standards—events showcasing Chinese performing arts.

Even small and seemingly trivial matters convey attempted sinicization. The moment chosen for the Games’ opening—8:08 p.m. on August 8, 2008—is a string of Chinese superstition’s lucky number. The Chinese version of the Games’ widely used English slogan replaces the bland “New Beijing, Great Olympics” with the more proprietary and transforming “New Beijing, New Olympics.”

Some host country cultural nationalism in the Olympics is commonplace and consistent with the inclusion of “culture” alongside

“sport” in the pantheon of Olympic values. Still, the Chinese hosts’ efforts have been unusually pervasive and often overwrought. Less clear are the prospects for success of this strand in the officially preferred narrative. Much of the content is, by any measure, clunky and contrived. Anecdotal evidence suggests that educated and cosmopolitan segments of the Beijing population (and perhaps others) wince at dated-sounding, simplistic, and excessively nationalistic tones in the official fervor for and pride in China’s Olympic moment and expected successes. The nationalist drumbeating over the Olympics also seems to have little carry beyond Beijing. Shanghai is far more focused on its own World Exposition for 2010. The Olympics figure far less prominently in conversations and local media coverage beyond Beijing, and many comments are critical of the perceived waste and the expenditure of national resources on the already rich and subsidized capital (author’s interviews, 2006–2007; *Economic Reference News* 2004; Wei 2007).

Moreover, the purveyors of the officially preferred narrative surely appreciate that moves that evoke or fan popular nationalism in China can be dangerous and must be relatively carefully calibrated. Although manipulable and often mobilized to regime ends (ranging from supporting the Olympic bid to criticizing Japanese prime ministerial visits to the Yasukuni Shrine to U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade), Chinese nationalism is a genuinely popular phenomenon that is sometimes virulent and difficult for the regime to control.

The nationalist strand in the officially preferred story line also must contend with more accommodating and cosmopolitan themes in the regime’s principal narrative and the weight those derive from Chinese authorities’ having emphasized them in their bid to secure the Games and advance broader PRC foreign policy goals. Moreover, purveyors of officially preferred narratives must contend with other contestants in a struggle to define the meaning of the 2008 Olympics. These rivals’ aims conflict with the official agenda’s nationalist elements—and others as well.

### **Counternarratives: Appropriating Olympic Ideals, Playing Chinese Politics, and the Games as Foreign Policy and Guerrilla Theater**

The Olympics often spawns transnational, multisided contests to shape a Games story line. Those battles are especially complex and high-

stakes for the XXIX Summer Games. Challenges to official China's preferred narrative come from diverse sources, including groups that fall within the loose rubric of "global civil society"; foreign governments with China policies and issue-specific foreign policies; and other organizations, industry associations and firms, and individuals in China and elsewhere. Well before the Games, these actors began to press Olympics-related agendas on a wide range of issues. These efforts to expose, publicize, or affect repressive, illiberal, or otherwise international norm-violating PRC policies and practices predate and extend beyond China's pursuit of the Games. Several features of the Olympics, however, create especially promising contexts for long-standing participants and newcomers to try to change China.

First, the Olympics has facilitated linkages between agendas that critics and promoters of reforms press and goals that the Chinese leadership values, including hosting the Olympics as a sign of China's status and prowess and, more broadly, securing China's standing as an internationally accepted, normal state. Foreign actors' influence on the IOC's choice of hosts and their ability to threaten credibly to diminish the Beijing Games' success (through high-profile protests, boycotts, reports, and the like) gave outsiders special leverage with the Chinese leadership. Echoing the saga of China's quest for WTO membership, Beijing's quest for the Games prompted pledges that otherwise would not have been forthcoming from the PRC on issues that mattered to foreign governments, international NGOs, and influential interest groups.<sup>16</sup>

In seeking the Olympics, as in pursuing WTO accession, China's promises gave new tools to critics and reform-promoters at home and abroad. They could monitor China's compliance and depict PRC shortfalls as not meeting requirements that Chinese authorities could not dismiss as externally imposed, nonbinding benchmarks. A year before the Games, this tactic became more prominent. Notable examples included foreign media and international human rights NGOs and dissident and critical Chinese issuing high-profile condemnations of Chinese authorities' failures to live up to Olympics commitments on press freedom, labor rights, and human rights more generally.

Second, as these examples of linkage suggest, agendas of activists, critics, and other proponents of change in China can invoke or appropriate Olympics values. Where they do, their preferred story lines have a better chance of being woven into the Games' principal narrative and leveraging the Olympics' capacity to affect PRC regime behavior and Chinese circumstances.

Human rights issues are the most notable example. The Beijing Games' background includes much that reinforces the already robust linkage between the Olympics and human rights. NGOs and foreign political leaders cast their opposition to Beijing's unsuccessful bid for the 2000 Games largely in human rights terms (Bondy 1993; Sun 1993). As the IOC considered awarding Beijing the 2008 Olympics, critics and opponents reprised earlier tactics and argued that China's human rights record disqualified the PRC from hosting the Games.<sup>17</sup> In one widely noted example, Amnesty International timed the release of a major report on torture in China to coincide with IOC representatives' predecision visit to Beijing (MacLeod 2001b).

Chinese authorities have made it easier for NGOs and other critics to connect human rights agendas, including maltreatment of political prisoners and China's suppression of political dissent, to the Beijing Games. The release of selected dissidents to parry foreign criticism made the former prisoners potent spokesmen and foci for linking criticisms of China's political repression to assertions of Beijing's unsuitability as a host for the Games. Perhaps the most striking case is twice-imprisoned and exiled Wei Jingsheng's call to deny China the 2008 Olympics, which was more potent because his first release had been widely seen as a move to boost Beijing's bid for the 2000 Games.

