

Hosting:

The Choice of Authoritarian States

to Bid for the Olympic Games &

the Impact on Their Governments

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Introduction

This honors thesis examines the possible motivations for and effects of authoritarian governments bidding for and hosting the Olympic Games. A premise of my research was that governments that adhere to crude force may have different advantages in bidding and different reasons to host the Games than non-authoritarian governments and thus hosting the Games may have different effects upon their people and their governments. In examining three authoritarian governments' bids: Nazi Germany; China and Russia for the 1936, 2008 and 2014 Games, I will also assess what it is about the International Olympic Committee's selection criteria that may inadvertently reward authoritarian regimes' with the right to host the Olympic Games.

I chose the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, and the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games because each of these Olympics bids (submitted years in advance of hosting the particular Games) was by a definitively authoritarian government at a pivotal time in its history. Also, in looking at each of these case studies, it might not have been immediately obvious to contemporaneous observers both why it would be beneficial to that specific authoritarian government to open up its nation to international scrutiny, nor why, once having won its bid, the government would prioritize the lavish spending necessary to host the Games.

My research is especially relevant and timely given the escalation of international attention on the competitive bidding process for global sporting events, including the Olympics, World Cup and other international athletic

tournaments, and the appropriateness of selecting a host with questionable domestic economic and social policies. At first glance, although it may seem unwarranted to attach great significance to the host selection decision, I will argue that, intended or not, the award of host bids to authoritarian governments may have the effect of enabling these governments to take certain measures in the name of infrastructure or security measures and possibly to build national support for the regime premised upon the legitimacy conferred by the international community which has awarded it the right to host. With questionable and often deplorable practices employed in an increasing number of the non-democratic nations which host mass spectacle events such as the Olympics and the World Cup, international selection committees should understand the impact of their choices transcend merely choosing the sites for athletic competitions.

The Sochi 2014 Olympic Games is studied more in depth than the other two cases. It was chosen to be the focus of this research because Russia's bid and hosting seems in retrospect to have represented a pivotal point in Russian domestic and foreign policy. Additionally, while every Olympics has been analyzed to some extent, there has been and continues to be a wealth of coverage of each aspect of the Sochi Games from bidding through aftermath, and the controversy it has stirred within the international community has provoked serious debate about the selection of host nations and of the impact of awarding Olympics to this type of government.

In my attempt to understand the host nations' motivations and the IOC's selection criteria for the Berlin 1936, Beijing 2008, and the Sochi 2014 bids, I traveled to Lausanne Switzerland to consult the archival resources housed at the IOC Headquarters. Accessing first-hand accounts of IOC deliberations over the bids for these games was imperative for analysis of the language used to discuss the key policy decisions and IOC sentiments during the periods in question. While letters and notes surrounding the awarding of the 1936 Olympics to Germany were readily available, similar documents pertaining to the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2014 Sochi Olympics unfortunately were under seal for at least a minimum of 15 more years, as per the terms of confidentiality agreements between the IOC and China and Russia.

Additionally, I reviewed contemporaneous accounts addressing hosting of the Olympics in each of the three case studies and compared those accounts with the host nation's official statements. To draw conclusions as to the Games' economic and social impacts, I did comparative analysis of the economic and political stability and situation of each host country at the time of its bid and directly following its hosting of the Games to evaluate any effect hosting might be fairly judged to have had on its host nation, in terms of cost/benefits involved and related actions by the governments, including resettlement and repression of certain segments of its population.

My hypotheses for my research were that authoritarian regimes choose to bid and host the Olympic for non-economic reasons, including to consolidate power, quash dissent and distract attention from other domestic or international issues

by stimulating nationalist sentiment and to use the international community's tacit acceptance of them as legitimate and important state actors to stabilize their positions. Finally, in my research, I found support for the theory that over time, the IOC requirements to be selected to host have become so expensive and dependent upon effective centralized control of infrastructure improvements and creation of unique venues that its selection criteria inadvertently favor strong, authoritarian forms of government over more democratic participatory forms.

History of the Games: Literature Review

The literature surrounding the topic of sports is vast, but when one narrows the search to the impact of the Olympic Games and then further to Games hosted by authoritarian regimes a number of clear voices emerge with decisive opinions as to why those particular countries have such a marked obsession with hosting the Games. One common view in the literature is that a driving rationale for authoritarian governments to host the Olympics is the opportunity to make use of the 'cult of sport' and the high visibility of the Games as a mass spectacle.

