

**THE ROLE OF THE BEIJING OLYMPICS IN CHINA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY
AND ITS IMPACT ON POLITICS, ECONOMICS
AND ENVIRONMENT**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work.

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

The 2008 Beijing Olympics were ardently sought, lavishly staged and hugely successful, despite intense scrutiny, speculation and setbacks. Amplified by modern media, most controversies revolved around China's political repression, epitomised by Tibet brutality. Resultant protests threatened boycott and terror, putting internal cohesion, national image and Olympic dream at stake.

This study argues that despite controversies and setbacks, China successfully used the Beijing Olympics as a tool of public diplomacy with a positive impact on its politics, economics and environment. The Games helped China to portray a successful national brand image as an emerging global power with growing influence, despite some problem areas. Hosting the Games was a consequence of China's economic success, showcase of remarkable achievements, catalyst for Beijing's modernisation and signal for more business.

China relied on state and economic might, organisational and sporting excellence, nationalist and shrewd diplomacy to avoid an Olympic embarrassment. Bolstered by economic success, China's PD is reinforced and undercut by authoritarianism, ethnic diversity and controversial trade and defence policies. Yet, global status demands greater accountability. Good Olympic impressions would diminish if the major issues spotlighted elude resolution. As PD becomes increasingly indispensable in the management of external affairs, China's Olympic experience offers wider lessons.

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ACRONYMS

AFI	American Film Institute
BCG	Boston Consulting Group
BCIA	Beijing Capital International Airport
BOCOG	Beijing Organisation Committee for the Olympic Games
BRIC	Brazil, Russia, India and China
CCPPC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CCTV	China Central Television
CMC	Central Military Commission
CPAFFC	Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPD	Central Propaganda Department
CPIFA	Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs
Expo	Exposition
G20	Group of 20 Countries
GAPP	General Administration of Press and Publication
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IOC	International Olympic Committee
KMT	Kuomintang
LED	Light Emitting Diode
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NPC	National People's Congress
PD	Public Diplomacy
PRC	People's Republic of China
PwC	Pricewaterhouse Coopers
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
SARFT	State Administration of Radio, Film and Television
TRIPS	Trade Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UNEP	United Nations Environment Protection
USC	University of South California
WTO	World Trade Organisation

BACKGROUND

Introduction

In the current framework of international relations, Public Diplomacy (PD) is an indispensable instrument in managing external affairs. Trends of globalisation have enhanced interconnectedness and interdependence among nations. States, organisations, institutions and individual actors are striving to cultivate, promote and maintain multiple relationships not only through the media but also using various other channels like culture, education and sports. As the diplomatic arena becomes increasingly shared, varied networks and partnerships between governments, the media, private sector and civil society have changed the modus operandi in the blending domestic and foreign environments.

Global trends coupled with current trans-national challenges like global warming and economic downturn, terrorism and piracy have focused international attention on the underlying issues of environment, economic order, migration and resources. Instant communication and greater access to information have not only enhanced principles of good governance, but have also promoted global solidarity among peoples and nations. As Zaharna (2004, pp. 133-134) rightly notes, public diplomacy plays a critical role in defining a country's position in the world on many issues, thereby impacting its image and reputation.

However, as Wilton Park (2005, p.1) observes, the effectiveness of public diplomacy is only as good as the reality it portrays and its strategies are neither standard nor universal. Its practicability lies in its dynamism and pragmatism; varied channels and actors; and its ability to transcend traditional diplomacy.

As in many other countries, the People's Republic of China (PRC) conducts its public diplomacy to promote understanding, increase its influence and win support for Chinese national interests (Goness and Melissen 2006, p.5). Internally and externally, it utilises the fascinating Chinese Culture, public-private partnerships and national foreign policies while being reinforced and undercut by political authoritarianism. Despite its dramatic rise from poverty, social chaos and self isolation to economic pre-eminence owing to Deng Xiaoping's 1978 free market reforms dubbed "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics", China still feels misjudged by the international community (Emmott, 2008, p. 48). In the spirit of opening-up, Beijing keenly uses avenues that promote global interaction, friendship and solidarity including hosting the 2008 Olympic Games.

Despite controversies and setbacks, China successfully used the Beijing Olympics as a tool of public diplomacy with a positive impact on its politics, economics and environment. The Games have helped China to project a successful national brand image as an emerging global power in spite of some problem areas. They also left behind a legacy of transformed Beijing, awesome architecture, improved environment and better reputation for business and tourism. However, China's record on human and media freedoms, political and civil liberties, food safety and environment threatened the Games with potential boycott (Bhattacharji and Zissis 2008). As well as attracting negative publicity, brutal suppression of Tibet riots and cosy relations with Sudan in spite of Darfur crisis led to wide protests and intensified boycott calls.

However, over 80 world leaders attended a dazzling opening ceremony in Beijing underlining China's soaring global influence.

As Melissen (2006, p.6) notes, countries go into public diplomacy to boost their economic performance; support long-term foreign policy objectives; enhance visibility and articulate their perceived identity abroad; do away with historical stereotypical images; and head-off crisis and negative perceptions abroad. In view of the current opportunities and challenges, and against past colonial humiliation, the Chinese leadership is increasingly utilising public diplomacy tools to project China as a progressive developing country which is harmonious, responsible, and trustworthy; and supportive of global peace, stability and prosperity (Xu, 2009, p.1; d'Hooghe, 2007, p. 3). Hosting the Olympics was integral to this agenda of underscoring China's new role in global politics and economics, and polishing up its image and reputation damaged by years of Communist repression. Despite some setbacks and controversies, this strategy registered notable success with some of the benefits immediately apparent while others will emerge with time.

CHINA'S CONCEPT OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

In this paper, public diplomacy is understood according to Jozef Batora's definition as the development and maintenance of a country's soft power of persuasion and attraction (Rana, 2009). Soft power is understood according to Joseph Nye's definition as the influence and attractiveness a nation acquires when others are drawn to its culture (Nye, 2008. p. 1). Both definitions embrace activities of state and non-state actors that contribute to the maintenance and promotion of a country's soft power including attractive culture, education, media, national image and influence.

Before the 1990s, China's perspective of public diplomacy was synonymous with a government-sponsored approach especially targeting foreign publics, and simply informing domestic audiences with little regard to engagement and dialogue. However, according to Rana (2009), this approach has since changed with the projection of a rising China and the Beijing Olympics. China's public diplomacy, tinged with ultra-nationalism, strives to achieve Mark Leonard's concept of internal daily communication, strategic communication with domestic and foreign publics and building lasting relationships with the rest of the world through sports, education, culture and partnerships (Scott, 2008).

China's Public Diplomacy System

The major state actors in China's public diplomacy system are the Office of the Foreign Propaganda of the Communist Party of China; State Council Information Office; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and China's national leaders through foreign charm offensives, national events and management of tragedies (d'Hooghe (2007, p. 25). Under domestic outreach, the foreign ministry regularly moderates elements of Chinese ultra-nationalism towards historical rivals like Japan through internet-based discussions. Other important domestic issues are managed through the government controlled mass media, white papers, press briefings, websites and blogs; not just to get citizens' concerns, views and feedback, but also to offer official interpretations and shape public opinion (Rana 2008).

Besides the Prime Minister's annual press conference, some recent public diplomacy opportunities, through which government rallied national support for its policies and actions in 2008 include the launching of Shenzhou 7 Spacecraft; the 60th Anniversary celebration of PRC; and management of national tragedies like the Guangdong Snowstorms and Sichuan

Earthquake (Hu, 2009). As Henrikson (2006, p. 8) rightly observes, countries effectively use NGOs and associations to shape the thoughts of and form relationships with other societies. China's people-to-people relations have since 1950s been promoted through the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs (CPIFA); Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC); cultural exchanges; academic and epistemic communities; Diaspora Chinese and volunteers; NGOs and business companies; sister organisations, students and tourist groups (Yang, 2009, pp. 54-59).

According to Davidson (2005, p. 1), public diplomacy plays a key role in delivering influence through establishing understanding and trust between nations. Much of this impact is conveyed through the media which plays an influential role in portraying other countries' images and contributes to peoples understanding or misunderstanding of each other's countries. Despite its remarkable achievements, China still feels misconceived, and seeks to change these negative perceptions partly through the media. The 2008 Olympics provided an excellent opportunity which Beijing used to overwrite positive impressions, if slightly diminished by some unresolved domestic challenges.

Shaping Factors

China's public diplomacy is shaped by economic considerations, domestic cohesion and foreign policy objectives (d'Hooghe, 2007, pp. 9-11). Besides boosting home support and legitimacy, it aims at soliciting elite opinions on policies; support for foreign policy goals; influencing foreign media and public attitudes; building and maintaining multiple relationships for national economic interests. Despite slow political reforms, China relies on its strong GDP of \$4.9 trillion and expanding foreign reserves of \$2.4 trillion to build and

maintain economic and soft power especially executed through technical and development assistance (CIA, 2010; ABC News, 2010).

As d'Hooghe (2007, p. 10) notes, China's public diplomacy is also impacted by the national foreign policy guided by President Hu Jintao's theory of a 'Harmonious World' introduced in 2005. This theory is premised on effective multilateralism; collective security; prosperity for all through mutual cooperation; and tolerance and dialogue among civilisations. Besides contributing to international peace and humanitarian missions, China has variously supported concerted efforts to overcome the 2008 global financial crisis, climate change and piracy, and hosted national and global events including the Beijing Olympics and the Shanghai Expo 2010 with high public diplomacy benefits (Yuan, 2008, pp. 1-7).

'Beijing Consensus' continues to appeal to developing countries, as a pragmatic development approach committed to innovation and constant experimentation, adaptation and self determination. This contrasts with the value-laden and now discredited 'Washington Consensus' a neo-liberal development model faulted for arrogance, complacency and lack of pragmatism (Ramo, 2004, pp. 3-5; Turin, 2010, pp.1-2). However, besides lacking actual consensus, the Beijing model focuses mainly on China's development needs to quench its thirst for raw materials, FDI and markets; and remains indifferent to many global challenges under the guise of non-interference.

China is poised to overtake Japan in 2010 as the world's second largest economy (Bangkok Post, 2010). While its rise is perceived by some developed nations as a threat partly owing to contestation, its theory for a harmonious world pales before Communist repression, ethnic marginalisation, media censorship and support for odious regimes. Besides concerns about

Beijing's growing military expenditure, its trade and monetary policies are blamed for widening trade deficits and job losses in US and Europe. Against these concerns and realities, China sought and used the Beijing Olympics to create positive impressions with compelling Chinese narratives.

Challenges

Challenges to China's public diplomacy largely stem from its political set up, its affinity to propaganda, and the limitations posed by the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961). Cultural and language barriers aside, China's tight bureaucracy, heavily censored local media and restricted international networks hamper progression and effectiveness of public diplomacy. Paradoxically, Beijing's authoritarianism undercuts as well as reinforces its public diplomacy.

Other challenges, including environmental degradation, ethnic disharmony, communist roots and bad human rights record, were epitomised by heavy crackdown on Tibet rioters in March 2008. But China finds justification in its past humiliations at the hands of imperial powers while the American hegemony helps to water down the theory that China's rise is a threat to world peace. China still relies on diktat to give coherent messages and to undertake decisive actions leading to notable success, awe and admiration including the smooth execution of the impressive 2008 Beijing Olympics, some setbacks notwithstanding.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims at achieving the following Objectives:

- To study the role of the Beijing Olympics in China's Public Diplomacy;
- To study the Olympic impact on China's governance and international image;
- To study the Olympic impact on China's environment, business and infrastructure development;
- To study the Olympic impact on China's Culture and Branding, Media Freedom and Foreign Relations;
- To come up with Observations, wider Lessons and Conclusions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research takes a descriptive and analytical approach; and seeks the views of the various persons who were privy to, involved with, or witnessed the hosting of the Beijing Olympics. Evaluation is mainly done qualitatively, backed by some quantitative analysis.

Both primary and secondary type of data are collected and used in the research study. The research variously depends on selected and assessed internet sources, and published material; and also collects primary data from selected respondents through interviews.

Secondary data is extracted from relevant material already published including Textbooks, Journals, Magazines, News Papers, and internet sources. Primary data sources are used with the aid of questionnaires and interview guide.

The research uses oral interviews and questionnaires to collect data, which is analyzed, processed, compiled and presented in the accepted format. Selected informants include government and party official who were privy to the hosting; foreign journalists who gave

coverage of and former volunteers who were involved with the Games; and ordinary citizens, foreigners and diplomats who witnessed the Beijing Olympics.

Purpose of the Study

The study investigates how China used the Beijing Olympics as a tool of public diplomacy to display its remarkable and diverse achievements and to project a successful national brand. It highlights the Games-related controversies and setbacks; assesses the long-term Olympic impact on China's politics, economics and environment; its growing global importance; and makes observations, derives wider lessons and draws conclusions.

Justification of the Study

The study:

- Identifies how Chinese government used the Olympics to showcase its economic success, enhance its legitimacy and promote national image;
- Assesses the political, economic and environmental impact of the Games on China;
- Examines media freedom in China, and the role of domestic and foreign media during the Beijing Olympics;
- Highlights China's PD paradox and the wider lessons from the Olympic experience;
- Contributes to the academic debate and future research on whether Olympic spotlight fosters compliance with international norms and standards.
- Adds to the available research material in PD, and might stimulate further inquiry into the growing commercialisation and politicisation of the Olympics.

Limitations of the Study

The research has been variously constrained by limited access to government of China publications, most of which are not in English, and censorship of critical internet information. Some potential respondents, especially Chinese government officials and nationals declined to grant interviews or answer questionnaires. Consequently, it became difficult to conduct sufficient interviews, receive sizeable questionnaire responses, and to clearly establish the main objectives of the Chinese government in hosting the Games.

CHAPTER ONE

BEIJING OLYMPICS: PREPARATION, OPENING, SETBACKS AND ASSESSMENT OF SUCCESS

Introduction

The Olympic Games are a global multi-sport event that promotes realization of individual and collective dreams in sportsmanship and enhances human interaction, friendship and solidarity (Olympic Charter, 2007, p. 1). Transformed by Pierre de Coubertin in 1894, and organised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the modern Olympics provide an international arena for nations, governments and leaders to promote sports, culture, economics and politics. Host nations and cities build and enhance their reputation, image, tourism and business opportunities, despite the associated global scrutiny. Excellent performance is rewarded with medals, honour and publicity that transcend individual winners to teams and nations.

Officially known as the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, the Beijing Olympics were held in China in August 2008. According to Liu Qi, President of the Beijing Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG), 204 Olympic teams competed in 302 events at 37 venues,

and broke 38 world and 85 Olympic records (Xinhua, 2008). Being hosted in China for the first time, the largest Games in the Olympic history had the opening and closing ceremonies at the Beijing National Stadium also known as the Bird's Nest. To its credit, the host China trumped the world with 51 gold medals while six countries won their first ever Olympic medals (BBC News, 2008; Wasiak, 2008).