The seemingly ordinary practice of the host city's mayor being a prominent presence on the bidding and organizing committees strengthened the human rights connection because of two incumbents' problematic records. In the 2000 Games process, Chen Xitong brought the burden of a significant role in the bloody crushing of the 1989 Democracy Movement. For the 2008 round, Liu Qi's presence spotlighted the suppression of Falun Gong, most dramatically when his visit to the Salt Lake City Winter Games made possible service of process against him in a suit over his leadership of a government body tasked with eradicating the "evil cult" (Pomfret 2002; *Doe v. Liu Qi* 2004). Such damaging linkages were reinforced further by the aspiring hosts' tone-deaf short-lived contemplation of using Tiananmen Square—site of the 1989 military action against peaceful demonstrators—as the venue for the 2008 beach volleyball competition (Mackay 2001; Sohu.com 2005). More calculatingly and ultimately more powerfully, Chinese authorities made the connections stronger still with their bid-supporting reassurances that the Games would foster human rights improvements and their pledges of specific Olympics-related legal reforms with human rights content.

Since the decision on the 2008 site, those seeking to press the regime have continued Olympics-linked critiques and calls for improvement of China's human rights laws and practices. NGOs have played the Olympic card and won related media attention in several ways. Some have proclaimed "minimum human rights standards" that China should be required to meet as host for the Games and published periodic reports highlighting China's failures to fulfill Olympics-related human rights promises (Olympic Watch 2004; Magnier 2004; Pierson 2007; Lague 2006). The pace and profile of this approach surged at the one-year-to-go point with a series of headline-grabbing publications. Amnesty International issued a report denouncing an ongoing crackdown on Chinese media, an Olympics-related "cleanup" ousting Beijing vagrants and migrants, a general failure to implement Olympics-related pledges on press freedom and other matters, and continuing abuses in criminal justice and media censorship. Invoking the link to the Games, the NGO's secretary general warned that "[u]nless Chinese authorities take urgent measures to stop human rights violations over the coming year, they risk tarnishing . . . the legacy of the Beijing Olympics." Human Rights Watch simultaneously issued a similar report, criticizing the regime's overall record on human rights, a growing crackdown on dissent and the media, and Olympics-related increases in abuses of labor rights and forced evictions (Amnesty International 2007; Human Rights Watch 2007b; Yardley 2007d; Cody 2007b).

Chinese activists and critics have undertaken kindred efforts. Perhaps most famously, a group of more than forty prominent intellectuals and activists issued an open letter to Hu Jintao, Wen Jiabao, and National People's Congress head Wu Bangguo at the one-year mark, calling for a recasting of the Beijing Games' principal slogan as "One World, One Dream, and Universal Human Rights." The letter cataloged familiar human rights problems, including media controls, persecution of lawyers and activists who expose human rights abuses and environmental problems, and aggrieved citizens petitioning for redress, forced evictions, residency restrictions, violations of labor rights, and so on. It added calls for amnesty for political prisoners, expanded and equal freedoms for foreign and Chinese journalists, and establishment of a system of citizen oversight over Olympics spending.<sup>18</sup> Less elite Chinese, including thousands of peasants, have expressed similar sentiments in their own letters and petitions.<sup>19</sup> Such moves by PRC and international actors foreshadow further efforts to promote scrutiny of

PRC human rights conditions through the Games themselves—a prospect that the regime clearly finds disconcerting.

As the abuses cataloged in such omnibus human rights reports suggest, the Olympics-linkage strategy extends to more specific human rights agendas. Connecting their issues to the Beijing Games has been a promising project for opponents of China's harsh treatment of rural-to-urban migrant workers and urban dwellers whose homes stand in the path of property development. Massive and rapid Olympics-related construction brought dramatic residential displacement, by one NGO's account ousting nearly 10 percent of the city's population. This helped the Geneva-based Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) and other NGOs, activists, and media draw greater attention to the broader issue of property seizures. Chinese activists similarly linked their long-standing complaints about housing rights and forced evictions to Olympics-driven projects, commencing their bold and risky efforts several years before the Games and prompting the imprisonment of one activist who had sought permission for a protest march (COHRE 2007; Watts 2003; Goff 2005; *Daily Yomiuri* 2007; Xinhua 2007d; Xinhua 2007k; Callick 2007).

Similarly, the army of construction workers who came to Beijing to build the Games' venues helped foreign NGOs and domestic critics highlight, and gave an Olympic face to, the problems of poverty, insecurity, and discrimination facing internal migrants (Eimer 2007; *Guardian Unlimited* 2007). So too did the authorities' moves to eliminate migrant villages and rumored plans to remove unauthorized residents prior to the Games, lest the capital's unregistered underclass damage the image of an orderly Olympics hosted by a prosperous China (Xinhua 2005a; Shi 2006a).<sup>20</sup> More than their foreign counterparts, Chinese activists and critics added other social and economic rights concerns to their Olympics-invoking agenda, for example, linking inadequate investment in health care and other public goods to profligate spending on the Games.