Scholars suggest that the Olympics are a tool used by authoritarian regimes to further their ultimate long-term political and social goals. Les Carpenter of *The Guardian*, Michael Novak -- a career diplomat and philosopher, and Natalie Koch of Syracuse University offer academic and carefully weighed analyses of mass spectacles. They view the Olympics as offering not only a show of athleticism and national pride, but also as a venue for nations to make international political statements. Carpenter points to a shift in the candidates that now submit bids to

host Olympics from what formerly was a broad cross-section of types of governments and states to only those who are willing to “spend any amount to run a Games hoping to make an international political statement”. He further observes that these bids are being made largely by nations that are above domestic reproach, do not have to be fiscally responsible, and therefore can write “checks in the name of national pride”.¹ Novak writes to a similar effect when he characterizes sports as “a medium in which to portray redemption over adversity and failure and a medium for sublimating existential dilemmas on to sporting teams, Games and players”.² Koch takes this a step further by linking nations’ performances to the creation of “geopolitical ‘primacy’ narratives” and the opportunity to “broadcast” themselves to the world through the internationally recognized tendency for these high visibility events to “put a place ‘on the map’”.³ Koch’s example of the Cold War mentality towards the winning nations’ type of governance as representing either a boost to or a check on progress for either capitalism or communism is not unrelated to today’s broader debate over the pros and cons of such forms of governance.

The literature and discussion regarding the hosting of the Olympic Games centers on the Games’ ability to legitimize governments and nations’ practices, as being selected to host the Games suggests an implicit acceptance if not approval of those practices by the International Olympic Committee. Cam Cole’s work at the *National Post* has traced the transition from awarding Games to host cities deemed to be “reasonable site[s]” (at least by Western standards of fiscal responsibility), to awarding Olympics to what he considers “deplorable authoritarian regimes”. Cole argues that awarding of the right to host “bestow[s]

legitimacy” on fiscally irresponsible governments as measured by their willingness to divert funds from “their struggling economies to fund the magnificent playpens the IOC requires”, specifically citing China and Russia.⁴ While Cole’s work focuses on their goal of attainment of legitimacy by fiscally irresponsible governments, Ryan McMaken’s journalistic inquiries focus on how, since the 1936 Berlin Games, the Olympics have been a venue for “grandiose spectacle” at which governments have been able to benefit diplomatically while showing off the “wealth and influence of national government”.⁵ McMaken focuses on the wealth a country must have in order to be able to afford the associated price tag of the Games, and therefore the image hosting the Games broadcasts to the international community as to both the health of the host nation and to its priorities for national spending. McMaken also argues that the money generated by the Olympics is directed to the elite elements of the host nation and thus provides a vehicle for the elites to celebrate and enrich their personal successes and positions with few constraints.

The mass spectacle created by the Olympics can also provide a platform for a large-scale clash of cultures similar to that revealed during diplomatic interactions between nations. John Alt’s work on sport and cultural reification draws a direct parallel between athletics and national identity, attributing the ability of these events to draw out “dramatization of cultural values and norms”.⁶ Michael Novak similarly attributes culturally revealing qualities to the Games, citing sport as a form of “civil religion” by which countries portray their “redemption over adversity and failure” by placing weight on their success within the Games and therefore gaining standing internationally.⁷ Alt cites

Joseph Epstein, a fellow liberal writer, who views sport as a “successful ritual”, and attributes its true value for its participants and spectators being its “symbolic representation of their life”.

While the international community’s conferral of legitimacy is important to the governments of host nations, it would be impossible for those nations to present true legitimacy without the enthusiastic support of their own populace. Julia Hart’s research is supportive of the vital role of the supportive “home crowd” in presenting a mass spectacle that legitimizes the host government. Indeed, given the worldwide following of Olympic Games, it is easy to draw the conclusion that this highly visible demonstration of domestic support is one of the strongest motivating factors for an authoritarian government to host the Games. Hart postulates that mass spectacles such as these “matches are precisely this extension of the public square, in which mass meetings of citizens (supporter) physically come together to ecstatically worship the nation (the team) in a popular forum (the arena)”.⁸ Therefore, if the domestic fans are broadcast to the international community as supportive of their nation and competitors – as they almost always are – the Games present a picture of domestic support not unlike more traditional marches or rallies. Hart cites Joseph Roach in connecting the visibility of public support at sporting events to nationalist pageantry towards the “service of the ritual continuity of the body politic”.⁹

Finally, when a nation is in the international spotlight, it also has a medium to present its vision of the ideal citizen—the core values of its regime. Alt notes that host nations, and particularly authoritarian regimes, seek to present

performance at sporting events as reflective of the standards and social performances of their nation. Thus, Alt argues, the themes of “cooperation and fair play in competitive or social unequal situations” found in sports lend themselves to an introspective look at a nation’s teachings towards “duty and service, as against self-interest and egotistic needs”.

Alt further argues that affixing these characteristics to sporting events allows the international community to judge “the moral intersubjectivity of a group’s culture”: if the country wins medals, it must reflect inherent strength of its culture. Therefore, when authoritarian governments have success at major international sporting events they also are able to make strong international statements as to the virtues of their cultures and political systems.