Rationale and Preparation

Beijing won its bid to host the 2008 Olympics against Toronto in July 2001 (Longman 2001). The 1993 narrow loss to Sydney by 2 votes in an attempt to host the 2000 Games could have made the IOC sympathetic to Beijing in the subsequent bid. Moreover, Riding (2000) reports that Sydney officials confessed offering \$35,000 to two African delegates on the eve of voting. A promising China had won 28 gold medals in Sydney, and acted sternly against drug abuse in sports. Besides Chinese government vibrant campaigns for the Games, Beijing Olympics would tap China's enthusiasm and participation of over 400 million Chinese youths to the benefit of the Olympic movement.

Despite China's celebration, Verena Harpe, a human rights expert at the Amnesty International, reportedly remarked that China's human rights situation had actually worsened, not in spite of the Olympics but because of the Olympics (The Calgary Herald, 2008). While hosting the Olympics, and in an effort to be better appreciated, China displayed its attractive culture in form of performances and entertainment, art and music, food and dress as well their basic values and spirit to foster mutual understanding with the world. The Olympic drive also provided an opportunity for infrastructure development, environmental improvements and

city transformation leading to a better reputation supportive of Beijing's business and tourism.

According to Gonesh and Melissen (2005, p. 18), such a rare show to a global audience provides an opportunity for national branding from the host country's corporate story as well as commercial product branding. Besides branding, China used the event to show-case its recent remarkable economic achievements, portray a successful brand image and promote business and tourism opportunities, effectively utilising instant communication, internet and social media. However, the foreign media also carried criticism of Chinese politics, Games-related abuses and organisational mishaps while some of its sections manifested cynicism and hostility towards China.

The Olympic Torch routing from Athens to Beijing was blended with political signalling. It covered China's historical allies like South Korea, Russia and Tanzania; notable neighbours and competitors like India, Japan and South Korea; and strategic allies and rivals including France, UK and US. The Torch met some hostilities in California, London, New Delhi and Paris; skipped Taipei and delayed to reach Lhasa as a statement of China's domestic and foreign policy challenges especially revolving around Taiwan, Tibet and Trade (Mahalo, 2008). Despite the setbacks, the Beijing Games were successfully staged under three major themes of Green Olympics, High-Tech Olympics and Peoples Olympics. Instant relay of awesome performances, scenic spots and iconic features took an attractive China to billions of global audiences.

Opening Ceremony

The opening of the Beijing Olympics at the Bird's Nest Stadium, a four-hour dazzling ceremony on the auspicious 08/08/08, had 29 foot-print-fireworks; 2,008 drummers and 15,000 musicians staging acrobatics in meticulous sequences. Centred on major Chinese inventions of gunpowder, compass porcelain, papermaking, printing and fine arts, the 50-minute show overseen Zhang Yimou intricately incorporated 5000 years of Chinese history. While traditionally Greece led the athletes into the Stadium, China set a new precedence by determining entry sequence according to country names in Chinese characters. A six-time medallist Li Ning breathtakingly lit the Olympic Torch which burst the Stadium into an astonishing flame (Art Daily, 2008).

While addressing 91,000 guests including about 100 heads of state, royals and sovereigns, China's President Hu Jintao avoided controversies and blended Olympic principles with China's convictions, assurances and aspirations so that his country may be better appreciated, more trusted and mutually respected (Bynes, 2008). Going to Beijing was a top priority for most leaders, save for those who had pressing personal challenges. Leaders interacted with their counterparts and held bilateral meetings with the hosts to deepen friendship, solidarity and understanding. From far and near, they included George Bush and Vladimir Putin, Nicolas Sarkozy and Yasuo Fukuda, Kevin Rudd and Abdel- Aziz Bouteflika, Inacio Lula da Silva and King Harald V of Norway (Reuters, 2008).

The Olympics bolstered China's soft power not just through Zhang Yimou's striking performance, attractive culture and rich national heritage, but also through masterpiece architecture, organisational prowess and excellent athletic and music stars like Jackie Chan,

Lang Lang and Liu Huan (Yang, 2009, p. 17). Technological extravaganza depicted China's glorious past, a confident present and a promising future in tandem with modernisation. International television networks, internet highways, social and print media lent themselves to China's cause in furtherance of its appeal to the world despite some criticism and negative images they occasionally transmitted. With the Games and opening ceremony variously described by IOC President as truly exceptional; by Philippines President Gloria Arroyo as the world's most memorable Olympics; and by George Bush as spectacular and successful, China effectively used the Olympics as a tool of public diplomacy.

Controversies and Setbacks

China's Olympic controversies and setbacks, which started with the 1993 narrow loss to Sydney in a bid to host the 2000 Games, were also linked to its bad human rights record that discounted its credibility in the wake of June 1989 Tiananmen massacre. As the Olympics spotlighted China's human rights record, the situation worsened in March 2008 when government violently cracked down on Tibetan protesters; leading to sporadic protests in Berlin, London and Paris where the Olympic Torch was repeatedly interrupted, and reportedly extinguished (Deutsche Welle, 2008; Samuel, 2008). However, this international hostility stoked a nationalist backlash, leading to increased home support for the Games.

In a February 2010 Questionnaire-based survey in Beijing; all the 20 respondents believed China met some Olympic-related challenges, and listed Tibet riots, boycott threats, Olympic Torch disruptions, natural disasters, air pollution and traffic congestion. 50% of foreign respondents added terror threats, negative publicity and politicisation; while three respondents identified food safety, human rights and media suppression. Asked how China

handled the challenges; foreign respondents cited diplomacy and dialogue, publicity and media campaigns, sufficient security measures, environmental protection programs, good traffic management, timely infrastructure construction, patriotism and effective mobilisation of domestic support. Two respondents noted factory closures, efficient event managers and Volunteers. Indeed, most setbacks and controversies revolved around the cited challenges; and while Beijing overcame many hurdles or mitigated their impact to enable the Games succeed, those that were not effectively resolved dampened the outcome and will likely recur.

As the speculation that Beijing's 2001 victory had been traded with Jacques Rogge's IOC Presidential candidature was still lingering, the 2008 Games were labelled "Genocide Olympics" (Farrow and Farrow, 2007). Led by Hollywood actress Mia Farrow, the campaign faulted China for its strong ties with Sudan that stood accused of gross human rights abuses in Darfur since 2003. The same campaign forced Stephen Spielberg, a renowned Hollywood director, to withdraw as an artistic adviser to the Beijing Olympics in February 2008 leading to disappointment with a foreign expert followed by bad publicity. But by counting on its own human resources and allies like George Clooney, Beijing gradually tamed media attacks and pulled off a successful event.

President Hu Jintao felt the Olympic-pressure when Spielberg and 80 Nobel laureates, politicians and artists wrote to him urging his leverage to end human suffering in Darfur. As Chen (2007, p. 45) notes, notwithstanding the position that Olympics should not be linked with Sudan relations, Beijing dispatched a senior official to press Khartoum for a greater UN role, and appointed Ambassador Liu Guijin as a special envoy on Darfur. While the Genocide label gradually faded, the Olympic spotlight and other pressures led to the subsequent

indictment of Sudan's President Omer al Bashir by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity (Rice, 2009).

As the Games drew closer, suspected terrorists linked to East Turkistan Movement killed 16 policemen and injured 16 others in an attack in China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on 4 August 2008. Besides, rumours that terrorists would put a bomb on Air China and crash it in the National Stadium led to more apprehension and heightened security measures, and prompted Chinese government security assurances (Daily Telegraph, 2008). One day after opening the Games, an American tourist was stabbed and killed in Beijing by a Chinese national before jumping to his death; an act that cast doubt on security assurances (Watts, 2008).

China having surpassed the US as the largest green-house gas emitter by 2007, pollution became a serious threat against Beijing Games. As Yardley (2008) notes, Beijing's heavy pollution caused by massive industrial activities raised concerns and doubts over the city's ability to reach a required level of air quality. As some athletes pondered skipping the Games, Beijing vigorously implemented a combination environmental management measures to reduce air pollution. Intensive tree planting, factory closures and relocations and demobilisation of 1.3 million vehicles achieved desired air quality just in the nick of time for the Games to avoid an Olympic embarrassment.

A paralysing accident and a medal-depriving injury joined China's list of Olympic upsets. During rehearsals, a selected top classical Chinese dancer Liu Yan accidentally fell from a three-meter high platform at the Bird's Nest on July 27, 2008 and suffered paralysis (Wu and Hou, 2008). Just after opening the Games, Liu Xiang, China's world and Olympic 110-metre hurdler suffered an injury that forced him out of the competition. A sense of disappointment

became evident across China not just because Liu Xiang was a presumed gold medal winner, but he had demystified a discipline that had hitherto eluded China (Barboza, 2008). Despite these setbacks, Liu Yan's replacement perfectly performed the "Silk Road" Solo dance while Liu Xiang's team-mates emerged atop the gold medal table.

A South Korean Television, Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS), stealthily filmed rehearsals of the opening ceremony and gave preview footage one week to the Beijing Olympics. Although SBS was banned officially from the Bird's Nest for the breach and apparent pre-emption, the super-class opening ceremony left spectators awe-inspired (Sydney Morning Herald, 2008). However, Lin Miaoke, a nine year old girl who appeared to perfectly sing China's national anthem at the opening ceremony, mimed to a recording by another girl (Williams 2008). The instruction to ban a melodious Yang Peiyi for not being cute enough, reportedly issued by a CPC Politburo member, underlines government's involvement in the Games' minor details as in most other PD initiatives.

Revelations that the exciting 29 footprint fireworks were not real but a computer animation attracted strong criticism to the organizers (Stone, 2008). Besides attacking the apparent dupe, Ai Weiwei, a celebrated Chinese artist who helped design the Bird's Nest, severely criticised the lavish Beijing Olympic show as a reincarnation of the Marxist imperialism and totalitarianism by the CPC. Organisers were again attacked for presenting 56 undeclared Han children to represent China's ethnic diversity (Spencer, 2008). While seemingly minor, this image-tarnishing act further spotlighted China's ethnic disharmony; reminisced the March 2008 Tibet riots; and foretold the bloody Xinjiang ethnic violence of July 2009.

While the Sichuan earthquake disaster of May 2008 shook the host China by claiming over 70, 000 lives, it inadvertently bolstered the hitherto threatened Beijing Games. According to Price (2009), the earthquake caused a dramatic change of heart about China from Tibet controversy to redemption, solidarity and sympathy. Dick Pound, a senior IOC official from Canada, reportedly confirmed that the earthquake changed the political and public mood of Canadians about Olympic boycott (CBC News, 2008). That the earthquake featured in opening speeches, and Yao Ming led the Chinese national team with Lin Hao, a nine-year Sichuan earthquake survivor, highlights how a national tragedy was turned into a winning Olympic strategy.

Wen Jiabao's 2007 decree giving the foreign media unrestricted access and coverage of China was inadequate without continuous engagement with Chinese government (Grohmann, 2008). Although characterised by pressure, reassurances and controls, China balanced its partnership with the media to facilitate coverage with minimum friction. Notwithstanding these controversies, and setbacks, China relied on a combination of nationalist appeal and earthquake-generated solidarity, strong economic means and organisational finesse, enduring IOC support and shrewd diplomacy to overcome boycott, and stage successful Games effectively relayed to the world by instant media.

Assessment of the Olympic Success

The world media was almost unanimous in their acclaim for the Beijing Games, despite some cynical overtones (AFP, 2008). Reporting on an otherwise dazzling opening ceremony, New York Times carried a scornful headline; "Even the cynical succumb to a moment of real national pride" (Jacobs, 2008). Whereas Malaysia's New Straits described the opening

ceremony as the greatest show on earth, Hindustan rightly noted that the people in Tiananmen were brimming with national pride. While summing up national aspirations, China's state media Xinhua (2008) opined that "the extravaganza showcased an increasingly confident nation and could be a turning point in world history". But more revealingly, the Wall Street Journal under the title "Opening Ceremony aim to illustrate rise to Global Power" wrote succinctly that China opened the most expensive Olympics in history with a mix of traditional performance and technological wizardry designed to showcase the country's transition to a modern powerhouse" (Dean and Fong 2008).

Over 4 billion global television audiences estimated to have watched the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics is the highest in the Games' history; ahead of 2004 Athens' 3.9 billion; and 2000 Sydney's 3.6 billion (Smith, 2008). CBC News, Kansas City Star, Sunday Times, Telegraph and Xinhua News, among others, estimated the global viewers of the Beijing opening event at or above 4 billion. That China avoided a potentially disastrous boycott and defied speculation of ruinous interruptions to stage the most lavish Games with a spectacular opening ceremony; the highest attendance; and an excellent sports performance, underscore its success in using the 2008 Olympics to achieve its public diplomacy objectives.

Dick Ebersol, Chairman of NBC Universal Sports and Olympics, reportedly described the opening ceremony as a magical and memorable spectacle that captivated the American public. Steven Spielberg, the celebrated Hollywood director called the show an unforgettable spectacle and arguably the grandest spectacle of the new millennium while Tony Blair, the former British Prime Minister, described it as the "spectacular to end all spectacles" (Spielberg, 2008; Blair, 2008). The Olympic ceremony director Zhang Yimou was named second personality of the year 2008 after President Obama before winning an Honorary

Doctorate from Yale University in May 2010 (Shixi, 2010). The resounding success of the Beijing Olympic opening ceremony made it the NBC event of the year; the biggest US Television event of 2008; and one of the “Eight moments of significance” selected by the American Film Institute (Wong, 2008; Kilday, 2008).

In an interview on January 19, 2010; a middle-ranking official of the International Department Central Committee of the CPC revealed that hosting successful Olympics was an ultimate fulfilment of China’s century-old dream. China could not to take up the hosting challenge about 100 years ago owing to deep internal divisions and colonial encroachment. He recalled that during foreign administration of Shanghai, its upscale area had a sign post reading “Chinese and Dogs not allowed”. He observed that besides overtaking Japan in GDP, China had become strong enough to defend its interests. His views confirm the impression that China’s hosting of a lavish Olympic event was not only to showcase its transformation but also to demonstrate to its former tormentors that it is now a global power with sufficient economic means and growing political influence. The unsurprising mention of Japan points to their bitter history and current rivalry in which China is gaining the upper hand.

The Beijing Olympics were widely watched and hailed across the world. Besides heavy pollution and a devastating earthquake, most of the controversies and setbacks were related China’s opaque and authoritarian political system and organisational mishaps, ranging from the 1993 bid loss to protests and rehearsal leakages to miming, faked fireworks and injuries to bad publicity. However, through striking impressions created by the spectacular opening ceremonies, glowing remarks by some eminent persons, wide praises by the world media; high attendance by world leaders, organisational finesse and sporting excellence, China successfully used the Games as a tool of public diplomacy. Despite the controversies and

setbacks, the Games helped China to portray a successful national brand image to the world and left a positive legacy on its people, politics, economics and environment.