Olympics-related developments also provided regime critics with means to bring greater exposure to labor rights violations. A British NGO reported that PRC firms were using child workers to produce Olympics logo-bearing products. The revelations, media coverage, and PRC promises of remedial action helped bring international attention to broader child labor abuses that labor rights NGOs argue are widespread and growing in rural China. An Olympics-focused union-based campaign, PlayFair 2008, reported "gross violations" of labor standards



at four factories making Olympics-branded merchandise (McLaughlin 2007; Xinhua 2007h; PlayFair 2008 2007). Such reports increased pressure on Chinese authorities to investigate and sanction problems of underage labor and forced overtime among other producers of Olympics licensed goods. The host regime thus helped NGOs bring further attention to such issues while seemingly gaining little credibility with skeptical foreign audiences that became increasingly concerned over Chinese factory conditions in the wake of scandals over the low cost and poor safety of Chinese exports (*Financial Times* 2007b; Barboza 2007).

Attempts to pressure the Chinese regime on "rights of peoples" issues also invoke the Olympics. PRC authorities' efforts to use the Olympics to assert their claim to sovereignty over Tibet—by including Tibet on the torch route and a Tibetan animal among the Games' mascots—have facilitated their nemeses use of Olympic linkages to advance their own Tibet agendas. Thus, exiled Tibetans have proposed a separate "Tibetan Olympics" and asked the IOC to allow a Tibetan team at the 2008 Games. Free Tibet groups have staged widely reported protests, unveiling banners near the proposed torch route and at the Great Wall, where the one-year countdown saw soon-to-be-deported activists unfurl a call for "One World, One Dream, Free Tibet" (*Hindustan Times* 2007; *New Zealand Herald* 2007; *Statesman* 2007; *Kyodo News Agency* 2007). PRC officials have fairly openly expressed concern that long-repressed domestic dissident groups favoring separatist agendas in Tibet and Xinjiang will attempt to seize the Olympic spotlight to advance their causes (Cody 2007a).

The banned Falun Gong sect poses similar threats and raises similar concerns. Its supporters and advocates abroad have linked calls to cease persecuting the group to the PRC's broader Olympics-related human rights commitments and Olympics-heightened international concern over China's human rights performance. Their tactics have included a "Global Human Rights Torch Relay" (HRTR) alternative to the official Olympic torch relay. The authorities reportedly worry that Falun Gong adherents remaining in China will try to use the Olympic stage to highlight their plight. And such worries seem plausible, given the extraordinary determination evident in domestic Falun Gong followers' and activists' persistence in challenging the regime despite extraordinary suppression efforts and through sometimes desperate measures (including self-immolation).<sup>21</sup>

Activists, including foreign celebrities, also have used Beijing's hosting of the Games to focus attention on human rights violations in Dar-

fur and China's support for the Sudanese regime. China's recalcitrance on international sanctions and Hu Jintao's uncritical tone during his Africa trip a year and a half before the Games created a useful platform for NGOs and activists. They dubbed the 2008 Games the "Genocide Olympics," arguing that China's Darfur policy (as well as China's domestic human rights record) made Beijing an unfit host, and planned their own alternative torch routes through sites of twentieth and twenty-first century genocides and through more than twenty U.S. states. Despite official PRC denials, some analysts credit such efforts—and the attention those efforts received from foreign governments—with making the PRC more cooperative in multinational efforts on Darfur, including acquiescence in a Security Council Resolution endorsing peacekeeping forces (Farrow and Farrow 2007; Dinmore 2007; Xinhua 2007e; Cooper 2007; Yardley 2007e).

Media freedom and related issues of openness and free exchange are another area in which critics and activists (as well as journalists, who depend upon such freedoms) exploit resonance with Olympic ideals. The now-entrenched Olympic expectation of unrestrained international media access provides important leverage against any host government's restrictions on coverage. The principles are particularly salient for the 2008 Games, where the host regime is accustomed to imposing severe constraints on media coverage, information flows, and free expression. PRC authorities have given proponents of media freedom additional leverage by bowing to strong international pressure and promising a free (or at least freer than is normal in the PRC) media environment for the Games (*China Daily* 2006d; McGregor 2006b).

This has provided a sturdy platform for NGOs' and news organizations' criticisms of moves by PRC authorities that portended Olympics-related media restrictions, refused to extend promised Olympics-related freedoms to Chinese journalists or non-Olympics stories, and harassed or restricted media in China during the run-up to the Games (Yan 2005b; Reporters Sans Frontières 2006; Allen 2007). Here too, the countdown's reaching the one-year mark brought high-profile critiques by NGOs of tightening censorship of local media, harassment of foreign media, and unfulfilled promises of Olympics-related liberalization. At the same time, Reporters Without Borders sponsored a demonstration in Beijing criticizing the failure to implement the press freedom reforms China had pledged when seeking the Games. The demonstration gained extra publicity and impact when authorities detained Chinese

journalists who covered it (*BBC Monitoring International* 2007; Amnesty International 2007; Human Rights Watch 2007b; Landsberg 2007a).

Those with more commercial interests also press their regime-criticizing and regime-pressuring agendas by invoking another established—if less exalted—feature of the Olympics: the Games as business venture. Those concerned with China's IPR record especially can build upon the IOC's and official corporate sponsors' concern with Olympic branding and licensing, and exploit Chinese authorities' interest in avoiding high-profile criticism of Olympics-related shortcomings in an area that has been a source of conflict and embarrassment in China's external relations. A prominent example of this tactic is the Motion Picture Association of America's airing familiar criticisms of Chinese IPR protection from an Olympics-invoking platform. Another perhaps is the U.S. government's taking formal steps before the WTO to address Chinese IPR infringement and negotiating enhanced bilateral cooperation against piracy (Glickman 2006; Puzanghera and Iritani 2007; Associated Press 2007). While factors unrelated to the Olympics surely drove such decisions, the Olympics connection was often cited in discussions of Washington's moves and may well have made China more pliable.