While the benefits of athletic successes bolster authoritarian governments’ standing in the international community, Peter Konecny points to mass sporting events as also providing the venue through which governments such as the Soviet Union (now Russia) have promoted domestically the essentialness of “a strong body” and their citizens’ achievement of a “healthy social attitude”.¹⁰ While this is a somewhat different approach than Alt’s, Konecny comes to the same conclusion: authoritarian governments have long drawn an important connection between the triumph of athletic prowess of their populace celebrated during these mass spectacles and the maintenance of social stability.

The cost/benefit analysis of hosting the Olympic Games with their notoriously expensive price tags, threats of boycotts, and international scrutiny are of great

interest to those who want to understand the motivations of authoritarian nations to host the Games. Cam Cole at the *National Post* identified the cost of constructing the required infrastructure as being the principal economic cost for the host nation, dwarfing any benefits derived from sponsorship packages offered by the IOC¹¹. Cole states that, despite this clear economic net deficit, authoritarian governments disregard costs altogether and selfishly host the Games based on their desire for a legacy. In contrast, Max Delany and Kevin O’Flynn of *The New York Times* and the *Moscow Times*, respectively, point to the high standards for “roads, electricity and airports” required by the IOC of host nations providing welcome incentives for improvements in infrastructure for nations otherwise lacking these necessities.¹² Taking a middle position on the cost/benefit analysis, Georgios Kavetsos and Stefan Szymanski of the *Journal of Economic Psychology* argue that, while there is a high opportunity cost to spending public funds that otherwise could be better distributed to more appropriate purposes, such as hospitals, schools and increasing productivity, there is some support to view Olympic spending as economically justified as “hosting events should in any case be based on the argument that it will produce a net increase in welfare”.¹³ Based on Kavetsos and Szymanski’s argument, then, one could conclude that spending on Olympic Games by authoritarian governments in order to solidify national support and consolidation of power is consistent with promoting the welfare of their populations.

Authoritarian governments also face the threat of boycotts, as the Olympics provide a unique platform to make political statements protesting the legitimacy or policies of host governments. Despite the threatened boycotts of Berlin in

1936, Beijing in 2008, and Sochi in 2014, the vast majority of nations now agree that boycotts are an unfair and ineffective tool for promoting or protesting political positions or other agendas. Katrina vanden Heuvel of *The Nation* strongly advocates always attending the Olympics and heralds them as an opportunity to take advantage of the “unprecedented platform for activism (they) provide,” despite the restrictions on protests and outside influence particular nations might enforce.¹⁴ Sergei Guriev of *The New York Times* agrees, as he maintains, “participating in the Olympics may be more effective in spreading Olympic values than boycotting,” and sees boycotting as “indiscriminate sanctions that punish hundreds of millions of innocent people”.¹⁵ Nicholas Sarantakes, also of *The New York Times*, argues that, because host nations face the threat of boycotts, they in turn put on better shows for the international community.¹⁶

Boycotts operate on the assumption that repugnant policies of a host nation can be influenced by public pressure to alter these offensive policies or practices. Even the threats of boycotts have been largely ineffective in changing these governments’ policies and their incentives for hosting. Given that bids and the planning to host the Olympics occur many years before the actual event, the threat of boycotts does not influence the regime’s decision to bid and, upon award of the Games, the host nation’s questionably offensive policies have been implicitly sanctioned or ignored by the IOC. Subsequent threats of boycott to protest the host government’s positions may cause negative international and local reaction without any apparent effect on the authoritarian host nation.

In considering the reasons a country would submit itself to the intense international scrutiny that accompanies hosting the Olympics and commit to massive expenditure of funds that would normally be available for other state purposes, one must also consider the undeniable propaganda opportunities presented by the combination of high visibility, strict regulations on the flow of information, and the ability of host nations to influence global impressions through the platform of the Olympics. The issue here is how host nations make use both domestically and internationally of this unique window of public focus.

Natalie Koch specifies that the Olympics and other sporting events are used by “soft power regimes”, i.e. those that are more rational and rely less on naked coercion to solidify their governance goals. She does state that authoritarian governments can shift from soft power to hard power throughout their terms, relying from time to time more on naked coercion or force, which she classifies as ‘hard power regimes’. Given the ability of a host country during the Olympics to retake control of its media, a practice that it might have had to curtail during the bidding process, Koch details that a host nation “does not seek a monopoly on information flows, but manages them effectively” in order to achieve their political and social agendas, both domestically and internationally. It is important to note here that Koch specifies “soft power” authoritarian regimes, which have a less violent nature and promote progress and “regime-articulated values” through the medium that the Olympics coverage affords them.¹⁷

David Satter of the Hudson Institute agrees that the attention given to a host’s rhetoric in connection with Olympic Games tends to increase support for that

government domestically due to the reinforcing impact of having even more national attention on the government rhetoric, but he sees the true value of the Olympics to be the acceptance of autocracies as legitimate actors in the international community.