CHAPTER TWO

BEIJING OLYMPICS: IMPACT ON CHINA'S GOVERNANCE, TAIWAN, TIBET AND XINJIANG

Introduction

China existed from the first millennium BC as a coherent empire governed after the Confucian ideals of meritocratic and ordered society until the 20th Century. The western influence introduced in the 16th century resulted into military defeats, colonial encroachment and civil unrest leading to the end of Qing Dynasty in 1912. After the World War II, Mao Zedong's Communist Party of China (CPC), having forced the Nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) to flee to Taiwan, established the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) under an autocratic social system. After 1978, Mao's successor Deng Xiaoping initiated economic reforms which have significantly increased national output and dramatically improved people's living standards (Emmott, 2008, pp. 235-237)

Although China has since the 1990s increased its global outreach and participation in international organisations, it is increasingly faced with a dilemma of reconciling a progressive market economy with political repression. Political reforms have been slow

amidst tight controls. Unresolved ‘governance’ issues and controversial policies on Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang variously threatened the Beijing Olympics with possible terrorism, boycott and tarnished national image. However, a combination of strong state power and nationalist appeal, economic might and organisational finesse, global stature and shrewd diplomacy helped China to stage successful Games. Despite challenges, the overall Olympic impact on China’s governance was beneficial with valuable lessons.

All Chinese respondents to a February 2010 Questionnaire believed that China met some Olympic challenges related to Tibet riots, public security, traffic congestion, environmental and natural disasters. Asked how these challenges were handled, they cited elaborate measures for public security; traffic management; pollution reduction; and save environment campaigns, including grounding vehicles, decommissioning old cars and closing or relocating Beijing’s heavily polluting factories. 30% cited countering foreign propaganda, national unity, resolute leadership, and efficient service staff; while 10% cited use of public transport, soldiers helping quake victims, financial and material donations to survivors. While all the challenges identified did exist; and were commonly identified by foreign and Chinese respondents, most solutions cited by the latter largely focused on Chinese domestic politics and management.

Governance

China operates a unique political system of ‘multiparty cooperation with political consultation under the leadership of the Communist Party of China’ as the vanguard of the Chinese people and nation. The three main political institutions are the CPC headed by Hu Jintao who is also head of state and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC); the

government, headed by the Executive Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and his Cabinet; and the NPC led by Wu Bangguo, a weak legislative body which approves CPC motions (Zhang, 2010). As Sodaro et al. (2008, pp. 659-661) rightly observes, the state and the ruling party are fused; and virtually every aspect of the Chinese politics are derived from the realization and acceptance of the CPC leadership.

As part of opening up to the world, China used the hosting of the Olympic Games to portray a successful national brand image and international solidarity, but the impact while largely positive also had negative aspects. Although the CPC has become increasingly resilient and adaptive in the last six decades, government actions still show neither transparency nor accountability, not in the least the utilisation of the \$44 billion Olympic-related expenditure (Bristow, 2008). With the state and ruling party fused, Liu Qi who is the Beijing CPC Municipal Secretary and former city mayor was appointed President of the Olympic Organising Committee.

However, political reforms are slowly being introduced with party, central and local governments' appointments now conforming to merit. Following the Olympic-inspired criticism, Beijing adopted its first "National Human Rights Action Plan 2009/2010" to improve its human rights situation. The measure seeks to regulate the use of death penalty; protect the right to be heard; and rights of detainees and their next of kin (China Daily, 2009). While its success will largely depend on its effective implementation, it is nevertheless a well conceived document to which about 50 government agencies, academic, and civil society organizations made contributions. The 1953 electoral law has also been amended to allow equal representation for rural and urban areas while the NPC has pledged to scale up its oversight roles over the executive and judiciary in 2010 (China Daily, 2010).

The Beijing Olympics had both tangible and intangible impact on China's governance. According to Pew Research Centre; hosting successful Olympics made China the most satisfied nation. In the run-up to the Games, 86% of the Chinese people had a positive view of their country, their economy and by extension their government. The friendly, cheerful and hospitable Olympic volunteers illustrated this view. Grand Olympic success has significantly bolstered domestic support, credibility and prestige for the CPC. On a global scale, Professor Edward Friedman, a China expert at the University of Wisconsin, claims that the Olympics also fuelled the Chinese government's world power aspirations (Gardener, 2008).

The Olympics drew government's attention to certain policy defects and social ills that were either being glossed over or underrated. The 4th Plenary of the 17th CPC issued a revealing Communiqué in September 2009, pledging not only to deepen inter-party democracy, fight corruption and narrow income gap, but also to intensify balanced economic development and crack down on ethnic separatist activities (China Daily, 2009). On the other hand, President Hu and Premier Wen listed, among the major achievements of 2008, the successful hosting of the Olympics alongside the launch of China's first manned spacecraft, coping with the Sichuan earthquake and the global financial crisis as China's notable victories (Ma, 2008, pp. 24-25).

Although preparation and hosting of the Games created many jobs, it also dampened job opportunities for China's migrant workers. As deLisle (2008, p. 192) rightly observes, over 1.5 million workers, who were forced to return to their home provinces upon completion of the grand Olympic venues, associated the Olympics with chronic poverty, insecurity and discrimination. Livelihoods of some ordinary people were adversely affected by Games-related measures, some of them high-handed, like demobilising millions of vehicles; keeping

delivery trucks out of Beijing; closure of factories; halting work at several construction sites; and ordering beggars out of Games-hosting cities.

Games-driven evictions reportedly displaced about 1.5 million people with little or no compensation to the victims (O'Rourke, 2007). Even those who sought, during the Olympics, to protest the seizure of their houses or inadequate compensation as was often the case, faced harassment, detention or threatened detention. The Games provided the state with leverage to disperse dissent in the name of preparing the country to host the event. Besides expelling some unregistered city dwellers from Beijing, Olympic-inspired measures tightened visa regulations and increased deportation of foreigners. However, these measures successfully bolstered security during the Games.

The Olympics spotlighted labour rights violations in form of underage workers, forced overtime, underpay and poor accommodation (Beck, 2008). As the current workshop of the world, these abuses and accidents are common in China's numerous mines and factories owing to a huge population, high unemployment levels, wide rural-urban income disparity, and unbalanced regional development. However, like Britain and US after the industrial revolution, China's labour rights and working conditions will gradually improve with sustainable development to guarantee a minimum wage, enforce strict labour laws and marshal better capacity to mitigate effects of natural disasters like earthquakes, floods and droughts.

As China globalises, its monolithic and oppressive political system becomes increasingly vulnerable. Its economic success, supported by integration in the world economic order, is continuously expanding the middle class and affluent elites. With growing political awareness and diversified information channels beyond government's effective control,

Chinese nationals will increasingly demand for more political and civil rights, greater freedom of speech and increased participation in their governance to protect their economic and other interests. It will become increasingly inevitable for the government to make necessary political adjustments in order to build and sustain national cohesion, stability and good reputation which the successful Games helpfully created. Despite some Olympic-inspired adjustments and compliances, the political and policy complications posed by Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang tested the Chinese government's resolve to grant greater civil and political freedoms.

China-Taiwan Relations

The 2008 Beijing Olympics provided an opportunity for China to reassert its sovereignty claim over Taiwan (Formosa), albeit indirectly, using the Olympic Torch and the Taipei athletic team. Annexed by Japan in 1895 but returned to China after World War II, Taiwan was declared Republic of China (ROC) by Chiang Kai-shek's KMT after being ousted from the mainland by Mao. The Island eventually lost the UN seat following the 1972 Nixon-Kissinger historic visit to Beijing and subsequent normalisation of PRC-US relations (Emmott, 2008, pp. 235-236). However, the six-decade US-China-Taiwan tension still found expression during the preparation of the Games.

Taiwan's complex relationship with the mainland China has been characterised by varying degrees of hostilities including a potential military confrontation under China's Anti-Secession Law (2005) as well as cultural ties and growing economic cooperation boosted by China's recent economic rise. As part of Olympic preparations, China unsuccessfully negotiated with Taiwan on the Olympic Torch ceremonies and the name of Taipei's team,

both of which had implications on the unresolved Taiwan sovereignty. Besides disagreeing on changing from Chinese-Taipei to a more resonant China-Taipei which reaffirms one China, they could not concur on appropriate Olympic Torch ceremonies over which Taiwan threatened withdrawal from the Games (Shih and Ko, 2008).

While it was China's strategy to use the Olympic Torch to demonstrate that Taiwan was not different from Hong Kong and Macao to which the torch would proceed, Taipei also intended to use the symbolic Torch to seek international recognition as a sovereign state. The significance of Taiwan question is that in addition to the reunification of Hong Kong from Britain in 1997 and Macao from Portugal in 1999, winning back the island would enable China complete its reunification; finally bury the bitter memory of colonial encroachment; reaffirm its territorial sovereignty; and end Taipei's challenge to Beijing leadership (Shi 2008, pp. 74-84; Emmott, 2008, p. 236).

However, a compromise was eventually reached for Taipei athletes to participate in the Games while the Torch would by-pass Taiwan, an outcome that Beijing received with relief; and an understanding that may be a precursor for peaceful reunification (Callick, 2008). This positive trend in China-Taiwan relations has also been shaped, since 1980s, by changing realities in favour of China ranging from growing economic might and bulging military muscle with expanded fire power, to increased missiles across the Taiwan straits (Jane's Defence, 2009, pp. 37-38). US growing strategic partnership with China coupled with the effects of 2008 financial crisis on Taiwan's economy have also continued to play a positive role as the mainland provides a valuable economic hinterland.

Taiwan's position vis-à-vis China has been weakening since Nixon-Kissinger visit to Beijing in 1972. With China's economic rise and growing attractiveness, it may be neither viable nor necessary to use force to win Taiwan back. Besides Beijing's warming relations with Taipei's KMT, "one country two systems" policy is an incentive which, like the case of Hong Kong and Macao, could facilitate Taiwan's re-integration. As Emmott (2008, p. 236) rightly notes that their re-unification was occurring organically, Taiwan tourists to the mainland surpassed 4.5 million and trade volume exceeded \$108 billion in 2009. The two territories have opened direct sea and air links; boosted tourism and marriages; increased trade, investment and agricultural cooperation, and are currently discussing cross-strait common market; which taken together point to better prospects with economics shaping the politics (BBC News, 2009).

In spite of these hopes, post-Olympics relations between the three parties remain uneasy over the US intended sale of arms worth \$6.4 billion to Taiwan amidst strong protests by the Chinese authorities with a threat to suspend China-US military cooperation (China Daily, 2009). The Taiwan relations Act passed by the US Congress in 1979, besides recognizing one China and a peaceful reunification, also allows the US to sell hardware for Taiwan's self defence which Washington uses to justify the sale. Although the Olympics survived disruption due to gradually improving relations, it carried a strong enough reminder to the parties that the sovereignty issue, which has tensed up their ties for six decades, is yet to be settled. Besides Taiwan, Tibet riots and Xinjiang restiveness also added to China's Olympic woes.

Tibet's Quest for Greater Autonomy

The sparsely-populated Tibet Autonomous Region has sustained a low-intensity conflict with Beijing authorities since its annexation in 1950s, with grievances revolving around power, resources, identity, values and ideas (Sodaro et al. (2008, p. 655). Because of its border with the Himalayas, the world's highest mountains, Tibet is strategically important to China's tourism and national defence. But the brutal suppression of March 2008 Tibet riots led to wide condemnation, Olympic Torch disruptions, widespread protests and intense calls for Olympic boycott. Although Tibet had its hope for greater autonomy diminished, the Olympics spotlighted political, economic and cultural oppression of the indigenous Tibetans and led to studies and policy reviews whose impact is still too early to adequately assess.

Beijing maintains that Tibet had been part of China which was just restored. Whereas China-Tibet relations date to the 13th Century under Genghis Khan and Yuan dynasty, Tibetans claim that they had been independent between 1644 and 1950. The 1959 crushing of Tibetans' revolt forced their spiritual and political leader, the Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyasto, to flee to India (Emmott, 2008, pp. 224-225). Beijing's control over Tibet and the region's connection with India, in culture and territory, led to a war between China and India in 1962; while resolution was compounded by the US interests in the area and subsequent China-Pakistan territorial arrangements. India's 1954 recognition and 2003 reaffirmation of Tibet as an Autonomous Region of China eased but did not eliminate territory-related tensions.

Building on enduring low-intensity resistance, and hoping to take advantage of the Olympic spotlight on China, the Dalai Lama and Free Tibet Movement sustained campaign gained more sympathy in Europe and the US in the wake of March 10 riots which killed 22 people

and injured 100,000 others. At the heart of Tibet issue is a complexity of Tibetans' cultural identity, religious beliefs, economic emancipation and self determination (BBC News, 2008). The latter collides with China's territorial and national sovereignty that is compounded by strategic considerations by China's rival powers and neighbours like India and Pakistan.

Bewildered by the level of criticism levelled against China in advance of the Games, the Chinese authorities, nationals and domestic media were equally baffled by the world-wide sympathy for the Dalai Lama and Tibet. Some groups called for separate "Tibetan Olympics", others came up with a "Guide to China's Labour Camps" and a "Global Human Rights Torch Relay" (deLisle, 2009, pp. 187-188). Citing government's efforts to promote Tibet's economic development, Chinese authorities dismissed claims of human rights and economic inequalities as a pretext for foreign countries to meddle in domestic affairs in furtherance of the Dalai Lama's cessation agenda. Beijing justified its actions in Tibet with the overriding principle of preserving state sovereignty, territorial integrity and national stability.

Some Chinese scholars accused certain European countries of envy and sinister motives to hold back China's emergence and growing global influence. Viewing national stability as a pre-requisite for China's continued development, some Chinese leaders argue that the problems previously facing China were the result, not of an overbearing state but instead of a state too weak to guide the economy, control local government, or block foreign influences (Sodaro, et al. 2008, p. 686). Although this view finds justification in China's past humiliations ranging from territorial encroachments to repeated defeats in Opium Wars and

the 1937 Nanjing massacre, continued repression is neither a respectable manifestation of a strong state nor is it a sustainable tool for national stability.

As Washington Post, (2008) complained that the international reaction to Tibet violence was halting and tentative, the Dalai Lama, surprisingly, supported China's right to host the Games to the disappointment of hard-line pro-Tibet movement members. Then a devastating earthquake hit Sichuan province and instead shifted global attitude towards China from Tibet brutality to expression of solidarity. As the tragedy absorbed the global media, the already fading boycott calls were replaced with empathy for China as optimism for successful Games gained momentum. But the Olympics had amply highlighted the ethnic challenges facing China, and the US strongly urged Beijing to address the policies that had created tensions on Tibetan religion, culture and livelihoods.