Environmentalists also are employing linkages to the Olympics in pressing their China-related agendas. International groups' efforts resonate with the Olympic movement's official concern with environmental issues. They leverage the IOC's highly public worries about environmental conditions for the 2008 Games (including the mid-2007 threat to postpone endurance events). They exploit the PRC regime's proclaimed commitment to a "Green" Olympics and its desire to avoid images of athletes struggling with choking haze, Olympics-related feature coverage of Beijing's pollution problems, or the embarrassment of pollution-postponed events. Even PRC successes have provided fodder for such critiques, inviting NGO questions about why Games-related clean-ups did not extend beyond the Olympics period or outside the capital region (Magnier 2007). Efforts from Chinese NGOs and activists generally have been broadly similar but more tempered. Thus, PRC environmental advocates report, and observers confirm, unprecedented success in getting the authorities to take their concerns seriously, and they attribute such developments largely to Beijing's "Green" Olympics pledge and Olympics-driven international scrutiny. At the same time, prominent Chinese environmentalists have faced criticism for being

too timid and cooperative—charges that are not often made against their besieged counterparts who press various human rights agendas often at the cost of harassment or imprisonment (Yan 2005a; Larmer 2001; Fan 2007).

As these patterns of internal and external criticism and pressure imply, Chinese actors have been less visible in pressing counternarratives months or years in advance of the Games. They, of course, have much less freedom, far fewer resources, and more constrained media access. As the Chinese authorities' reaction to some of the more bold domestic critics (such as housing activists) makes clear, Chinese challengers to the regime's preferred Olympics story line can pay a high price for their temerity. As PRC officials' reported worries over foreign-media-targeting surprises from domestic dissident groups suggest, PRC proponents of counternarratives likely understand that their best hope may be to wait for the Games themselves to make their most dramatic and visible moves.

Third, Olympics norms and practices have combined with features of Chinese politics to help proponents of critical counternarratives and advocates for Chinese reform by limiting PRC authorities' use of means they ordinarily could employ against activities and actors that they find threatening or deem unacceptable. The Beijing Games will bring an international media and visitor presence of vast proportions and diverse worldwide provenance that the PRC's security apparatus will be hard pressed to monitor and evaluate, much less control, despite allocating formidable resources to the task. For the 2008 Games, the familiar effects of international media and other Olympic visitors are likely to be magnified, given the extraordinary interest that the Beijing Games have generated among traditional print and broadcast journalists and the presence of an unprecedentedly large, diffuse, and particularly hard-to-control cohort from new media. In this context, aspects of PRC behavior that support critical counternarratives and mediagenic actions that regime critics undertake in connection with the Beijing Olympics are likely to receive extensive coverage that Chinese authorities will be unable to stop at all or, at least, not without unacceptable financial and political cost.

The Olympics' status as a singularly supranational event makes the venue for the Games a global space in which ordinary sovereign prerogatives of the host are limited. In the context of the Games, familiar and otherwise internationally tolerated restrictions that PRC authorities use to disable protesters, silence critics, or stifle public debate may

well appear illegitimate and face unusual international opprobrium when exposed, as they are sure to be, in the glare of the Olympics spotlight.

As this suggests, the "Olympic effect" of greater scrutiny and openness may be especially significant for Games held in China. For Beijing in 2008, the "gap" between the Olympic media frenzy and ordinary coverage is unusually large. Although foreign audiences increasingly appreciate China's global importance, developments in China still receive disproportionately little international attention under ordinary circumstances. This is partly a matter of the inherent difficulties of covering a large; poor; rapidly changing; and physically, culturally, and linguistically remote country. It is also a function of political regime type. While China has undergone a breathtaking opening during the last generation, the PRC is still among a small handful of authoritarian states, and (with the exception of the Soviet Union in 1980) the most strongly authoritarian state since before World War II, to host an Olympics. Such regimes severely restrict information and journalists and do so in crude and obvious ways that are hard to sustain amid the global interest and expectations of openness that come with hosting the Games.

As Chinese authorities are acutely aware, an extraordinarily dense foreign press presence and relaxed media controls previously have had powerful political effects in China. Outside journalists who arrived to cover Soviet President Gorbachev's visit to Beijing helped catalyze, and bring international attention to, the Tiananmen Democracy Movement in 1989. In an exceptionally liberal period in Chinese politics and regime policy toward students, intellectuals, and the press, the Democracy Movement attracted an unusually large and unfettered media contingent—both foreign and indigenous—that reported extensively and dramatically on the movement and its violent suppression, with correspondingly greater harm to the Chinese leadership's international—and domestic—reputation.

Many of the organizations and actors that seek to shape the story of the Beijing Games and, in turn, the PRC's behavior (and the media that cover them) also enjoy insulation from some of the more subtle pressures Chinese authorities ordinarily use to restrain those who are more durably on the ground in China. The NGOs, corporations, government officials, interest groups, celebrities, and others that are primarily focused on China for the Olympics differ from the foreign businesses, foreign-linked foundations and civil society organizations, and resi-

dent foreign diplomats and journalists in China in a key respect: the former are more nearly nonrepeat players. They have less need to worry about angering Chinese authorities or putting Chinese counterparts in difficult positions. They need not be so concerned about future license denials, regulatory hassles, adverse decisions on matters within government discretion, and alienating Chinese partners who are wary of dealing with foreigners who have fallen into official disfavor or shown questionable political judgment. The contrast with the concerns and constraints facing domestic Chinese NGOs, dissidents, and critics is, of course, greater still.