In establishing requirements for host bids, the IOC puts conditions on infrastructure changes it deems necessary to award hosting, but sets no such standards for governance. Thus, the IOC's bid evaluation does not normally involve considerations as to the legitimacy of the host nation's government or whether the host's government is sufficiently "normal".¹⁸ While Satter argues that the bidding platform does allow the international community to debate the "normalcy" of a bidder's government, Guriev argues that being awarded the Olympics in fact allows the successful bidders to claim legitimacy and ascribe any criticism to jealousy, thereby further entrench(ing) positive domestic views as to the state's governance.¹⁹

The cost/benefit analyses of economic and social returns on hosting Olympic Games are of particular interest to authoritarian regimes. The consensus is that hosting does not provide widespread economic benefit to the host nation's economy, but rather benefits targeted areas for either investment or stimulus. For Germany it is clear that preparations for hosting the 1936 Berlin Olympics promoted civil employment, which may not have resulted in long-term economic gains but certainly provided a lift towards greater economic engagement in the wake of the hardships following the First World War and subsequent financial

crash of 1929. This is in line with Kavetsos's theory mentioned above regarding increased national "well-being" rather than tangible economic benefit.

In his work on Global Communications, McPhail contends that companies that previously were unsure about investing in or venturing into markets characterized by weak rule of law or unattractive authoritarian governments are emboldened by the awarding of the Olympics and therefore may choose to engage in specific markets within the host nation.²⁰ Correspondingly, Sands of the *China Business Review* sees hosting the Olympics as in a state's best economic interests. He notes that, for China, the 2008 Beijing Olympics were "an event that showcase (d) China's maturation into a great economic power...an opportunity for China to show the world how 'democratic, open, civilized, friendly, and harmonious.' it is".²¹ So while these views do not dispute the lack of direct economic benefit of the Olympics, they do support the contention that hosting the Olympics can be beneficial to the host nation's economy insofar as changing potential investors' perceptions and thus encourage willingness to invest, creating subsequent economic growth without the government having to make major concessions in, or reforming, fundamental policies.

Between bestowing legitimacy and creating more positive goodwill toward the host nation, international opinion toward the host nation improves, thus generating greater trust and more open relations with attendant economic and social benefits accruing from the time it is awarded the Games. Additionally, authoritarian governments may use their host status to openly challenge prevailing international reproach and opposing states during their time in the

international limelight. Host status provides opportunities for authoritarian governments to move from a taboo status towards international recognition, respect, and increased influence in international issues, despite previous or ongoing domestic repression or international aggression.

Koch explores the connection between the solidifying of “nationalist boards...through the language of international competition on the athletic field” and the altering of previously existing “hierarchy” and opinions about the host nation. Koch attributes the “fixation with a state’s place in the hierarchy of states” to be particular to authoritarian regimes.²² Therefore, it makes sense that these governments would bid for Olympics in order to have this opportunity to improve their current standing within the international community.

Garofalo of *U.S. News* points to three examples of authoritarian governments that have used the Olympics as their opportunity to re-emerge onto the world stage as major players: Berlin in 1936, China in 2008, and Sochi in 2014. These governments had different conditions for the need to reposition themselves in the international hierarchy of states: Berlin was reemerging after the financial yoke of the First World War reparations, 1929 financial crash and ensuing Depression and wanted to promote itself as a resurgent nation in addition to broadcasting the vision of the National Socialist regime; China wanted to put itself on the map as a big power player among the developed industrial nations; and Russia wanted to present itself as resurrected from the ashes of the Soviet Union as an impressive regime with a long-term strategy of reasserting its international influence under the direction of Putin.²³ Consequently, because

these times were so pivotal to the future of these specific authoritarian regimes, it can be assumed that each government's calculation of the benefits and costs of hosting the Olympics concluded that the Games posed an exceptional opportunity to alter perceptions of their status within the international hierarchy and would fundamentally enhance domestic support for their political agenda and controversial measures.

While there is much literature on sports and the use of the platform of the Olympics as a beneficial mechanism for authoritarian governments, there is also much room for analysis as to why the Sochi Olympics were particularly important to the Russian government given its policies towards ethnic and land disputes, LGBT rights, and consolidation of its power hierarchy. I will look, therefore, at how the Russian government used the 2014 Sochi Games to further these goals, with smaller comparative case studies of the 1936 Berlin Games and the 2008 Beijing Games.