The Olympic-related pressure made China vulnerable leading to half-hearted acceptance to negotiate with Dalai Lama's representatives, if only for posturing. The Tibetology Research Centre (2009), despite its connection with Chises government, conducted a study and produced a 'Report on the Economic and Social Development of Tibet'. The investigation focused on possible causes of disharmony, the potential to cause greater political instability and proposed policy solutions to mitigate and resolve ethnic tensions. Subsequently, Chinese and Italian governments sponsored an international Forum on Tibet Development in Rome in October 2009 attended by over 400 participants (Global Times, 2009). While these measures could foster national harmony and stability, their effective implementation requires strong political will, equitable economic policies and recognition of the national and global contexts.

Despite violent crackdown and diminished hopes for Tibet's greater autonomy, the Games spotlighted political, economic and cultural oppression of the indigenous Tibetans and led to studies and policy reviews whose implementation will test government's commitment. Although controlling the civil disturbances also demonstrated China's ability to restore order and conduct secure and successful Games, absence of effective resolution led to a related ethnic violence in Xinjiang in the aftermath of the Beijing Olympics.

Xinjiang Autonomous Region

Xinjiang Autonomous region, another sparsely populated but large and strategically important province in the North West of China was a potential source of terror attacks during the Beijing Games, reminiscent of the bloody 1972 Munich Olympics. Since it came under the PRC in 1949, the predominantly Muslim Uyghur Region has waged a low-level insurgency against Beijing government with suspected links to Diaspora Uyghur Movement (Emmott (2008, pp. 223-227). The simmering conflict between native Uyghur Muslims and migrant Hans found expression during the Beijing Olympics.

Within China's 56 diverse ethnic groups, the Uyghur share growing resentment with other minority groups against increased socio-economic marginalisation within their native areas under a state-induced policy of the majority Han migration (Gladney, 2008). It is against this social discontent that a suspected terrorist attack linked to East Turkistan Movement targeted Kashi border police post four days to the Games. This was reinforced by rumours of an impending terror attack on Air China, the official carrier of the Beijing Games (Graham-Harrison, 2008). Although heightened security measures instituted to handle potential attacks secured the Games, they did not address the simmering restiveness.

Lessons from the Olympic experience and image-tarnishing handling of Tibet violence were evident in managing the July 2009 conflict when Chinese authorities invited foreign media and Beijing-based diplomats to a fact-finding mission in Urumqi. While this level of transparency from the Chinese authorities was a positive development, it was partly informed by the damaging Tibet experience as well as the varying perceptions of the two conflicts; the first one as a separatist revolt and the second one as a domestic inter-ethnic violence. Having started as a rumour in Guangdong toy factory, clashes between Uyghur and Hans led to 197 deaths and 1,700 injuries (Hogg, 2008).

Following the Olympic spotlight on inequitable ethnic policies, China published a White Paper on Xinjiang Development in September 2009 as a policy solution to ethnic issues based on equality, upholding and improving regional ethnic autonomy and common prosperity (China Daily, 2009). While this is a commendable effort, it must address the root causes of the conflict between ethnicities as well as the intervening factors like the effect of globalisation on certain cultural practices, beliefs and values. Economic marginalisation of the Uyghur natives at the hands of the Han migrants calls for equitable economic policies and provision of safety nets against victims of China's economic boom.

Subsequently, the State Council Information Office published another comprehensive White Paper on China's Ethnic Policy and Common Prosperity and Development of all Ethnic Groups in China. The September 2009 paper defines China as unified multi-ethnic country that follows guidelines of unity for common prosperity drawing on its experience and benchmarks from other countries (Government of China Website, 2010). While these post-Olympic initiatives, if backed by political will, have the potential to address the real causes of China's ethnic tensions including economic hardships and marginalisation; fair resource

distribution and greater political participation; social-cultural development and mutual respect, it is still too early to duly assess their impact.

The Beijing Olympics, therefore, take credit for spotlighting issues of economic marginalisation, political suppression and socio-cultural subjugation of China's ethnic minorities, which if effectively addressed through proposed government initiatives, would enhance China's ethnic cohesion, and greater national stability. The post-Olympics strategy adopted by the Chinese government is to underscore its regional and national accomplishments; initiate new strategies to promote balanced development; and avail basic information to the media to dispel accusation of biased policies and marginalization of ethnic minorities. It also endeavours to present China as a developing country with numerous challenges which are being tackled to create a prosperous and harmonious society at home while contributing to global peace and prosperity. However, China's theory of harmony stands challenged not only by ethnic divisions but also a deteriorating environment, unfair trade policies and unconventional business practices.

CHAPTER THREE

BEIJING OLYMPICS: IMPACT ON CHINA'S SECURITY, ENVIRONMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE, BUSINESS AND TOURISM

Introduction

China's recent remarkable economic achievements have earned it considerable respect, awe and admiration as a global power with the fastest growing economy, offering various business opportunities and holding the largest foreign reserves. However, its rapid industrialisation has come with enormous challenges ranging from environmental degradation to internal ethnic disharmony, unbalanced development and international rivalries, all of which captured the Olympic spotlight. Besides the intangible outcome, the Olympic-generated benefits in infrastructure, business and tourism mostly came from \$44 billion spent on preparatory investments, international publicity and hosting of the most lavish Games that left a lasting legacy on Beijing.

In an apparent answer to persistent criticism against China's human rights, environmental degradation and limited innovation, the Beijing Olympics were staged with three major themes of Peoples Olympics, Green Olympics, and High-Tech Olympics. As China's rapid

economic progress helped Beijing to win the Olympic bid and stage impressive Games, the preparation and hosting of the event catalysed transformation of the host city and promoted its reputation for more business and tourism opportunities. However, besides closer scrutiny and foreign pressure, the Games were also associated with stringent and controversial security measures, evictions and demolition of some homes, job losses and expulsion of migrant workers from Beijing as the event drew closer. Despite these shortcomings, the overall Olympic impact on China's environment, infrastructure development, business and tourism opportunities has been positive, beneficial and sustainable.

Security

Although the 17 million residents of Beijing are usually secure, the aftermath of the March 2008 Tibet riots changed the security situation for the Beijing Olympics. Concerns became even more pertinent when four days until the Games, a suspected terrorist group attacked a border police station in Xinjiang Province, followed by rumours that an Air China aircraft would be hijacked and crashed into Beijing National Stadium which was poised to host the Games' opening ceremony. However, asked in a February 2010 Questionnaire whether there were any security breaches during the Games; 100% of the respondents answered no; but 20% pointed at security threats in Xinjiang before the Games; and an isolated killing of an American tourist during the Games; while two respondent expressed disappointment closure of websites like face book and YouTube due to Tibet conflict.

While the Olympic Torch was being disrupted by human rights groups and pro-Tibet protesters over human, media and civil rights, China's reaction ranged from outright indignation and stoking nationalism against specific countries like France, to preparing an

effective security apparatus at home. With rampant security threats at the crucial time of hosting about 100 world leaders and over 11,000 international athletes, the national reputation was at stake for which stringent security measures were adopted and successfully executed, despite associated inconveniences. Viewed as an external threat to the Beijing Olympics, the impact of the 2008 global financial crisis was largely kept at bay by the Games-related expenditure until the government adopted a 4 trillion Yuan (\$586 billion) stimulus package in November 2008 (Roberts, 2009).

Besides deployment of 100,000 armed police, commandos and other forces, 300,000 surveillance cameras were reportedly installed around the city to the discomfort of some foreign guests for being 'spied' on. Artillery and anti-aircraft missiles monitored the Beijing airspace to prevent any attacks reminiscent of the September 11, 2001 disaster. With government reassurances and \$7,400 reward for information on security threats, public confidence was restored (deLisle 2009 p.195). Chinese authorities planned, as they always do, to censor information considered injurious to national security, reputation or interest. A provision was accordingly made to delay the relay of live Olympic images by a few seconds to deal with any such offensive images.

In the run-up to the Games, China's strict visa requirements, movement permits and ticket distribution not only caused inconveniences but could have also affected the attendance of the Games. About 1.5 million migrant workers, who were expelled from Beijing after completing their construction work on the Olympic facilities, felt discriminated against. Meanwhile, Reporters without Borders organised a demonstration to criticise failure of the Chinese government to implement prior pledged press freedom reforms whose interpretation remained varied (Bhattacharji and Zissis, 2008). Despite stringent security measures, one American

tourist was killed by a knife-wielding Chinese national at the Drum Tower tourist site in Beijing to the embarrassment of the Chinese government.

However, for the purpose of securing the Games and using the media to relay the Olympic events and generally report about China, the Chinese authorities struck a balance between facilitation and security control. Save for a few instances of high handedness like roughing up some foreign TV crews and restraining locals from being interviewed, the Beijing security arrangements and provision of physical security for the guests and nationals were successful. As Preuss and Alfs (2009, p.1) rightly observe, the legacy of mega events cannot be revealed correctly by benchmarking and use of micro data, but by evaluation of hard and soft event-related changes in the host city. As well as prompting serious attention to China's pressing environmental issues, the tangible and intangible Olympic outcomes include new infrastructure and better image; knowledge and emotions; new networks and culture, all of which have the potential for transformation and creation of a lasting legacy for tourism and business.

Environment

The Olympic impact on China's environment has benefited Beijing residents. Following Olympic spotlight on toxic clouds from China's numerous factories, which also affected neighbouring countries, China adopted some international environmental management measures; invested in energy efficiency; raised environmental awareness; and improved Beijing's air and water quality, leading to benefits that have outlived the Games event. China's potential for Olympic embarrassment had become apparent when IOC officials threatened to postpone the Games or cancel endurance events if pollution remained severe;

some athletes pondered skipping the Games, while others considered delayed arrivals besides carrying their own food and water to Beijing.

Already under Olympic spotlight, China surpassed the US as the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter in 2006 while Beijing is the world's 13th most polluted city on the World Bank list (Impact Lab, 2006). As deLisle (2009 p.188) rightly notes, China reacted positively to environmental concerns in order to portray an image of a responsible and respectable participant on the international environmental issues. China's winning strategy, albeit seemingly transitory, was to chose "Green Olympics" as one of the major Olympic themes; which was supplemented with publication of new regulations to cater for international green standards; and cooperation with UNEP and other international environmental protection agencies on Games-specific environmental measures.

Investments from China's \$20.5 billion in ten years leading to the 2008 Olympics have generated enduring benefits. Beijing adopted green technology for the Games-related buildings and transportation system including 4 energy efficient subways and a mass-transit, energy-saving bullet-train-link to Tianjin, currently being massively replicated to link all major cities by 2015 (Seligsohn 2008). Beijing Linked Hybrid complex was designed as an embodiment of the 21st Century ecological urban living, while the new Beijing Terminal 3 building, opened in March 2008, is a rare incorporation of environmental design concepts with an integrated environmental control system for energy efficiency.

While grounding 1.3 million vehicles and 300,000 tucks; and inducing rain through "cloud seeding" to wash away polluted air during the Olympic period contributed to the reduction in pollution levels, the relief was only transitory (Eimer, 2008). Save for brief redundancy and

inconveniences, vehicles and trucks resumed normal operations and have since increased by over one million. At the same time, whereas closing Beijing's worst polluting factories relieved city residents; those that were merely relocated to Hebei Province did retain their potency. However, in a February 2010 Questionnaire-based survey; 90% of the respondents did not consider pollution in Beijing as a threat to the athletes; while 10% considered pollution a threat only before the Chinese government had adopted strong measures that improved the environment in time for the 2008 Games.

China has since met most of its 2007 pledges to reduce energy consumption, increase the share of renewable energy, and cover about 20% of its land with forest. Mead and Brajar (2008) estimate benefits from Beijing Olympic-inspired pollution clean-up activities at \$500 million for reaching air quality standard; and \$380 million as the potential annual gain from water pollution cleanup. According to Seligsohn (2009), a five-year comprehensive air and water quality has been drawn to start in 2011; power plants have been provided with emission control and monitoring equipments to ensure proper use while water treatment increased from 22% in 1988 to 90% in 2008. But these measures remain a drop in the ocean as 13 of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in China.

A recent World Bank report credits China for being one of the few countries that have rapidly increased their forest cover and reduced their air pollution. China has also used part of the \$586 billion stimulus package to enhance its environmental conservation campaign (Impact Lab 2006). Success in the run-up to the Games was a function of foreign and domestic pressure and the Chinese authorities' self-interest to avoid a high level embarrassment. Besides mainstreaming environmental programs and increasing awareness across cities and regions, volunteer and community-led conservation efforts and education campaigns have

been largely maintained. Inspired by the Beijing Green Olympics, the Shanghai Expo 2010 adopted 'Low-Carbon Expo' as its main theme under which it will showcase energy efficiency for 'Better City, Better Life'.

As Tankersley and Lee (2010) report, China has become a world leader in clean energy investment from \$2.5 billion in 2005 to \$34.6 billion in 2009 compared to \$18.6 billion invested by the US. In a Games-inspired, but now maintained, cooperation with the international community, Beijing separately signed two joint research cooperation agreements on renewable and cleaner energy with the US and Japan in 2009. China also committed itself to reducing greenhouse emissions to 40%-45% using 2005 as the base year, which Premier Wen Jiabao said would be honoured despite challenges (Fu J. et al. 2009; Li X. et al. 2009). From the foregoing, Beijing's environmental management programs are sustainable, but their impact would be gradual owing to the large extent of its environmental problem and the desire to sustain high GDP growth.

Beijing Olympics are credited for spotlighting China on environmental issues which prompted main-streaming environmental programs across China's major cities and provinces. Having demonstrated commitment to control emissions, conserve energy, and replicate some successful initiatives, the Chinese government is now striving to strike a balance between a sustainable environment and desired development. While the Olympic-inspired programs are still inadequate in coverage and impact, they have expanded Beijing's green belt, increased blue-sky days and improved water and air quality. With introduction of energy-efficient transport systems, increasing investment in clean energy and greater international cooperation on sustainable power and climate conservation, China's environmental programs are sustainable and gradually beneficial.

Infrastructure Development

The Olympic-related expenditure of about \$41 billion in pre-Games construction blitz led to rapid transformation of Beijing into a modern city with some awesome architecture and efficient transport system (deLisle, 2009 p.183). Deliberate adoption of “High-Tech Olympics”, a lavish opening ceremony and use of the world’s largest LED demonstrated China’s modernisation, technological progress and potential for greater advancement. Responding to a Questionnaire on whether Beijing had any noticeable features resulting from hosting the Olympics; 100% of the respondents answered yes. They listed infrastructure development commonly citing the Bird’s Nest, Beijing Airport Terminal 3, sports facilities and a better city skyline. They also cited efficient transport system with improved traffic flow, new subways, rail links, highways and widened roads; cleaner city environment with improved water and air quality.