At the same time, those who seek to use the Olympics as a platform for rival narratives and critical agendas benefit from the host regime's Olympics-based reasons for self-restraint. The Chinese leadership shows every sign of feeling strongly the "pull" of securing a story line that echoes the international "seal of approval" provided at Seoul in 1988 or Tokyo in 1964, and the "push" of avoiding the politicization and loss of international goodwill that befell the 1980 Moscow and 1984 Los Angeles Games, or, much worse, the 1936 Berlin Games. While this is to be expected from a political system that emphasizes symbolic politics and national pride, PRC authorities have magnified the effect by binding themselves to the past in so publicly staking their reputation on staging a "successful" Olympics.

Another structural feature of Chinese politics promises greater space for international civil society NGOs and other regime critics, including domestic ones, to advance their goals in connection with the 2008 Olympics. The commitments to hosting a successful Games and to advancing the regime's preferred overarching narrative do not mean that the Chinese Party-state will function as a disciplined machine pursuing a coherent agenda. Although the PRC's political system is authoritarian, it is also famously "fragmented": different components of the Party and state pursue diverse and sometimes conflicting aims.<sup>22</sup> This is reflected in the great but uneven importance that the Olympics has assumed for Party and government organs, and the extensive but varied responsibilities and commitments that various state and state-linked entities have undertaken in conjunction with the Games.

Although the specific alignments are too opaque and uncertain to map in detail, different "pieces" of the Beijing and broader PRC Party-state (as well as elite leaders and social constituencies) well may react very differently to steps that NGOs, activists, and others take on the

Olympic stage. For example, those portions of the Party and state apparatus (and their patrons and constituents) that are especially deeply invested in staging an Olympics that wins international praise are likely to be more willing to tolerate actions critical of the regime, or at odds with regime preferences, as a cost of achieving their goals. They therefore are more likely to push, in the complex and informal world of Chinese politics, against peer or rival organs (and their patrons and constituents) that favor less accommodating lines.

Signs of this pattern emerged well before the Games. BOCOG and the Beijing municipal authorities seem genuinely to accept an imperative of greater tolerance for media freedom while other state entities that traditionally regulate the media, international journalists, and the Internet (including the State Administration of Radio Film and Television, the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of the Information Industry, and the public security authorities) appear to have taken harder lines and adopted contrary measures, leading to difficulties for those who made and must defend China's Games-related pledges of increased openness (Reporters Sans Frontières 2006). The apparent understanding among authorities most involved in hosting the Games that it is important to liberalize the political climate (albeit temporarily) diverges sharply from—and foretells friction with—public security authorities, who have held forth loudly about the extraordinary resources devoted to keeping order and the need for security forces to be “combat ready” (Wang 2007).<sup>23</sup>

BOCOG, environmental protection authorities, city leaders, and others have taken significant and unpopular measures (including cutting off coal-fired heaters for a wintertime IOC delegation visit, ordering restrictions on cooling and other electricity usage during the Games, and banning more than a million cars from the streets) to improve the environmental image and reality for the Olympics. Chinese environmental activists and advocates have had kind words for state environmental protection authorities and their Olympics-enhanced interest in enforcing rules and cooperation addressing environmental issues. Yet, with the Games barely three years off, speculation continued that one of the capital region's most polluting enterprises—a steel company with powerful state patrons and many employees—might succeed in resisting directives to curtail or suspend operations for the Games. A year before the Games, a company spokesman sniffed that, while sharp reductions in operations would be phased in through the

Games and beyond, the final relocation in 2010 would have occurred eventually anyway and had only been hastened somewhat by the Olympics (Cha 2007; *China Daily* 2004c; Larmer 2001; Fan 2007; United Press International 2005; Dickie 2007a; MacLeod and Wiseman 2007).

Beijing Olympics officials and IPR enforcement organs sought to strengthen (at least somewhat) measures to limit pirated Olympic goods. But they seemed certain to find little cooperation from officials in China's major fakes-producing regions where entanglements and alignment of interests between local government and IPR-violating enterprises can be very close (Clark and Cheng 2007).

To the extent that more accommodating fragments of the Party-state win out in such conflicts or have autonomy to implement their preferred approaches, there will be a more favorable environment for outsiders and local reformers to push agendas that diverge from the principal narratives favored by the Chinese regime as a whole. At the same time, some moves that more recalcitrant components of the Party-state, or the regime as a coordinated whole, might undertake against foreign critics' or domestic dissidents' agendas can redound to the targets' benefit. For those pressing counternarratives and challenging regime behavior, sometimes nothing succeeds like official repression, at least where it is high profile and ham fisted or tin eared. Instances of this phenomenon already have occurred in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics. Examples from around the one year countdown mark include PRC security forces' detention of local journalists who covered a foreign journalist organization's protest in Beijing of China's failure to implement Olympics pledges of media freedom, and detention and deportation of "Free Tibet" supporters who unfurled a banner at the Great Wall.

Still, such regime missteps—and other factors that limit Chinese authorities' capacity or will to suppress—provide little reason for complacency among critics of the PRC regime and proponents of counternarratives.

### **The Empire Can Strike Back**

Although facing significant constraints and capable opponents in the contest to define the narrative of the Beijing Games, the host regime also has considerable advantages. These derive in part from key features



of the Olympics, Chinese politics, and the critics and opponents of official China's preferred story line.