Authoritarian governments chosen as hosts

Many question why authoritarian governments are still awarded the bids for hosting Olympic Games. There is no consensus on the International Olympic Committee's rationale and much criticism of its awarding Games to authoritarian nations and of the IOC's evaluative process. Scholars, such as Professor Robert Orting of George Washington University, argue that the IOC favors nations that have "the ability to spend money without any kind of oversight" and this drives bidding and awarding of Games.²⁴ This allows arguably 'successful' Olympics to be carried out, which is the IOC's objective. Recent examples are the record-

setting cost associated with hosting the 2008 Beijing Olympics soon shattered by the astronomical price of \$51 billion reported for the Sochi Games. Critics of the IOC argue that, while the IOC specifically eschews political considerations as relevant in its selection of hosts, that link is specifically the reason why the authoritarian nations bid for the Games and, with little or no effective domestic oversight, they are able to use the Games for political advantage. The debate continues on between those who argue the IOC's awarding of the Games reinforces authoritarian regimes and the IOC, which defends awarding Games to these regimes by stating that there is no room for politics in sports.

Sochi Olympics: Literature Review

Given the controversial nature of Russian domestic policies, there has been substantial interest in understanding the Russian bid for the 2014 Sochi Olympics. Academics have broadly examined the Sochi Games for its immediate implications in terms of short-term increased cooperation with the West, domestic policy changes, and prominent Russians involved in the bidding process and the preparation for the Games. Observers also were fascinated with how hosting the Games might affect Russia's internal power structure, given the economic impact of hosting the Games and the consequential restructuring of interest groups domestically. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and Russia's reemergence in the early 2000's, bidding for the Olympics were a bold move considering the fragile nature of Russia's economy and political situation. Scholars therefore have a particular interest in analyzing Russia's motives and the Games' lasting impact on the country's future.

Motivations

White and Sonne of *The Wall Street Journal* propose that the IOC's 2007 award of the 2014 Olympics to Russia can be attributed to the "charm offensive" put on by President Putin, including his impressive use of English and French, during speeches in front of the International Olympic Committee.²⁵ This "charm offensive" was followed up, however, by two years of significant policy changes that negated much of the positive attitude and goodwill accompanying the IOC's awarding of the Games to the usually controversial nation.

In light of this apparent change in Putin's appeasement of the international community, White and Sonne point to Vladimir Yakunin (an ally of the Russian President and a significant voice in Russia as the President of Russian Railways), who saw the importance of the Olympics as a "litmus test" of attitudes towards Russia. The Olympics, however, did not achieve a long-lasting improvement in international perception that Putin and Yakunin desired; there was discussion of whether there were sufficient similarities between the Western leaders' boycott of the 1980 Moscow Games and the conditions extant in the years leading up to the Sochi Games to justify an Olympic boycott. While this negative shift in international opinion did not prompt the IOC to concede its awarding Russia the Sochi Games was a mistake, it did prompt a clarification by the IOC that the award did not represent an endorsement of the Russian President's policies.

In *The Wall Street Journal*, Sonne cites Anita DeFrantz, who is both on the IOC executive board and a United States Congresswoman, as having made a good

point about increased visibility of Russian policies that would otherwise have been ignored had it not been awarded the Olympics. Her takeaway: “The lesson is: Whatever you are doing, the world will know about it if you are hosting the Games. So do good”. DeFrantz’s simple statement is an excellent articulation of pitfalls from the scrutiny accompanying a bid to host the Olympics when the bidder engages in questionable governance.

Russia’s Bouncing from the “Bad 1990s” Back to Center Stage

There is an extensive body of literature that argues that a significant motivating factor behind the Russian bid for the 2014 Olympics was an attempt to reintroduce Russia to the international community as a world power after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990’s and to re-establish itself as a world power back in ‘the mix’ with other dominant nations and economies. Many argue that this was the only motivation for Russia’s actions. Agreeing to open up its otherwise tightly controlled society to international scrutiny and to accede to a number of demands of the international community (conditions and pleas that would otherwise would not have been entertained) in order to win the 2014 Games are both actions otherwise very difficult to explain.

Jeré Longman of *The New York Times* contrasts the exalted place of sports in Soviet Russia and how its focus on sports programs commanded much Soviet wealth and attention and the decline of sports following the demise of the Soviet Union, with the increased spending and attention again on sports once Putin’s government stabilized and increased control.²⁶ Maxim Trankov, the great Russian skater, commented on the “river of money in the sport” sponsored in

Soviet times and that similar spending had reappeared since the 2010 Vancouver Olympics (on which Russia apparently spent very little), commenting that the money returned before the Sochi Olympics, with renewed focus on sports and improved optimism. This rebirth of sport in preparation for the Sochi Olympics was a validation of the messages and goals instilled in young Russians and fulfillment of the national image that many had not thought possible since the collapse of the Soviet Union. As Trankov expressed, the “Olympic Games in Sochi is not only big pressure for Russian athletes, it’s a big dream and a big happiness”. Preparation for the Sochi Games brought back exaltation of sport as populist validation so crucial during Soviet times, vaulting athletes to honors similar to military serving in the army; indeed, soldiers and athletes were supported equally in Soviet times and triumphant athletes feted with similar honors to victorious soldiers.