Attracted by the Olympic-inspired construction boom, some globally reputed architecture and engineering companies teamed up with their Chinese counterparts to produce celebrated architectural designs and world class skyscrapers. The magnificent Beijing Airport Terminal 3 designed by the British Foster and Partners, which is the world’s second largest terminal after Dubai’s Terminal 3; and the centrepiece Beijing National Stadium designed by Herzog and de Meuron, which hosted the main Olympic ceremonies and competitions, epitomise the legacy of the 2008 Games. Beijing also benefited from new highways; 4 new subways, light rail link to the Airport, and a bullet train link to Tianjin whose success has sparked off a railway revolution in China.

This Olympic-inspired fast-rail transport revolution is expected to have significant economic, political and cultural impact on Beijing and China, not only by enhancing internal trade, but also increasing domestic consumption and facilitating more even development from urban east to rural west (Hewitt, 2009). It is also expected to foster greater national unity by helping Beijing to bind the vast nation together, strengthen its hold over provinces, reduce cultural differences and internal divisions and significantly contribute to China's cherished vision of building a more harmonious society, thereby overcoming some of the Games-spotlighted national challenges. Although some of the infrastructure, other than sports facilities, would normally be provided by government, the Olympic drive influenced the timing, magnitude and wider appreciation.

In terms of Olympic-related infrastructure, transport system development and management, the Beijing Games were successful. Besides stimulating urbanisation and increased employment opportunities, the Games attracted contributions of the Overseas Chinese not only as private investors but also through donations and public-private partnerships. Apart from the Olympic village, up to 37 stadiums, gymnasiums and courts were constructed or refurbished and equipped. Coupled with the actual success of the Games; the majestic airport and magnificent Bird's Nest; unique Water Cube and Beijing Capital Museum; National Grand Theatre and the New CCTV Tower have greatly contributed to Beijing's landmarks, attractiveness and reputation. They provide an enduring legacy of the most lavish Games in the Olympic history (Tour Beijing, 2010).

Although locating most of the Olympic facilities near Beijing Universities has ensured continued utilisation by students; the gorgeous Beijing National Stadium is yet to find

significant use beyond hosting a few events and a couple of tourists. Despite their impressive appearance, some of Beijing's new office blocks and apartments remain partially occupied. While the Olympic impact on China's infrastructure development was generally positive, about 1.5 million people were reportedly displaced and their homes razed to create room for the Olympic venues, often with insufficient compensation (O'Route 2008). Despite Wen Jiabao's June 2007 retrenchment order to curb excessive expenditure amidst concerns about the future use of the grand Games' venues, the Beijing Olympics remained associated with a comparatively huge expenditure and lack of public scrutiny as with most Chinese government actions.

Beyond stimulating production and consumption of relevant construction materials like cement, glass and steel, the Olympic-induced infrastructure development provided employment, sustained the growth of Beijing and exposed China's potentials to the world. Despite displacements to create room for Olympic venues; abuses of some construction workers; and underutilisation of some impressive buildings, the overall Olympic impact on China's public infrastructure development has been positive, beneficial and enduring. Not only did the Games-related projects create jobs and engage top domestic and foreign talents, they also transformed Beijing's skyline with some celebrated architecture; improved its transport system and environment; and generally left a positive legacy on the host city and nation conducive for business and tourism.

Business and Tourism

The 2008 Olympics was a grand event not only for sports, but also for business and tourism; and provided China with an opportunity to promote domestic business, attract foreign capital

and expertise, and expose national tourism potentials. With \$40.9 billion spent on infrastructure development, \$1.9 billion on sports facilities and \$2 billion on Olympic Committee operations; the Games created various business and employment opportunities not just in construction and furnishing of various facilities but also production and supply of relevant materials for about a decade (Pravda, 2008). Despite Olympic-associated job losses; elements of negative publicity through media hype; and some unconventional business practices, China succeeded in using the Olympic event to promote itself as a favourable tourist and business destination.

As Nielsen (2009) notes, the total estimate of advertisement in China in 2008 reached 333 billion Yuan (\$49 billion), a 7% increase compared to 2007 as companies increased their advertising budgets led by Adidas' 200%, Nike's 145% and Pepsi 105%. According to the Beijing Statistics Bureau (BSB), while Beijing Games generated about \$2 billion as direct revenue for the host city; and \$15.5 billion in economic activities from 2004 to 2008; the overall national economic benefit was estimated at \$88 billion and the annual contribution to Beijing GDP averaged at 11.8% from 2001 to 2004 and 12.6% from 2005 to 2008 (Bristow, 2008; Xinhua, 2008). Major projects included the \$4 billion Airport Terminal, which employed over 5,000 workers but who were inevitably laid off with its completion; \$500 million Beijing National Stadium which used up to 110,000 tons of steel; \$2 billion speed-train link to Tianjin; a rail link to the airport; 4 new subways and new highways around Beijing (Telegraph, 2008).

In a mutually reinforcing relationship between business and Olympics, Beijing Capital International Airport (BCIA) has become the 8th busiest passenger airport and the 18th busiest cargo terminal in the world. Besides a 7 million increase in passengers from 46.5 million in

2006 to 53.5 million in 2008, BCIA won the “World’s Best Airport Award” by Conde Nast Traveller Magazine in 2009 (Travel Blackboard 2009). As well as becoming a symbol of the lavish Beijing Olympics and a new tourist attraction, the iconic Bird’s Nest scooped the Royal Institute of British Architects’ (RIBA) prestigious Lubetkin Prize for 2009, given to the most outstanding work of architecture outside the European Union (Waite, 2009; Arup Sport, 2009). Hence, in addition to promoting business and fostering tourism, these monumental symbols of modernisation have also become part of China’s expanding soft power.

Despite numerous business opportunities, China sometimes operates unconventionally as revealed by WTO rulings and on-going investigations; recent Google withdrawal from China and charging Rio Tinto staff with espionage in Shanghai (Hornby and Shen, 2010). China being a developing country with unbalanced regional development, worsening rural-urban disparities and over 100 million people living on less than one US dollar a day, an Olympic cost of \$44 billion was astronomical. But Baizhu (2009) argues, rightly, that while the cost was enormous, it was large enough to impact the economy of Beijing but not significantly large to affect the nation’s economy. Indeed, according to BSB, Beijing Municipality contributes a marginal 3.8% to China’s national economy; and while part of the Olympic spending was related to consumption, a substantial part was committed to creating an enduring legacy through impressive infrastructure development, tourism and business signalling.

In spite of tight Communist controls, China successfully used the worldwide media not only to signal to domestic and foreign audiences, but also to convey information on business and tourist related opportunities to potential internal and external investors and tourists.

Consequently, a Pricewaterhouse Cooper (PwC) index indicated that China's manufacturing sector moved from the 14th position in 2008 to become the 4th most attractive destination in 2009 while Boston Consulting Group (BCG) notes that 36 out of 100 top global companies are from China; the highest number from any single country (Schwarz, 2009). Although free riders used the media hype to criticise Chinese politics, Tibet, Darfur and press censorship, China's strategy to use the Olympics to promote its business and tourism potentials was by and large successful.

The Olympics also provided China with an opportunity to mobilise moral, financial and nationalist support from Diaspora Chinese which became even more crucial in the face of boycott threats. In the wake of Tibet violence, some US-based Chinese citizens filled lawsuits against CNN for its bias, and Chinese students throughout the world protested what they perceived as unfair attacks against their homeland; an effort that bolstered Beijing's defence for the Games, elements of ultra-nationalism notwithstanding (Price 2009). Besides being prompted by the Games to strongly identify with their homeland, some Overseas Chinese and compatriots from Hong Kong and Macao acquired a stake in some ventures like the Aquatic Centre through public-private partnership; and their involvement in their management improves efficiency.

As a consequence of China's economic success the 2008 Olympics were offered and hosted in Beijing because the city had built sufficient infrastructure, and accumulated ample supporting resources to make the event lavish. As a showcase, the Games helped China to display its recent remarkable achievements, and to demonstrate its potential for greater success. As a contribution, the Olympics created various business and job opportunities, catalysed the modernisation of Beijing city, and popularised it as a favourable destination for

business and tourism. While the overall economic impact was significant on Beijing, but negligible on China, a successful Olympic event positively impacted the image and reputation of both the host city and nation. Despite inevitable Games-related job losses; elements of negative publicity through media hype; and some unconventional business practices, China's strategy to use the Olympic event to promote tourism and business was largely successful, as it effectively used the media and attractive culture in branding.

CHAPTER FOUR

BEIJING OLYMPICS: IMPACT ON CHINESE CULTURE AND BRANDING, MEDIA FREEDOM AND FOREIGN RELATIONS

Introduction

Chinese Culture and the Beijing Olympics have become instrumental in China's national and product branding. With the notion that culture is central to the construction of a national image, China variously used its cultural symbols and images in marketing itself for the 1993 and 2001 Olympic bids, and continues to blend its rich cultural heritage with the 2008 Olympic legacy to enhance its reputation. The media was the main medium for reflecting the intercultural interaction and branding fostered by the Games. Promoting visibility aside, the Olympic event exposed inherent weaknesses of China Brand ranging from contaminated food and drug products, violation of intellectual property rights and unconventional business practices to poor working conditions and government oppression. Despite inadvertent exposure to image dissonance, the Olympics provided China with an opportunity to display its fascinating culture, values and ideology to an international audience, test its diplomatic credentials, further open-up and embrace the world in mutual trust, friendship and solidarity.

In a January 27, 2010 interview; a senior official of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) said that the Olympics boosted China's opening-up and enabled world friends, including the western media, to see China for the first time. He noted that western-based groups tried to sabotage China's dreams using Tibet and Darfur; but through dialogue and the support of friendly nations, Beijing hosted the 'best Olympics in history'. Yes, the world came to China, but Beijing remains wary of the western media potential to frame. While his perception of Tibet violence, unsurprisingly, reflects Beijing's official position, the dialogue referred to in relation with the world would also be instrumental in resolving some domestic 'governance' challenges which continue to discount China's national image. Besides its positive effect and wider lessons for Beijing and the world, the Olympic experience has also helped improve China's reputation and brand index, albeit slowly.

Culture and Branding

Guided by the concept of Peoples Olympics, Zhang Yimou blended China's history and cultural heritage with western high-tech to produce fascinating shows at the Olympic opening and closing ceremonies that not only captivated the guests but also mesmerised the hosts. Underscoring the concept of harmony as the core of Chinese culture, China used the Games to exhibit its spirit, culture, and basic values, and to symbolise Chinese people embracing the world. This notion tied in with Beijing's policy of opening up and embracing the world to continue benefiting from globalisation despite its strain on some aspects of the Chinese culture.

The Games prompted Chinese cultural revival and Olympic education programs which went beyond the 400,000 volunteers and 400 million Chinese school children to the entire public; and was well blended with the Olympic and Western Cultures especially using domestic media. Under the theme “Smiling Beijing” the cheerful volunteers, whose online recruitment was also an outreach to Taiwan and Diaspora, heeded the call to offer high quality services to earn Beijing a good image (People’s Daily 2008). In addition to the cultural extravaganza at the opening ceremony, guests were entertained at various theatres and museums with varied performances and art exhibitions. The various scenic spots including the Great Wall, Forbidden City and Temple of Heaven contributed not only to revenues collected but also to refreshing memories of the event, the people, the host city and nation.

Chinese Culture was evident in the five official Mascots of the 2008 Games which artistically symbolized humanity, harmonious co-existence and Olympic posterity; and their names carried a message of “Welcome to Beijing” (*Bei Jing Huan Ying Ni*). The Olympic Emblem, unveiled in 2003 as an open-armed human figure in motion, was commended by IOC President for conveying awesome beauty and power of China embodied in Chinese heritage and people. While “One World One Dream” (*Tong Yige Shijie Tong Yige Mengxiang*) encapsulated China’s aspirations in an inclusive Olympic slogan, drafting 106 Miss World Beauty Pageant contestants from 100 countries into composing English Olympic songs blended the Olympics with western beauty pageantry and Chinese branding (Official Website 2008).

The social engineering campaign by China’s Ministry of Culture to educate people on public manners in advance of the Beijing Olympics was another effort at cultural blending as well as preparing China to embrace the world. Whereas some practices like belching, splattering,

spitting, shoving and smoking in public areas are still persisting, and can only fade gradually, they seemingly reduced among Beijing residents as a result of this Olympic-induced campaign. In order to make a better impression abroad after reported cases of unimpressive conduct, tour companies also gave tips to some out-bound tourists to be more courteous and to avoid being noisy, bossy or rude to their hosts. The Games impact also prompted over 16,000 couples to apply for marriage licences in the Olympic year while several other couples who planned to deliver Olympic babies led to a baby-boom and stretched health facilities across China in 2008 (NPR, 2008).

Despite some outdated cultural practices, the Olympics provided an opportunity which China utilised to powerfully display its fascinating culture, values and ideology to an international audience, which was blended with the western modern technology in furtherance of opening-up and embracing the world. Besides national and cultural branding, corporate China also used the Games to give more visibility to a range of products through Olympic branding and advertising. Against a paradox of China being the current workshop of the world while still producing some brands that are at best generic; some companies used the Olympic event to introduce and promote their respective brands to capture or increase their global market share in the medium and long run, despite challenges to China brand.

Challenges to China Brand

China's remarkable economic progress juxtaposed against its persistent trade malpractices exposes a country which loves the world markets but does not want to play by the world rules (Quelch, 2007). China Index is impacted by limited research and innovation, cultural collectivism and branding, marketing and business ownership, negative perceptions and

western media rhetoric. Despite challenges, China Brand benefited from Olympic advertising and success of the Games; but this marginal benefit could be enhanced by effectively addressing issues of quality and standards, fair play and clarity of business ownership, shrewd trade-marking and marketing strategies.

Asked in a Questionnaire whether Chinese products benefited from the Beijing Games, all respondents answered yes, but only 80% cited examples including; Olympic advertising, global publicity and big sales to thousands of Olympic guests. Two respondents noted that benefits could have been limited by the global financial crisis and perceptions of rampant Chinese counterfeiting. While the economic downturn generally affected Chinese exports, negative perception still bedevils China brand. But besides foreign firms, Air China and Bank of China, with several domestic and international networks, and credited for some innovation and pioneering, were respectively the official airline and official banking partner of the Beijing Olympics. China's other top Olympic sponsors or partners included China Mobile, China National Petroleum Corporation, China Netcom, Lenovo, SINOPEC, Haier, Tsingtao, Yanjing Beer and China State Grid (Chow, 2009).

Simon Anholt, a reputable producer of 50 Country Anholt-GfK Paper National Brand Index, reportedly noted that China's brand index ranking has started to improve following its 2008 Olympic experience (Latin Business Chronicles, 2009). However, while flawless execution of the Games significantly improved China brand and created a positive perception about the Chinese capabilities to get things done, certain challenges have persisted. Stiff domestic competition among several companies producing the same product and largely focussing on mass production for domestic market reduce the profit margins that would otherwise be committed to further research and development. Moreover, part of the market share is taken

up by some famous foreign brands which maintain a strong appeal amongst the increasingly affluent urban Chinese.