First, despite the partly self-inflicted erosion of its means of control and intimidation over the last three decades, the Chinese Party-state remains formidable, especially when it faces relatively short-term challenges. For the fortnight of the Games, Chinese authorities can maintain a level of vigilance and, if needed, repression that might not be sustainable over a long period. In doing so, they will have human and material resources beyond the considerable ones ordinarily on hand in Beijing (Xinhua 2006e; Xinhua 2005d; Daley 2003; Xinhua 2007a; Kwok 2007). They can use methods recently practiced in suppressing remarkably determined Falun Gong adherents, honed in concerted pre-Olympics drills, and enhanced by foreign-assisted Olympics-related security forces training programs. The latter have proceeded despite international criticism of liberal states for helping a repressive regime build capacity and concern that heavy-handed security measures might mar the Games (Xinhua 2007f; Xinhua 2007g).

Second, despite the decline of ideology's importance in post-Mao China, symbolic politics and political theater remain important in Chinese politics and stiffen official resolve to control the rich image-making power of the Olympics. PRC authorities likely see it as vital to prevent definitive moments that serve a heterodox political agenda—anything analogous to the raised fists of African American athletes at the Mexico City Games, much less the hostage crisis at the Munich Olympics, or the Olympic equivalent of the lone man standing before a tank near Tiananmen in 1989.

In trying to forestall such adverse imagery and broader counternarratives, official Chinese sources and sympathetic commentators have been adept (if not unchallenged or entirely successful) at invoking the Olympic principle that the Olympics should not be "politicized" by those who wanted to deny Beijing the Games or who want to use the Olympics to change China's human rights practices or political system (Cody 2007a; Magnier 2004; Mackay 2001). Here, PRC authorities have had help from the IOC and others who have a stake in the 2008 Games' success and have made more muted versions of anti-"politicization" arguments (B. Smith 2007; Rogge 2007).

Third, the PRC regime may well be able to blunt or deflect criticisms of its failure to satisfy external demands or expectations that China adopt international norms. And it may be able to do so without major

changes in its own behavior. On many fronts, China has been adept at pledging conformity to foreign standards or global rules, avoiding robust implementation, and escaping the degree of condemnation from abroad that would have accompanied flat rejection of the norm or commitment. That is, at least, a plausible characterization of how the PRC has engaged international human rights law and international intellectual property rights—both areas that have been especially at issue in connection with the Beijing Olympics. Quasi-official Chinese sources and defenders of the Beijing Games also have worked to undercut or preempt criticism of human rights, press freedom, and other shortcomings by pointing to China's recent progress and asserting that hosting the Games will help foster improvement well beyond 2008.<sup>24</sup>

Pursuit of official China's preferred narrative may benefit also from low expectations that many Olympics participants and observers likely hold because of their lack of familiarity with contemporary China. First-time visitors and relative neophytes can be favorably surprised by the cosmopolitanism, openness, sophistication, wealth, and lack of obvious political repression in Beijing. Experiences of Beijing tend to color impressions of the unvisited "rest of China," notwithstanding an intellectual appreciation that much of the country does not resemble the glittering capital. This effect likely will be more pronounced given the care taken to present Beijing's best face for the Games.

Finally, the hosts' prospects for controlling the Beijing Games' story line are enhanced by structural disadvantages among proponents of rival narratives. Those seeking to invoke or hijack Olympic ideals and use the Games as a platform to pursue alternative, regime-criticizing agendas are ideologically cacophonous and institutionally fragmented. Their aims are strikingly varied: democratic reform; civil liberties and civil and political rights; social and economic justice for migrants and displaced urban residents; media freedom; environmental protection; intellectual property rights protection; labor rights; "separatist" or "independence" goals for Tibet, Taiwan, and the Muslim regions of Xinjiang; religious freedom, primarily for Christians; ending repression of Falun Gong; relaxation of population control policies; and so on. Elements in international civil society and foreign political circles that endorse such ends range across a broad political spectrum. They have little demonstrated or likely capacity for close cooperation with one another.

Perhaps more importantly, they have only modest accomplishments and dim prospects for cooperation with their Chinese counterparts

who have begun to pursue parallel tactics. Chinese dissidents, intellectuals, activists, and NGOs have emerged to address—with varying degrees of success and risk—many of the same issues, including the environment, forced evictions, migrant workers, human rights more generally, and media freedom. While these local proponents of change also have adopted tactics of linking their causes to the Beijing Olympics, their actions have shown little coordination with or even apparent impact upon the undertakings of the many foreign actors seeking to define the meaning of the Beijing Games.<sup>25</sup> The most internationally visible example of a domestic Chinese undertaking is the August 2007 “open letter” from dozens of prominent intellectuals and dissidents calling for adding “Human Rights” to the slogan “One World, One Dream,” and asserting that the regime’s violation of Olympics-related human rights promises and human rights abuses more generally “violate the Olympic spirit” and worsen a “crisis of rule” in China (Qianming.net 2007; Wu 2007; Cody 2007b). Even that letter, however, prompted mostly citation and not collaboration abroad (and much of the attention it received reflected the preexisting fame of its principal signatories abroad).