The significance of the timing of the Sochi Olympics was highlighted by U.S. News writer Pat Garofalo, who pointed to the fact that Sochi Games were the first held in Russia in the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union.²⁷ Garofalo called the Olympics the “coming out party for Russia”, citing the director of the Kennan Institute at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Matthew Rojansky, who postulated that this was only possible because “Putin's the first Russian leader in decades who's been able to restore the ability of the Russian Federation to deliver on these big infrastructure development projects that the czars had, [and] that the Soviet leaders had”. Rojansky went on to connect Putin’s ability to orchestrate big infrastructure projects to the power he wielded and success of the system as attributed singularly to him.

However, Garofalo contrasts Rojansky's argument that Putin's goal was restoration of former Soviet glory and ability to mobilize on large projects with the ideas of Anton Fedyashin, an assistant professor at American University and the executive director of the Initiative for Russian Culture, who argues that the Olympics were actually just a piece of a larger strategic plan by Putin to internationalize Russia over the span of 12 to 13 years.

Graham Allison of *The National Interest*, highlights the editor of the *New Republic*, Julia Joffe, who argues that the criticism and skepticism voiced in the Western press coverage in preparation for the Sochi Olympics in fact had the opposite effect of its intention.²⁸ Joffe coins this negativity to be "Russophobic" and suggests that the wave of negativity and bullying in the press in fact "bolster[ed] Russian people's support for a government that stands up for Russia" and created such low expectations for the Games themselves that if Games occur, they appear successful and strengthen the Russian spirit. This point is especially crucial because it emphasizes the distracting nature that ad hominin attacks of the international press criticizing an unpopular regime have by shifting internal focus away from specific national problems and rights violations of the government.

A second very poignant message conveyed during the opening ceremony at the Sochi Olympics, notes Allison, was its emphasis on Russian cultural and athletic achievements spanning from before Peter the Great to the present day, suggesting no discontinuity in Russia's greatness. Allison claims that this

presented the image of Russia re-emerging both in international prestige as a world power and as a desirable contemporary destination. Allison postulates that Sochi's attendant infrastructure investment, which Joffe argues is in the image of previous regimes, was a unique effort to diversify its economy for a new era of Russia. Ostensibly its Olympics bid was an opportunity to break from the mold of previous Russian regimes' relationships with the Western world.

Putin's Personal Stake

There is a common argument among academics that Putin leveraged the Sochi Olympics as a platform upon which he could re-establish his worthiness both as a leader and as a man. Given the place of sports in the Soviet mentality, he wished to prove himself as the embodiment of the "ideal soviet man".

Reuters writers, Timothy Heritage and Maxim Shemetov, identify Putin's unexpected personal involvement in the bidding and final push towards securing the bid as unusual and indicative of a grander plan for Russia and his personal legacy.²⁹ They point to his willingness to address the International Olympic Committee in Guatemala in 2007 in both French and English, languages he had never used previously in such a public capacity, rather than having a translator or just speaking in English. The rarity of a Russian leader putting himself at the disadvantage by speaking the "IOC's language" was monumental in shifting a negative perception of Putin to one possibly willing to work cooperatively with the West.

While Heritage and Shemetov's article argues that Putin's intent was to distance

himself from the Soviet era legacy of Russia in bidding for the 2014 Games, Putin did assume a position often associated with leaders of the Soviet era, with the Russian organizing officials calling him the team “captain”. While initially this would seem to hark back to a time of a more hands-off approach to oversight of the myriad of details associated with hosting the Games, the Reuters article instead suggests that this foreshadowed Putin assuming a very “hands on” role in planning for the Games by actively pursuing bidders for completing needed contracts and, by submitting the bid for Sochi, putting in place his plan for securing the Caucasus region. Thus, Putin saw Sochi as critical to the success of his government, seeing the Games in the broader context of what it meant to his power and legacy in securing the economy and the Caucasus.

Heritage and Shemetov argue that the prominent position Putin took in representing Russia to the international community in Russia’s Olympic bid can be interpreted as his attempt to shift away from the reputation of the “evil” Soviet Empire of President Reagan’s time. They argue that Putin made a calculated evaluation of the impact hosting the Games could have, both on the international opinion of Russia and of him as a ruler, with the take-away being that, once having won the bid, failure to host successful games in Sochi would have represented a possible personal blow to his image of “invulnerability” from the perspectives of both his supporters and his opponents.