Lack of effective marketing strategies coupled with quality problems continues to be devil China Brand. Beijing appears to have missed an opportunity to identify, deliberately and effectively promote a few top quality products to gain global recognition. Comparatively, South Korea overcame such a dilemma by producing few high quality products like Samsung and LG that gained global visibility with the hosting of the 1988 Seoul Olympics, and have since become part of its successful national brand. Moreover, some powerful Chinese brands are fairly new on the market, and use strategies that do not directly introduce them to customers. Huawei Technologies, a Shenzhen-based Chinese IT giant worth over \$18 billion, sells most of its products to other industrial customers which limits its brand visibility (Simons, 2009).

McGill (2010) argues that because the traditional Chinese values do not align with the concept of ideas as capital for individual gains, intellectual property rights in China have reflected not the values of the people, but the agenda of its leaders. With China's foundations in the Confucianism and Marxism ideals, which subordinate individual considerations to the common good, some companies and individuals find no contradiction in imitating and duplicating some products to benefit a wider group like the contested Expo 2010 Song (Xie, 2010). In spite of the existing legal framework on Trade Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), most Chinese companies have yet to value brands as much as western companies owing to collectivism coupled with a long period of international isolation which kept China away from foreign markets and brands.

Some Chinese companies and their brand products are negatively impacted by deep connection with or ownership by the state especially when perceived as state functionaries. Huawei Technologies dropped its bid for Marconi, a British electronics and IT firm when it was accused of being a government tool for espionage targeting British Defence Industry. Huawei also withdrew from a joint \$2.2 billion bid for 3Com, an American telecom equipment maker when the US Congress raised national security concerns (Simons 2009). Besides business ownership issues, China brand also suffers from Beijing's weak protection of intellectual property rights against counterfeiting of software, music, movies and other products.

While negative perceptions and western media rhetoric are blamed for undermining China brands, they are not entirely without basis. The US estimates that its industries lose approximately \$20-25 billion annually due to counterfeiting and piracy in China (McGill, 2010). When Cisco Systems sued Huawei over copying computer codes used in routers, the case generated negative publicity despite its subsequent out of court settlement. China brand further suffered from recent product recalls ranging from poisonous pet foods, to milk, eggs, toys and tires. According to a 2008 report by Interbrand, a London based consultancy, 66% of 700 international professionals reportedly cited "cheap" as the best attribute describing Chinese goods; 12% said that "made in China" quality was "improving"; while 80% said that a "low quality" reputation prevented Chinese brands from succeeding in overseas markets (Simons 2009).

In an effort to overcome negative perceptions, China's Ministry of Commerce adopted an advertising strategy to re-brand Chinese products with "Made in China: Made with the World" which appeared on CNN in November 2009; and will also appear at 2010 Shanghai

Formula 1 Championship (Jin, 2010). According to Jay (2009), “Made in China” still has multiple denotations of poor quality, cheap price and job losses for the US workers (Marketplace 2009). While this re-branding is helpful in addressing the contemporary business processes of multiple partnerships, it can hardly substitute for quality and fair play. China’s success as a world leader in fast rail transport, bolstered by the on-going massive bullet-trains project and a proposal to recreate Silk Route through a rail link from Beijing to London, could also introduce a positive dimension to China brand.

China Brand can further be improved through financing research, development and marketing of high quality products; focusing on greater innovation to replace perfect imitation, and sustained education programs to build a philosophy of respect for property rights. Strict health and safety standard enforced by central and provincial governments as well as strong deterrent penalties could go a long way in quality improvement and strong brand building. In addition to acquiring some foreign brands like Lenovo-IBM, China should muster the art of branding, trade-marking and use of top domestic and foreign talents, while more transparency in business ownership, leadership and operational ethics could help clarify, overcome or reduce some suspicions.

Rather than reinforce each other, China’s national and product brands still largely undercut each other owing to persisting brand challenges. Yet Brand China can succeed well beyond the present levels with a careful blend of quality, innovation and branding, trade-marking and shrewd marketing strategies. To the extent that China utilised the event to showcase its remarkable economic achievements, display its fascinating culture, promote some products, protect Olympic symbols and conduct flawless Games, its brand index ranking has been improving, albeit slowly. For this upward trend to be sustained and enhanced, Chinese

authorities need to more effectively address the major issues of product quality, intellectual property rights, business ownership and fair play.

Media Freedom

The Beijing Olympics left a mildly positive legacy on media freedom in China. Diverse networks coupled with Chinese government interest to build and maintain soft power, reinforced by renewal of the Games-inspired media-friendly regulations provide a positive prospect for improving media freedom. Although Beijing still censors the media, it struck a reasonable balance between its own controls, Olympic-related commitments, desire to highlight its most remarkable achievements; and relaying the alluring Olympic events to inform and impress the world. Despite new censorship measures, persistent cyber attacks and obstinate self defence, the Olympic experience revealed China's potential for gradual greater media freedom.

The CPC tightly controls media access and coverage besides owning the major networks. But as part of the commitment to the IOC, Premier Wen Jiabao signed a decree in January 2007 to ease regulations for foreign journalists, allowing them to report throughout the country without prior permission as previously required (Bhattacharji and Zissis, 2008). China sought to redeem its battered image, and largely succeeded in using the media to tell its economic success story; and to overwrite positive impressions by relaying striking Olympic events to global audiences. However, even these efforts were at times impeded by occasional transmission interferences, impromptu procedural requirements, harassing foreign TV crews and intimidating locals not to give media interviews.

Besides other State agencies, two bodies which review and enforce regulations on information flow are the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) and the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT). As Zissis and Bhattacharji (2008) note, besides licensing publishers and screening written publications, GAPP is empowered to ban materials and shut down outlets while SARFT has similar authority over radio, television, film and internet broadcasts. The Central Propaganda Department (CPD) of the CPC supervises GAPP and SARFT to ensure that the content conforms to and promotes party doctrine. Besides regularly issuing directives on coverage of sensitive issues like corruption, mass protests, environmental disasters, Taiwan, Xinjiang, Tibet, Falun Gong, Dalai Lama and the 1989 Tiananmen events, the mighty CPD also uses dismissals and demotions, libel and fines, imprisonment and outright closure of offending news outlets as censoring techniques.

Local and foreign companies are forced to sign a self-discipline act requiring them to censor contents of their blogs and to provide bloggers' identities. After Google's loud complaints against censoring and frequent cyber attacks, the world's largest internet provider relocated to Hong Kong; a move that negatively impacts China's otherwise improving image. But the Games provided both an opportunity and excuse for Beijing authorities to check piracy, pornography, and unauthorized publications. With over 100,000 internet police, the Chinese authorities also use the Great Firewall, and the new Green Dam net filtering software fitted on computers sold in China from July 2009, to detect and block unwanted imagery (BBC News, 2010). Tibet violence reportedly led to jamming of even major internet, radio and TV outlets including BBC, CNN, Los Angeles Times and the Guardian.

Ironically, Chinese authorities use censoring technology provided by international companies like Yahoo, Microsoft and Google. Bhattacharji and Zissis (2008) observe that despite January 2007 decree, 230 cases of harassment, obstruction and detention were reported by the Foreign Correspondents of China by June 2008. By October 2008, 1500 internet cafes in 14 of Beijing's 18 districts had already been compelled to install cameras and take photographs of all users. According to China Daily (2009), 83.84 million pornographic and pirated publications were confiscated; 8 illegal disc production lines closed, 328 criminal cases prosecuted, 14,000 illegal websites closed; over 490,000 harmful items deleted; while 46,000 shops and 1,420 printing and copying enterprises were closed down.

Chinese authorities are ambivalent about the media. They use it to realise domestic and foreign policy objectives like communicating their diverse achievements and relaying the successful Olympic event while trying to guard against likely chaos that could undermine the government control, authority and legitimacy. For example President Obama's January 2009 inaugural speech was edited by the Chinese media due to pointed remarks about communism, corruption and repression. Likewise, in November 2009 when President Obama stressed his belief in human freedoms while interacting with University students in Shanghai, the event coverage was restricted to that region (Demick, 2009; Garnaut, 2009).

Yet, China seeks to increase its soft power partly through domestic and foreign media influence. According to He (2009), China planned to invest Yuan 45 billion (\$6.7 billion) in government media organizations targeting the global audience to boost its soft power and global influence. Xinhua News Agency planed to expand its bureaus overseas from 100 to 186; and create a 24x7 Asian based television like Aljazeera. Peoples Daily launched the Global Times, a daily tabloid while CCTV launched an Arabic Channel in July 2009, to be

followed by a Russian Channel. China nurtures an ambition to develop its own CNN or BBC equivalent to match its global status that the Beijing Olympics helpfully portrayed.

The Beijing Olympics left a mildly positive legacy on China's media freedom signalled by upholding more media-friendly regulations and unblocking some websites like BBC, Wikipedia and Blogger, although YouTube, Face book and Twitter remain inaccessible. At Beijing World Media Summit in October 2009, President Hu Jintao called on the local media not only to reflect social conditions and sooth public dissatisfaction, but also participate in public affairs and safeguard public right to information and expression, ironically against his very government. While pledging to safeguard foreign media rights and interests, President Hu also called on the foreign media to deepen the world's understanding of China, and further promote friendship between China and the world (Hogg, 2009; China Daily, 2009).

More hope also lies in Beijing's growing appreciation of the media in national and international affairs; diverse networks; alternative sources of information; and multiplying Chinese netizens, who while still representing 25.5 percent, reached 338 million in 2009 surpassing the total US population (Arthur, 2009). With over 2,081 newspapers, 9,363 magazines, 600 publishing houses and 300,000 different kinds of books, government censorship is becoming increasingly less effective (China Today, 2009). Aware of this reality, the government has also joined the trendy blogosphere like MySpace and maintenance of websites not just to give official interpretation to international events and shape public opinion, but also to obtain feedback on government policies as well as provide a vent for public frustrations. From the image-tarnishing Tibet experience, the government drew valuable lessons leading to a more media-friendly approach to Xinjiang riots in July 2009.

Although the World Press Freedom Index 2009 ranking of China in the 168th position out 175 nations is still weak, the scores reflect a slow but steady progress from 94.00 in 2005 to 84.00 in 2009 (Reporters Without Borders, 2009). Moreover older democracies like France and Italy have found greater media freedom increasingly challenging, leading to steady decline in their annual rankings (Kosmopolit, 2009). Despite this hope, China's new censorship measures, persistent cyber attacks and obstinate defence of its practices limit the prospects of faster media freedom. Yet continued censorship, coupled with other domestic political challenges, which are ushered into the international arena by varied channels of modern communication, continue to negatively impact Beijing's foreign relations.

Foreign Relations

China's foreign relations were for centuries characterized by limited contact with the outside world. With the introduction of western influence, and after Mao's tragic Cultural Revolution, Deng and subsequent leaders increased China's global outreach, participation in international organisations and integration in the global economy which culminated into hosting of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The Olympic experience revealed that continued political repression, support for odious governments, and unresolved domestic and regional issues discount China's image and reputation. However, relying on recent economic success, strong nationalism, global influence and shrewd diplomacy, China hosted the biggest sports summit in the Olympic history whose smooth execution left a legacy of a global power status, improved image and reputation, if slightly diminished.

The 1972 Nixon-Kissinger historic visit to Beijing and the 2001 admission of China into the World Trade Organization (WTO) have had a significantly positive impact on China's political and economic relations with the world. However, the June 1989 Tiananmen

crackdown on pro-democracy protesters, which coincided with Beijing's fading significance as an ally of the West against a disintegrating Soviet Union, disastrously plunged China's improving reputation (Shah, 2008). Against this backdrop, and despite its rapid economic progress, China remained estranged, feared and maligned by many Western governments and media. The Beijing Olympics were therefore, ardently sought and lavishly staged to improve China's reputation and polish up its battered image. Hence, the Games constituted a political convention with interesting dimensions on a handful of China's strategic allies and rivals, notable neighbours and oppressive friends.

While Dr. Henry Kissinger rightly predicted that the Games would have a profoundly positive impact on China by providing a high incentive for moderate conduct domestically and internationally, Beijing's human rights record and brutal suppression of Tibet riots, environmental concerns and international rivalries threatened the Games with possible boycott (Longman, 2001). Out of about 100 world leaders, the attendance of President Bush had a more significant impact on the Games as well as on China-US relations. As a leader of the reigning super-power, his unpopularity notwithstanding, Bush rejected calls for Olympic boycott citing separation of sports from politics and more appropriate avenues for such discussions. This position reinforced China's own defence, and together with economic considerations, positively influenced some undecided leaders (Leonard et al. 2008).

Despite Bush attendance, China-US complex relations continue to be characterized by cooperation and contestation since establishing formal ties in 1979. China and US are one another's second largest trading partners whose bilateral trade reached \$333.70 billion in 2008, with China holding \$768 billion in US treasury bonds by March 2009 (Ding, 2009; Somerville, 2009). However, they have outstanding disagreements on politics, human rights

and media freedom; defence, trade and monetary policies; Tibet and Taiwan issues. Despite occasional tensions, US-China strategic and Economic Dialogue was held in Washington in July 2009; President Obama visited Beijing in November 2009; and President Hu Jintao attended the April 2010 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington after hinting on a possibility of Yuan revaluation. They also cooperated on overcoming the economic downturn, North Korea's six-party talks, Iran nuclear issues, climate and energy (Yuan, 2007, pp. 1-6).

As Emmott (2008, p. 87) appropriately notes, China and Japan are Asia's oldest enemies. Despite their unique history characterised by aggression, humiliation and bitterness, the 2008 Olympics improved their relations and Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda was in Beijing for the Games. Recent positive developments include trade volume of \$266.4 billion in 2008, visits by Hu Jintao in April 2008 and Xi Jinping the Chinese Vice President, who in December 2009, met the Emperor on unusually short notice (JETRO, 2009; Li, 2009). However, tensions still exist over the 1937 Nanjing massacre, global economic status and China's opposition to Japan's bid for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. Growing economic cooperation, high level visits, Fukuda's attendance and absence of historic clashes at the Beijing Games signify improving China-Japan relations.

South Korea's President Lee Myung-bak's Beijing experience was reminiscent of the 1988 Seoul Olympics credited for the country's greater democratization and successful product branding for LG and Samsung which Beijing did little to emulate. Although the two countries had no diplomatic relations till 1992 owing to the Korean War legacy and the cold war estrangement, South Korea is currently China's third largest trading partner with trade volume exceeding \$180 billion (China Tech News, 2009). Strengthening relations aside, President Myung-bak's attendance also helped dissociate him from earlier Seoul protests

against the Olympic Torch. While US, Japan and South Korea are China's largest trading partners, the trio's historical alliance is being challenged by the growing US-China strategic partnership which the Beijing Games helpfully boosted.

The Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin graced the Beijing Olympics with his presence as a sign of historical ties and solidarity dating from the founding of the PRC to the Korean war, despite a period of strained relations prompted by Russia's cold war hegemony and Beijing's closeness to the West in the 1980s (Xu, 2009, pp.3-5). While Putin might have enjoyed the spectacle in contrast with the boycotted 1980 Moscow Olympics, Russia's invasion of Georgia was cynically linked to the Games by some news headlines like; "Kick off the Olympics with a new war" (Shaw, 2008). However, Putin-Bush discussion of Georgia War while in Beijing enhanced the political value of a Sports Summit.

The impact of the Beijing Olympics on China-France relations gained prominence when pro-Tibet and human rights protesters seriously disrupted the Olympic Torch in Paris in March 2008. Compounded by President Sarkozy's declared intention to meet the Dalai Lama, and to skip the Games, the Chinese started boycotting French Carrefour Retailer stores in China while others cancelled their trips to France (deLisle, 2009, p. 198). Amidst pressure from domestic business communities, President Sarkozy yielded and attended the Games to China's delight. France having pioneered Paris-Beijing relations in 1964 that generated China-EU trade worth \$400 in 2008, stronger economic considerations for most countries made boycotting the Beijing Olympics untenable (Xu, 2008, p. 5).

India's Congress Party President Sonia Gandhi attended the Beijing Games. China's preference to not invite the Indian Prime Minister or President highlights challenges

in China-India relations ranging from unresolved border disputes and the Dalai Lama's exile to nuclear issues and trade rivalries, and New Delhi's UN Security Council bid against Beijing's opposition. Despite challenges, China became India's largest trading partner as well as one of Beijing's top ten export markets in 2008 with bilateral trade growing from \$20 billion in 2005 to \$51.8 billion in 2008 (Srivastava, 2009). Besides, the Olympics came just after Premier Manmohan Singh's January 2008 visit to Beijing as a sign of improving relations between the G-20 members projected to fully dominate the world economy by 2050 especially under BRIC framework (Malhotra, 2008).

For varied reasons including strong national sentiments against China, disasters, conflicts or leadership challenges, not all the invited leaders were able to make it to Beijing. The absence of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper was more about strong sentiments of their people expressed through repeated protests against China. However, Harper made an official visit to Beijing in December 2009 to warm up economic cooperation (Schiller, 2009). The British Premier Gordon Brown attended the closing ceremony at which the London Mayor, Boris Johnson, received the Torch as the 2012 Olympic host. Besides the expected spotlight, London worries about being overshadowed by the spectacular Beijing Games before passing the buck to the recently selected Rio for 2016 Olympics.

Georgia's President Mikheil Saakashvili was facing-off with Russian forces; Ukraine's Viktor Yushchenko was handling devastating flood; while Pakistan's Pervez Musharaf and South Africa's Thabo Mbeki were battling impeachment challenges. Myanmar's Senior-General Tan Shwe and North Korea's Generalissimo Kim Jong Il were represented by their deputies, General Thein Sein and Kim Yong Nam respectively. Sudan's Omer al Bashir was

still trapped in Darfur maze that had associated the Games with Genocide while Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe was reportedly asked by China to stay away on the account of allegations of gross human rights abuses in the wake of a disputed presidential election (Smith, 2008; Chen, 2007, pp. 56-58). Not only did China's cosy relations with odious regimes reinforce boycott calls, they remain a source of serious international criticism.

The Games underlined the inevitable shift of power and influence from the West to the East which was ably demonstrated by the grand success of the Beijing Games and the steady progress of other oriental nations like Japan, India and South Korea. As Blair (2008) candidly writes, there is nothing in the 21st century that would work well without China's full engagement. On his recent visit to Asia, President Obama acknowledged this reality when he said that the US was not seeking to contain China, and that a strong and prosperous China could be a source of strength for the community of nations (CNN, 2009). As well giving an irreversible impetus to China's opening-up policy, the Olympics helped showcase China's remarkable achievements; forge global solidarity, and test its relations with rivals and competitors, while signalling greater responsibility and need for more accountability, transparency and consistency in Beijing's domestic and foreign policies.

The Beijing Games had a positive effect and valuable lessons for China and the world. Although Beijing managed to hold lavish Games, its human rights, political repression, ethnic disharmony, media censorship and environment remained major challenges and dampened the Olympic benefits, if slightly. Despite controversies and setbacks, China successfully used the Beijing Olympics as a tool of public diplomacy with a positive impact on its politics, economics and environment. The Games helped China to project a successful national brand image as an emerging global power with potential for greater success. They also left a legacy

of transformed Beijing, improved city environment and celebrated architecture, which together with the success of the Games created a better reputation for business and tourism. But the good impressions ably created by the spectacular Beijing Olympics will soon diminish as long as the major issues, which initially threatened the success of the Games, elude resolution.

CHAPTER FIVE

BEIJING OLYMPICS: OBSERVATIONS, LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Public Diplomacy has become an indispensable instrument in managing external affairs under the current framework of international relations. Varied actors and partnerships handling a multiplicity of issues in a shared diplomatic arena, amid blending domestic and foreign environments coupled with increasing transnational and global challenges, have made PD even more essential. As in many other countries, China uses PD to promote understanding, increase its regional and global influence and win support for its national interests. The Beijing Olympics were ardently sought, sumptuously hosted and successfully used as a tool of public diplomacy, despite some setbacks.

China's PD challenges go beyond the authoritarian political culture, tight bureaucracy and media censorship to restricted global networks, limited use of international languages and marginalization of ethnic minorities. While China's authoritarianism at times undercuts PD initiatives, it also reinforces them with coherent, clear and consistent messages whose effective execution often leads to success, awe and admiration. That the Beijing Olympics

were lavishly staged, broadly watched and widely hailed against a backdrop of controversies and setbacks, which slightly dampened the positive effect but did not deter the success of the Games, offer wider lessons for China and the world.

Observations and Lessons

China's recent remarkable economic achievements have earned it considerable respect as a global power with the fastest growing economy and holding the largest foreign reserves. As a consequence of economic success, the 2008 Olympics were offered to Beijing because the city had built sufficient infrastructure and accumulated ample resources to make the event magnificent. As a showcase, the Games helped to display remarkable achievements and to demonstrate China's potential for greater success. As a contribution, the Olympics created various business and job opportunities and catalysed transformation of Beijing into a favourable destination for business and tourism. But how did Beijing avert a potentially disastrous boycott to stage a globally celebrated Olympic event?

Responding to a February 2010 Questionnaire; all the 20 respondents, half of them non-Chinese, believed that the Olympic experience carried some lessons for China and other countries. 70% of the foreign respondents recommended wider emulation of China's capacity to enthuse and build domestic Olympic support; adapt an international event with Greek roots to its own national circumstances; overcome natural disasters resiliently; organise the Games excellently; and make its first hosting a notable success. 30% of the foreign respondents underscored good national implementation strategy; reliance on own resources to achieve core national objectives; and decried dependence on foreign experts in apparent reference to Spielberg's abrupt resignation from the advisory role on the Games.

Two foreign respondents noted that China was already a significant global player; would be closely watched by international community; is expected to adopt more open, transparent and consistent internal and external policies; and should recognise that its domestic policies directly impact the world. One respondent observed the Games had enhanced China's opening-up through easing media restrictions and adopting more liberal policies; and that total commitment could propel any nation to realise its cherished objective. Moreover, to some CPC and government officials, hosting successful Olympics was a dream-come true to mark China's rise to global prominence, and demonstrate to rivals and former tormentors that Beijing had come of age with sufficient economic and political influence.

Some 90% of the Chinese respondents observed that China's experience, while partly shaped by the previous hosts, could offer some lessons on security, traffic, environment and event management; efficient use of volunteers; and rallying nation-wide support for the Games. Two respondents wished their government could build more sports facilities; encourage people to do more exercises; increase athletic training; and aspire for more gold medals. One respondent added that despite China's high gold medal aggregate of 51; its large population reduced the medal per-capita, and hoped that Beijing would in future strive for a more commensurate outcome. Another respondent argued that by caring too much about 'face', which he noted was also good, Chinese government became less realistic and hence the Chinese people realised less benefit than had been anticipated.

China used the Olympic success to bolster its soft power not just by excellent athletic performance, skilful event management and impressive infrastructure, but also through fascinating culture, cheerful volunteers and music stars. Indeed part of China's Olympic success was the dazzling opening and closing ceremonies directed by Zhang Yimou, which

besides his world-acclaimed films, earned him the second personality of the year 2008, and an Honorary Doctorate from Yale University in May 2010. The event was also used to reaffirm China's national identity and to provide a platform for ordinary citizens to experience national dignity. As well as increasing national confidence and optimism on the country's direction, the Olympic success increased people's expectations in their government for repeated performances. Subsequent events like the Shanghai Expo 2010 risk PD disaster if they fall short of these expectations.

The Olympic Torch relay was used as a double-edged political signal. Carefully routed, Beijing dubbed it a journey of harmony while critics turned it into a journey of discord through attacks, protests and repeated disruptions which highlighted China's uneasy relations especially with Europe and US. But the Olympics presented a changed and changing China. Mutually, the event provided the world with an opportunity to learn about New China so as to replace the old images with new ones and for Beijing to overwrite new and positive impressions. Contributing to the Olympic success was the government's ability to inspire domestic enthusiasm evident through hordes of cheerful volunteers and soldiers entertaining the guests and reliance on its own human and financial resources that also kept the adverse effects of the financial crisis at bay.

While China's unelected government is still short on transparency and accountability, its wide latitude facilitates quick decision-making and prompt implementation. The CPC has not only proven resilient and adaptive, it has also shown remarkable ability to control dissent, deal with political pressures, initiate and utilise PD opportunities. Hosting a successful Olympic event was a prudent political calculation, which besides other benefits, rewarded the ruling party with increased popularity, renewed authority and greater legitimacy. If there

were any illusions that western democracy and values were a prerequisite for hosting successful Games, China proved to the contrary. Aspiring hosts like Brazil could also draw insights how to build nation-wide Olympic support, foster national confidence and boost government authority in the face of challenges.

Whereas Beijing prepared meticulously to display its greatest political, economic and cultural strength, it failed to anticipate the extent to which the Games would amplify domestic and foreign political challenges to the national stability and CPC leadership. Having initially overreacted, Chinese leadership eventually succeeded in using the Games to stoke nationalism against boycott threats and to create public opinion that supports the status quo. However, recourse to indignation, harsh rhetoric and ultra-nationalism when faced with international criticism falls short of political sophistication necessary to foster China's aspirations for global leadership.

Despite its contribution to China's remarkable economic success, globalisation has made the Communist political structure increasing vulnerable, posing a dilemma of reconciling market economics with command politics; a challenge Beijing has to deal with through more political reforms. The state and ruling party remain fused, CPC leadership unelected and government authoritarian while party membership is largely exclusive and the dominant Hans are state-favoured. The government is still averse to internal dissent and criticism on sensitive issues of Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, human rights, media censorship and the 1989 Tiananmen events.

However, economic progress has supported some measured political reforms like meritocracy in government and party appointments, predictable change of top leadership and retirement.

Olympic-spotlight prompted the easing of media restrictions, electoral and judicial reforms and introduction of the first Human Rights Action Plan 2009/2010. The Games also highlighted certain policy defects and social ills that were being glossed over like ethnic tensions and marginalisation, unbalanced development and income disparities, corruption and environmental disasters which the government appears to have since taken more seriously.

Although the Olympics highlighted Taiwan's unresolved sovereignty issues, Beijing's relations with Washington and Taipei will continue to improve as it seeks to induce the latter using one country two systems to complete the reunification process. China manifests strong resolve for its national interests so that despite intense criticism, its investments in Sudan, Myanmar, Zimbabwe and Iran still went on. However, faced with attempts to unfairly link the Games to genocide, Olympic spotlight tapped into international aspirations and compelled Beijing to prevail over Khartoum to accept UN peacekeepers in Sudan which eased the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

Persistent restiveness in Tibet and Xinjiang indicate that inequitable policies, perceived marginalization and lack of safety nets can generate discontent despite a booming economy. While Beijing's perception of Lhasa riots as a separatist rebellion and Urumqi violence as a mere ethnic conflict shaped its reaction, the more even-handed approach to the latter was partly shaped by lessons from the image-tarnishing handling of Tibet protests. But the Olympic experience also confirmed that outside condemnation of China, rather than engagement, stoked nationalist backlash and fostered unity within government, media, elite and Diaspora. Moreover, Tibet's desired autonomy remains a distant dream due to its large territorial value to China, lucrative tourism and strategic national defence purposes.

The Sichuan earthquake was China's blessing in disguise as it diverted global media attention from Tibet brutality, attracted sympathy for and induced solidarity with China. It was a national disaster whose prudent management turned it into a plausible PD strategy and diminished boycott calls. Whereas the Games were largely a force for the good, they also provided Chinese authorities with an opportunity and excuse to cramp down on dissent and protests, even against genuine causes. But negative as it appeared, government's crackdown on Tibet riots demonstrated its ability to swiftly restore order and secure the Games against any ruinous interruptions.

Major themes of High-tech Olympics, Peoples Olympics and Green Olympics were China's subtle response to persistent criticism of its limited innovation, human rights and environmental concerns. Besides using the largest LED at the grand athletic gathering, Olympic inspiration and pressure propelled China past the US as a global leader in clean energy investments. While China remains the largest greenhouse emitter and needs to extend the campaign well beyond Shanghai Carbon-free Expo, its campaign deserves wider emulation. Mainstreaming environmental protection programs, energy-efficient and green technologies, closing heavily polluting firms, capping emission levels, conserving and expanding green belts are beneficial and sustainable measures.

As with most previous hosts, China used the Olympic event to improve its image, enhance its reputation and promote business and tourism. The \$41 billion pre-Olympic construction blitz created numerous business and job opportunities, and attracted local and international talents in architecture and design leading to celebrated masterpieces epitomised by the Bird's Nest and Terminal 3 of Beijing Capital Airport. Besides being awesome symbols of China's soft power, they greatly contribute to tourism, international travel and trade. Construction of

timely, adequate and impressive Olympic-related infrastructure also enhanced China's modernisation, signalled greater potential for business and contributed to a better reputation and improved national brand.

Heavy-handed evictions with insufficient compensation and labour abuses on some Olympic sites had the potential to tarnish the national image that the Games were meant to enhance. However, some of the aggrieved parties were overcome by government threats, harassment and occasional detentions. The Olympics also provided China with an opportunity to mobilise moral, financial and nationalist support in the preparation for and defence of the Games against boycott. The impact of Chinese Diaspora on host countries, which is gaining prominence in Beijing's PD, was evident in wide protests to support or counter critics of the Beijing Olympics. In the US, Chinese students sued CNN for biased reporting about China.