The Chinese regime benefits from the many impediments to such parallel undertakings’ blossoming into full alliances. Domestic and foreign critics’ aims are far from fully parallel. The Chinese intelligentsia that provides ideas and leadership for such groups (and many “ordinary” Chinese as well) has limited interest in agendas associated with “separatism” or “cults,” attacking China’s Africa policy, and so on. They also tend to be more susceptible to at least the more benign elements in the regime’s nationalist narrative and more modest in their expectations of immediate reform in China. Compared to foreign governments and international civil society groups, Chinese activists have placed greater emphasis on linking the Olympics to education and public health spending and release of political dissidents. More significantly, Chinese and foreigners face radically different threats of retaliation from Chinese authorities. Cooperation and the trust it requires when grappling with an authoritarian regime are far more difficult when domestic actors face threats of ruined careers and imprisonment but foreigners rarely need worry about more than interrogation and expulsion. Such factors surely reduce the authorities’ need to worry about a coordinated foreign or transnational effort to capture the narrative of the Beijing Games.

### A Journey of a Thousand *Li* or the Death of a Thousand Cuts?

The victor (if any) in the contest to define the meaning of the XXIX Olympiad will be determined only in retrospect. Rivals in the struggle to shape the Beijing Games' narrative have sufficient strengths and weaknesses, and the dominant story of any Olympics can be so strongly affected by exogenous factors and unpredictably resonant moments, that pre-Games predictions are little more than speculation. Similarly uncertain, but more important, is the impact on bigger questions of "changing China" that have made the story line of the Games, and China's hosting, worth fighting over.

A bleak assessment conjures the specter of a Beijing Olympics that deepens China's repression in domestic politics and intransigence in foreign policy. Some who opposed awarding Beijing the Olympics, or fear that the regime will win the battle over the Games' narrative, see the 2008 Olympics providing a propaganda coup and reinforcement of self-image reminiscent of what the Berlin Games gave Hitler's Germany (A. M. Rosenthal 1993; Kynge 2001; Larmer 2001; Sun 1993; Frank 1993). Accounts of Chinese authorities' actions sometimes have fed these concerns, perhaps most astonishingly when foreign media reported that they consulted with Hitler's favorite architect's son and namesake on the design of the main axis for the Games site (Becker 2003).

This analogy has gained relatively little traction, and rightly so. It overreaches. It overstates the impact of the Berlin Games (Terrill 2007). It also oversimplifies the range of possible consequences of the Beijing Games. If official China succeeds in holding the Games—and selling the plotline—it wants, the regime might not become more set in its ways or emboldened. It might become more tolerant of the types of international links and liberalizing influences that the Olympics will have promoted. A "successful" Games may increase confidence among Chinese political elites that the regime can endure and benefit from increased openness. Or it may strengthen the image of China as a powerful—and therefore potentially threatening—state and, in turn, the Chinese leadership's appreciation that China needs to appear, and therefore perhaps to be, more open to international scrutiny and influence and willing to conform to international norms.

More rosy assessments foresee the 2008 Games spurring rapid transformation in China. One line of analysis imagines the 2008 Games as a

possible reprise of the 1988 Seoul Olympics, which are often credited with speeding South Korea's transition from military dictatorship to democracy, or the 1980 Moscow Games, which are sometimes depicted as having helped open the door to Gorbachev's reforms and, in turn, the demise of communism in the former Soviet Union. IOC sources, veteran U.S. diplomats, and foreign observers and proponents of Beijing's bid embraced moderate versions of this argument or folded the Olympics into a broader pattern of using negotiated commitments, foreign advice and assistance, and other tools of engagement to move China toward greater liberalism at home and cooperation abroad (Wilson 2001; Liu 2006; Longman 2001; Lilley 2001; Rogge 2007). Official Chinese sources concertedly—if perhaps sometimes disingenuously—encouraged this view, promising that a Beijing-hosted Olympics would lead to a more open China and promote further improvement in China's human rights conditions (Wilson 2001; Lev 2001; Longman 2001).

A less harmonious variation on this theme sees much potential for foreign governments, international NGOs, Chinese dissidents and reformers, and media coverage to push China along this same path of transformation by Olympics-focused or Olympics-enhanced pressure on the PRC leadership, global exposure of problematic Chinese practices and policies, coordinated responses to PRC failures to implement international promises and obligations, and success in the struggle for a critical counternarrative of the 2008 Games. If this occurs, then post-Olympics China may face greater and more sustained pressure on human rights, the environment, and other issues that have drawn criticisms and calls for reform during Beijing's two campaigns to host the Olympics, the run-up to the 2008 Olympiad, and the Games themselves.

Prognostications of major near-term change are likely overly optimistic and simplistic. The more strident critics and pessimists do have a point: for the Chinese regime, Olympics success may reinforce the status quo and its excesses. So too, the Chinese leadership has demonstrated—most extremely in the aftermath of Tiananmen—the ability and will to use political repression and endure international isolation when openness, liberalization, and their sequelae embarrass or seem to threaten the regime. Or the Games may simply fail to have any dramatic impact on China. Once the flurry of attention and scrutiny has passed, there may be a relatively rapid return to much that looks like the ordinary regime practices that predated the Games and the broader quest for the Olympics.

More importantly, any lasting impact of the Beijing Olympics and any significant transnational influences it will yield likely lie beyond immediate or dramatic success or failure at the Beijing Olympics or in shaping the “meaning” of the 2008 Games. Any such more subtle and lasting influences are likely to favor liberalization and openness in the long run. During the nearly three decades of China’s Reform Era, the trend has been strongly toward greater engagement with and influence from the outside world. Qualitative shifts toward openness and conformity in Reform Era China generally have proved to be “one-way ratchets,” not vulnerable to permanent reversal. The Games may well not have that level of impact. If they do, and perhaps even if they do not, they may mark another chapter in this long-unfolding story. Such developments can create space not only for previously repressed or ignored critics of the regime but, perhaps more importantly and more durably, for Chinese proponents of more moderately critical or reformist perspectives as well.