The magnitude of this risk could be contextualized in light of Putin’s prospective re-election in 2018. First, it preemptively addressed questions as to Russia’s competitiveness with the West, assessing it against modern capabilities.³⁰

Second, successful Games would quash domestic protest, conveying that there was no opportunity to topple a regime that had just proved itself to be capable of a massive scale successful production. Finally, successful Sochi Games would embellish Putin's stature as a leader in the international community.

Graham Allison frames Putin's desire to host the Games and measures enacted in preparation for the Sochi as a "doubling down" towards consolidation of his personal control domestically rather than expressing concern as to his nation's status internationally.³¹ Putin put himself at the forefront of the bid and preparations rather than designating a head of the Olympic delegation or a fall-man should the Games have been judged a failure. Allison agrees with the school of thought that the true root of Russian power is in its leaders maintaining local power and control; while Putin's initial interest may have been for Russia to realize "its greatness" again after the 1990's, after the 2011 parliamentary elections and the subsequent unrest, it was necessary for Putin to re-establish his unquestionable leadership position internally and prove that "Yes, Russia can" under him to prevent challenges to his power. While the press and internal opposition may have flirted with some notion of Russia moving towards democracy, Putin instead took this opportunity instead to concentrate power in his regime. Focused upon re-solidifying his "vertical power" structure, he moved to mobilize the oligarchs in control of the majority of the economy³² to rally behind him in support. What Allison noted was that Putin used the grant of lucrative contracts associated with the Sochi Olympics as an opportunity to stifle dissent and solidify the support of the business elite by awarding them the economic spoils of the Sochi bid, thus demonstrating mutual benefit from

cooperation.

Allison does question Putin's decision to gamble his personal reputation on hosting successful Olympic Games in Sochi, a politically volatile region, once the international community's attention was focused on Russia's bid. Viewing that site choice within the context of other controversial internal issues: Russia's role in the Syrian civil war, disputes over the Snowden case, and Russia's involvement in Ukraine, Sochi seems to have been a deliberate decision to revive faith in Putin's leadership, quell threats posed in the Caucasus region and put to bed nascent internal political opposition if the Sochi Olympics went well.

Mariam Cosic of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation hypothesizes that there is a direct relationship between the resurgence of the Russian Orthodox Church in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet regime and the introduction of anti-gay propaganda laws that were covered extensively in the media in the run up to and during the Sochi Games.³³ She suggests that these new laws actually stem from positions taken by the then current patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Kirill I, and his strong endorsement of Putin's leadership. While introduction of these laws were loudly condemned internationally, they represented a strong signal within Russia of a shift towards more traditional ideas and values and Putin's targeted approach at cementing his image as an "iconic image of Christian manhood" as well as gaining an important ally in the Church. This law permitted Putin to both re-establish a strong base of support with traditional Russians and, at the same time, to show that despite threatening an entire class of the population, the international community could not

successfully pressure the Russian government to back away from these repressive measures.

In the weeks leading up to the Olympics, Putin spoke a number of times explaining and defending the new law on homosexual propaganda. Journalist Shaun Walker of *The Guardian*, covered Putin's speech at Sochi to volunteers adamantly justifying his stance on the new regulation regardless of the backlash.³⁴ Arguing that the Russians were right to defend their traditions and culture, Putin suggested that to back down would have Russia "follow[ing] along like obedient lapdogs, towards whatever consequences await". By so doing, Putin shifted the focus from the repression of this discriminatory law to repositioning himself as a defender of Russia's traditional culture and religious morality from international pressures.

The Site: Making a Stand in the Heart of Terror-Ridden Region

Others argue that Russia's aggressive bid for the Sochi Olympics was motivated by the Russian government's desire to re-enforce government control in the Caucasus, a terror-ridden and territorially disputed region.

It is a clear priority of Putin's regime to reclaim and defend territories previously part of the mighty Soviet Union. His strong language, noted as similar to "the crude language of a street fighter", when discussing his military focus on securing breakaway regions such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia can be explain the 2014 Olympics bid for Sochi as similar prioritization of securing the Caucasus region.³⁵ Russia's main concern in the Caucasus was the strength of the Chechen

rebels who claim the area, and the threat this claim posed to preparation for hosting the Olympics. Putin sought not just to counter the Chechen threat of disrupting the 2014 Games, but went so far as to vow to wipe out the Chechen rebels, “even in the toilet”. This threat was not baseless, as Putin proved he was willing to lead heavy fighting, as he had in the Northern Caucasus region in 1999-2000 and in Georgia in 2008. It did not go unnoticed that the 2014 Sochi Games coincided with the 150th anniversary of Russia’s military campaign that killed 300,000 Circassians in the Sochi region and, while this event is not officially recognized by the Russian state, it is considered a massacre by historians.³⁶ Putin’s willingness to defend Russia’s claim to this region and his aggressive reclaiming of other regions (especially those with Pro-Western governments) is a clear departure from prior appeasement of Western powers and represented a leap into a new era of Russia’s defense of sovereignty.