By strategically locating most Olympic venues around Beijing Universities, China has continued to utilise these facilities after the Games. With the desired and Games-boosted urbanisation, numerous apartments and office blocks are getting tenants while the Bird's Nest, which is yet to find optimal use, has become a popular tourist attraction besides hosting some seasonal events. Beijing Olympics also demonstrated China's commitment to achievement and the will to conform to international standards if they align with its national interest as exemplified by its improved environmental management and protection of Olympic symbols against rampant counterfeiting.

China's Intellectual Property Rights enforcement and protection is negatively impacted by the cultural philosophy of Confucianism and Marxism which exalt collectivism. Besides piracy practices that are complicated for the police to curb, some counterfeiting is vital for the

local economy of the vast and populous developing country struggling for faster industrialisation and greater urbanisation. Although Beijing Olympics provided a window into the oriental culture, strains of globalisation on some cultural elements were evident in the social engineering campaign by the Chinese Ministry of Culture to improve public manners. Despite gradual effect, the effort signified the inevitable blending of Chinese and Western cultures beyond technologies exhibited at the dazzling Olympic ceremonies.

As well as transforming Beijing city, and improving its transport efficiency, preparation for the 2008 Olympics touched off a fast-railway revolution with significant economic, political and cultural impact. Although fewer Chinese companies significantly benefited from Olympic branding, flawless execution of the Beijing Games created a positive perception, and the Olympic experience has generally led to gradual improvement of China's brand index. China's re-branding efforts like "Made in China, Made with the World", acquiring of some reputable foreign brands, global leadership in fast-trains and hosting of the Shanghai Expo 2010 will also positively impact China brand.

Crackdown on protesters and bloggers; internet and surveillance cameras, and controlled movement permits increased government control over public and private affairs. However, realising the futility of effectively controlling information for over 330 million netizens, highlighted by Tibet exposure, the government has stepped-up engagement through publications, websites, blogs and regular media briefings. Much as Beijing tried to optimize Olympic benefits, expanded media outlets in the current volatile global environment made it difficult to control the event and maintain the official story of the Games. Diverse global voices claimed part of the Olympic space to criticise China's politics, policies and human

rights. China lacked a coherent strategy to handle most of the Games-inspired criticism which, unsurprisingly, dampened the effect of the positive outcomes.

The Beijing Olympics signalled a new epoch of China's irreversible opening-up; and reflected contemporary China as a dynamic and progressive country which, despite some dilemmas and contradictions, has a vision for a harmonious society. China relied on its controlled local media to galvanize opinion at home, and on domestic and international media to relay its impressive Olympic events to global audiences. The easing of media restrictions by the 2007 decree, and its subsequent renewal, represent a measured approach to retain control while allowing some media freedom in furtherance of national interests. Dialogue and engagement through which Beijing balanced its control and facilitation of media operations remains a viable channel for the international community to relate and influence China on matters of global concern.

As China's greater integration in the global economy remains a priority, it has and will continue to use its bulging economic might to improve its PD. Its rise offers numerous economic and strategic opportunities for developed and developing countries which diminished the viability of boycotting the Beijing Games and compelled President Sarkozy to reverse his earlier position to skip the event. Whereas the Olympics helped enhance China's relations with Japan and South Korea, they also revealed that Beijing was gaining an upper hand in their rivalry for regional and global influence largely by strengthening its strategic and economic relationship with Washington.

President Bush's decision to defend and attend the Beijing Games was vital not just for the US-China relations but also for diminishing boycott threats and positively influencing

undecided leaders. The global importance of China so highlighted by the largest Olympic convention, and only missed by a few leaders under extreme circumstances, makes it prudent for the world to continuously engage Beijing. As the necessity and reality of new China becomes more apparent, ignorance and fear will give way to more dialogue, stronger partnership and greater cooperation. China relations with US and EU will retain cooperation and contestation partly managed through Strategic and Economic Dialogue, and moderated by Beijing's continuous adjustment of trade and financial policies, and gradual reduction in its trade surplus.

The Games demonstrated that China has already arrived as a global player exerting growing influence through G20 and the UN system. The lavish event also illustrated that power and influence is inevitably shifting to the east from the west. China, Japan and India are already powerful with a potential for greater global influence especially if they enhance cooperation and integration rather than competition and rivalry. While more oriental countries like Malaysia, South Korea and Vietnam are also on the rise, some of their western counterparts are on retreat, a situation recently aggravated by the economic downturn in Greece, Iceland and Ireland. Consequently, China's foreign policy will become increasingly proactive and its influence on the world more profound in the next three decades during which it is projected to overtake the US as the world's largest economy.

Conclusions

The 2008 Beijing Olympics were lavish, spectacular and successful. Under the slogan "One World One Dream" the Games passed as China's successful coming out party, despite intense scrutiny, speculation and setbacks. Broadly, the Olympic event was used to portray China as

a new and modern nation with a glorious past; emerging global leader in economics, technology and environmental issues; and an improving human rights record. Whereas most of the tangible Olympic benefits were immediately apparent, some intangible outcomes like civic pride, national confidence and improved image are less obvious while others would come with time. China relied on domestic and foreign media, cultural shows and symbols, education institutions and student groups, volunteers and Overseas Chinese who especially countered foreign Games' critics and protests. The event also demonstrated China's resolve to achieve its set objectives even if some might be at variance with certain international norms and standards.

It is evident that Chinese leadership realises the need for successful PD as an indispensable instrument in managing its external affairs for sustainable political and economic progress. Beijing used the Olympics to portray itself as a strong, progressive and responsible global player that works for domestic harmony, world peace and better environment; and with considerable potential for greater advancement, despite some national challenges. However, its record on human, media and political freedoms, food safety and environment, global rivalries and controversial ethnic policies variously threatened the Games with potential terrorism, boycott, protests, and tarnished image which the Games were, ironically, sought to improve. Save for setbacks related to the earthquake, pollution and organisational mishaps, most of the foregoing controversies revolved around China's political culture of authoritarian, deception and secrecy.

China's political and economic relations with the world have been greatly impacted by the 1972 Nixon-Kissinger historic visit to Beijing and its 2001 admission into the WTO. Besides international rivalry and competition, concerns about China are generated and fuelled by its

rapid economic growth and insatiable hunger for raw materials, burgeoning military capabilities, unfair trade policies, currency manipulation, alliance with repressive regimes and deteriorating environment. Apart from the foregoing constraints, China's PD also suffers from strict media censorship and human rights violations, limited transparency and accountability, tight bureaucracy and a less open society. As spotlighted by the Olympics, the constant threat of force against Taiwan, marginalization of ethnic minorities in Tibet and Xinjiang, and continued suppression of political dissent and civil liberties discount China's image.

The Games illustrated the world's ambivalence about China; as an opportunity to embrace reflected in the high Olympic attendance, and as a concern to caution through wide criticism, protests and boycott threats. Yet Beijing Consensus remains inspirational to developing countries as a better alternative to the discredited Washington Consensus. China model is bolstered by development and economic aid without obvious strings attached while its remarkable economic success, pragmatism and vibrant culture have a wide appeal. Aware of its soft power assets as well as image problems, Beijing uses the assets to address the image deficit. But how sustainable are the positive Olympic outcomes?

Besides boosting China's national confidence and civic pride, the Olympic success was a gateway to international recognition and acceptance after more than a century of colonial humiliation, self isolation, state-induced disasters and the infamous 1989 Tiananmen incident. Beijing considers One China Policy as being fundamental for national stability and continued progress, hence the decisive, if brutal, crackdown on Tibet rioters perceived to harbour a separatist agenda. The possibility of Taiwan's unilateral declaration of independence and China's statutory provision to forcefully counter it are becoming

increasingly unlikely because of balance of power in favour of China; Taipei's changing attitude towards Beijing; and their deepening socio-economic integration.

China's political reforms, facilitated by economic progress, are gradually being initiated from within the CPC whose top leadership is increasingly meritocratic, resilient and adaptive. However, they are still slow and the country is yet to reconcile free market economics with its vulnerable command politics under the intensifying pressure of globalisation. Notwithstanding China's past humiliations, political repression is neither sustainable nor suitable for building the envisaged harmonious nation. With growing affluence and increasing awareness, Chinese will demand for more rights. It will become increasingly inevitable for the government to make more adjustments in human, media, civil and political freedoms in order to build and maintain national cohesion, stability and good reputation.

In the 168th position out of 175 nations, China's World Press Freedom Index ranking is still weak. While Chinese leadership aspires for greater media freedom for domestic and foreign policy objectives, it remains ambivalent about the media's potential to cause social chaos, undermine the CPC authority and erode government legitimacy. Notwithstanding persistent censorship, Chinese government realises the volatility of the global environment and the futility of effective information control amidst diverse networks and growing millions of netizens. Beijing's interest to build and maintain soft power, reinforced by the renewal of the Games-inspired media-friendly regulations provides a positive prospect for gradually improving media freedom.

Despite incoherent handling of some Olympic-generated criticisms, Chinese leadership is aware that in the current framework of international relations, good media strategies and

partnerships are inevitable for successful implementation of any significant PD initiative. Both domestic and foreign media provided the primary means of publicity, transmitting cultural displays as well as shaping perceptions of the viewers on the event. China struck a balance between control, Olympic commitments and relaying alluring Olympic events which amplified its Olympic glory. Watched by over 4 billion global viewers, the Olympic event served China's PD objectives and was hailed by the world leaders and media as the grandest spectacle, exceptional and memorable, some cynical overtones notwithstanding.

As well as being the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter, China has also become the global leader in clean energy investments worth \$34.6 billion in 2009. Prompted by the Games and sustained by self interest to demonstrate global environmental responsibility, and supported by growing economic capacity, China's environmental programs are sustainable and beneficial albeit gradual and still limited in scope. Although 13 out of 20 worst polluted cities are in China, the Green Olympics campaign was largely successful and deserves wider emulation and replication well beyond Beijing and Shanghai carbon-free Expo.

The Olympics provided an opportunity which China effectively utilised to powerfully and distinguishingly display its fascinating culture, values and ideology, and blended it with western technology in furtherance of opening up and fostering better understanding. After decades of mutual suspicion and self-isolation, China's embracing of the world was also evident in the inclusive 'One World One Dream' slogan; 'open-arm' Olympic Emblem; 'welcome to Beijing' mascots; and 'smiling Beijing' volunteers. A charming culture; with a rich history fascinating attributes, widely admired and abundantly displayed during the Games, remains one of China's most effective PD instruments.

As China's greater economic integration remains a priority, its remarkable rise and Olympic glory were mutually reinforcing and beneficial. Hosting the 2008 Games was a consequence of China's economic success, a showcase of remarkable and diverse achievements, a catalyst for rapid modernisation of Beijing and an improvement of business environment. With the overall economic benefit estimated by the BSB at \$88 billion, and the total cost at \$44 billion largely spent on infrastructure development, the Olympic impact on Beijing economy was notable while its effect on the national economy significantly improved China's image and reputation for greater business and tourism. With a 4.9 trillion GDP and foreign reserves exceeding \$2.4 trillion, China has and will continue to use its growing financial capabilities not only to meet its various national objectives but also to improve its PD.

Despite numerous challenges to Chinese products, China used the Olympic event to improve its brand index through showcasing its diverse accomplishments, management finesse, excellent sportsmanship, global publicity and wide advertising, which taken together, made a good global impression. But in order to overcome the persisting challenges, Beijing needs to increase research and development financing, build high quality brands and improve marketing and trade-marking strategies. Engaging top domestic and foreign talents for greater innovation, enforcing strict health and safety standards, strengthening punitive and deterrent measures, and initiating education programs to strengthen industrial culture would further improve China brands.

Notwithstanding the Olympic signalling for business and tourism, China still maintains some trade restrictions and unconventional practices. But for a populous country with unbalanced development, high unemployment and wide income disparities, cases of labour abuses and accidents in the current workshop of the world are not unexpected. Like Britain during the industrial revolution, sustainable development will gradually empower China to enforce strict

labour laws, improve working conditions and better mitigate effects of natural disasters. As well as stimulating modernisation, giving impetus to opening-up, testing relations with rivals and underlining the inevitable shift of power and influence to the east, the Games signalled greater responsibility for Beijing and the need for more accountability, transparency and consistency in its domestic and foreign policies.

China's foreign relations are negatively impacted by unsettled territorial disputes, support for odious regimes and international rivalry stoked by unresolved domestic 'governance' issues. Besides threatening the Games with boycott and dampening the positive benefits, political repression, human rights violation, ethnic disharmony, strict media censorship and environmental degradation have remained China's major challenges. But a combination of economic might and strong state power, domestic enthusiasm and resolute leadership, global stature and shrewd diplomacy, which were inadvertently bolstered by the earthquake-induced solidarity, and reinforced by organisational prowess and sporting brilliance enabled Beijing to avoid potential Olympic embarrassment.

China staged the largest and the most lavish Games in Olympic history whose success was evident in its spectacular ceremonies; smooth execution; wide media praises and glowing remarks by world leaders whose high turn-up also reflected the event as a political convention. Despite controversies and setbacks, China successfully used the Beijing Olympics as a tool of public diplomacy with a positive impact on its politics, economics and environment. The Games helped China to portray a successful national brand image as an emerging global power with growing political influence, sufficient economic means and considerable potential for greater success, in spite of some problem areas. They also generated national dignity, stimulated development, transformed Beijing and created a better

reputation for business and tourism. But the good impressions ably created by the splendid Olympics will diminish as long as the major issues, which initially threatened the success of the Games, elude resolution.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE 2008 BEIJING OLYMPIC GAMES

Dear Respondent,

I am a student of Master of Arts in Contemporary Diplomacy of the University of Malta and Diplo Foundation. I am undertaking research for purposes of MA Dissertation, on the topic; “The role of the Beijing Olympics in China’s Public Diplomacy”.

I therefore, seek your kind audience to answer the questions below. The information provided will be treated with utmost confidence and for only the purpose stated.

Respondent Particulars

Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

Age

Date

Inquiry Outline

1. Do you think China benefited from hosting the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Cite benefits (if any)

2. What is your view about the calls for Beijing Olympic boycott over Tibet and Darfur?

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3. Were there any security breaches during the Beijing Olympics?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Cite examples (if any)

4. Are there any noticeable features in Beijing that resulted from the 2008 Olympics?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Cite examples (if any)

5. Do you think that Chinese products benefited from the Beijing Olympics?

Yes ☐ No ☐

How?

6. In your view, was pollution in Beijing a threat to the Olympic athletes?

Yes ☐ No ☐

How?

7. Were there any lessons for China to learn from hosting the Games?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Cite lessons (if any)

8. Do you think that other countries have anything to learn from Beijing Games?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Cite lessons (if any)

9. Do you think that China met any challenges in hosting the 2008 Olympics?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Cite challenges (if any)

10. How were the challenges handled?

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