Here, the Olympics-related emergence and Olympics-focused efforts of Chinese activists for human rights, the environment, and media freedom are modestly encouraging signs despite their lack of success, their political and legal vulnerability, and the weakness of their connections to foreign counterparts. From a relatively long-run perspective, the organizational and ideological fragmentation on all sides—among Chinese leaders, institutions, and interest groups and among foreign and Chinese actors seeking to expose and change Chinese behavior—may be a positive factor. It multiplies the number of actors and points of contact, and, in turn, prospects for meaningful transnational ties and resilient channels of influence and cooperation (including the diffusion of techniques for successful NGO and civil society activities). The resulting numerosity, small scale, and seeming lack of connection among such actors and networks also are likely to make them less vulnerable and seem less threatening to the regime and thus less likely to provoke effective repression.

If the 2008 Olympics has these effects (and it is far from a foregone conclusion that it will), it will have contributed to a much larger and longer term process that has been transforming China in ways that are generally consistent with many of the international norms that global civil society groups; foreign governments and other external actors; and Chinese NGOs, activists, and dissidents have been pressing in the more immediate and perhaps less promising context of the contest over the Beijing Games and its story line. The Games then will have

been a step in a journey of a thousand *li* toward a more liberal and open environment in China, or one slice among the thousand cuts that will bring the end of a closed and repressive order.<sup>26</sup>

## NOTES

1. The first "partners" and "sponsors" included: Sinopec and CNPC (the giant oil companies), Bank of China, Air China, Haier (the white goods maker), People's Insurance Company of China, Tsingtao and Yanjing beer companies, China Netcomm, China Mobile, Sohu.com (a major internet portal), Volkswagen (China), Adidas and Johnson & Johnson. Almost without exception, the sponsoring companies are variously state-owned, majority-state-owned, in especially highly regulated sectors, or joint-ventures (or partners to joint ventures) in which the Chinese partner is state-owned or state-controlled. Lenovo (the Chinese computer company that bought IBM's PC division) announced that it would spend up to two percent of its yearly turnover for Olympics-related marketing efforts (Xinhua 2007b).

2. See, for example, Chua 2007a, *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* 2007a, Chua 2007b, and Xu 2007.

3. See also Dickie 2007b.

4. See, e.g., Lilley 2001, Chen K. 2007, deLisle 2001, and *China Daily* 2006a.

5. These developments have been the foci of NGO and media reports and are discussed more fully later in the chapter.

6. See, for example, Xinhua 2003 and Xinhuanet.com 2004.

7. See, for example, Shi 2006b.

8. See, for example, Spencer 2006 and Shi 2006b.

9. See, for example, Pan and Pomfret 2001, MacLeod 2001c, and Cater 1993.

10. The regulations, among other things, permit travel and interviewing without prior permission, but are in effect only from January 2007 to October 2008. Critiques of shortcomings are discussed more fully later in the chapter.

11. On many of these issues, see Clark and Cheng 2007, Xinhua 2007c, China Online 2002, and Tsang 2007.

12. The Chinese term is *renwen aoyun*, fairly translated as "humanistic Olympics." The more common English translation of the phrase for the Games is "people's Olympics," which would be the ordinary English rendering of the Chinese phrase "*renmin aoyun*"—a term that would refer inescapably to the Chinese people and that strongly evokes Chinese nationalism. See also Humanistic Olympic Studies Center, Renmin University.

13. See, for example, *Central News Agency* 2007, Ni 2007, Shi and Chung 2007, and Lague 2007.

14. For a strong and classic statement of this position, see Pye 1978.
15. The associated elements are water, wood, fire, earth, and air. The final traditional Chinese element is metal, not air (which is among other cultures' traditional lists of basic elements), and some Chinese sources have mistakenly substituted metal for air. The "internationalist" departure parallels—albeit perhaps unintentionally—the inclusion of the Olympic Flame as the central mascot alongside the four Chinese animals. The traditional blessings are prosperity, happiness, passion, health, and good luck.
16. On the WTO experience, see, generally, deLisle 2006 and Panitchpakdi and Clifford 2002.
17. See, for example, Larmer 2001, Kynge 2001, and Powers 2001.
18. For the text of the letter, see SperoNews 2007 and Cody 2007b.
19. Such petitions are described in He 2007.
20. Treatment of these groups figured prominently in the Chinese intellectuals' and dissidents' August 2007 "open letter" (SperoNews 2007).
21. See CIPFG (n.d.) and HRTR (n.d.). See also deLisle 1999, Li 2003, and Cody 2007a.
22. See, for example, Lieberthal and Lampton 1992.
23. Security preparation issues are discussed in more detail later in the chapter.
24. See Pierson 2007, Wilson 2001, and Rogge 2007.
25. See, for example, RTHK Radio Web site 2000, Quan 2005, Shi 2006b, Eimer 2007, and C. Smith 2001.
26. Lao-tzu so spoke of a journey of 1000 *li* (see Lao Tsu, Feng, and English 1997, 125); the thousand cuts refers to late imperial Chinese modes of execution and dismemberment and often appears—sometimes in exaggerated forms—in Western accounts of the cruelty of Chinese imperial justice. See Isaacs 1948, 63–64, and Costanzo 1997, 4.

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