Because of the very real threat that hosting the Olympics in Sochi could spark serious violence in the region, many argue that Putin’s true aim was to bring the area into submission and that his ultimate “gamble” was whether or not Russia’s security could control the region against the Chechen rebels and other terrorist groups. It is clear that in siting the Games in Sochi, the international community acceded to Putin’s claim over this disputed territory and emboldened the Russian leader towards larger reaches.³⁷ If the bid had failed, or if there had been terrorist incidents in the Games’ preparation or during the Games, Putin would have appeared to have lost control of the region and missed an opportunity to demonstrate his power to secure Russia’s safety from domestic terrorism.

One of the serious threats facing Putin's maintenance of security was the emergence of "black widow" bombers, a group of previously secular Chechen women who launched a "Saudi-style Islamic fundamental(ist)" campaign against Russian targets in the attempt to hurt both the Russia military and to embarrass President Putin, who had come to power with victory over the Chechen independent state.³⁸ If the "black widow" bombers were allowed to conduct terrorism under Putin's leadership, he would have lost what represented his real opportunity to revive his nation's international respect and standing.³⁹ However with Putin's ability to incur unlimited spending for security against terrorist groups with little accountability, the successful Sochi Games allowed Putin to bringing the Chechen region under authoritarian control, under cover of securing the Games in a manner unlike what any democratic nation would have been able to do and achieve international acceptance, even if it were tacit, for these measures.

The Russian government's determination to reclaim territory in the Caucasus region required overcoming other, non-politically rooted challenges. The site for the Sochi Olympics was disputed not only for sovereignty, but also because of the threat posed by the inevitable environmental despoliation accompanying creation of new venues and transportation infrastructure. The specific geographic area proposed by the Russian bid for the 2014 Games included a national park, rivers, nature reserves, and rare species of trees. Environmentalist groups argued that the site, which had been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, would be irreversibly damaged through pollution and development.⁴⁰ Clearly one lasting legacy of Sochi was the outward rejection of both domestic

and international environmentalist claims to the region which the Russian government saw as threatening or destabilizing influences. Damage to the Sochi region in terms of internal relations with residents and to the environment were, in the end, collateral damage the government was gladly willing to incur or absorb in exchange for the possibility of creating more jobs and promised prosperity from the resulting tourism during and following the Games.⁴¹

Comparisons

Of the published pieces discussing Russia's possible motives and the IOC deliberations surrounding the 2014 Olympics, and the effect of the Games on Russia and the Caucasus region, many make direct comparisons to other authoritarian governments that have hosted past Olympics. Some argue that Russia was not alone in seizing the platform offered by hosting the Olympics in Sochi to preserve domestic order, enhance international prestige or quell nascent political challenges. That being said, some like Fyodor Lukyanov, a Russian political analyst, believe that while similar motivations were behind the Chinese bid to host the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, none of the targeted policies achieved the intended benefits.⁴² However Claire Bigg argues that the Olympics provide a certain amount of cover for authoritarian governments to enact measures to forestall political change given the "clash of priorities between governments and interest groups", with Western nations less able to influence political and social movements in host countries than they might have under other circumstances.

The famous British actor, Stephen Fry, drew a direct comparison between the anti-gay policies enacted just prior to the Sochi Games and the laws persecuting Jews prior to the Berlin Games of 1936.⁴³ While the Kremlin argued that its anti-gay laws were aimed at protecting children from predators and exposure to deviant materials, Western commentators argued that these laws were just another example of Putin testing his strength to enact “backward” policies and rout out a dissident faction.

Similar to the German government prior to the 1936 Berlin Games, the Kremlin strongly opposed all foreign coverage of exclusionary policies enacted in preparation for the Sochi Games. Russian officials argued that it was “part of a deliberate Western campaign to sully Russia’s return to international prominence”.⁴⁴ This echoes the Nazi German government’s response to international objections to Germany’s domestic laws against Jews, LGBT and other minorities prior to the 1936 Berlin Games. Likewise, China’s oppressive measures in Tibet just prior to the 2008 Beijing Games, as well as its treatment of foreigners and repression of attempts at free speech ignored international outcry, by claiming this criticism reflected the West’s jealousy of China’s return to the international scene as a powerful player and lack of regard for its traditions and cultural heritage.

Signifying Shift in Ideology

Some argue that the Russian bid for the 2014 Sochi indicated a shift of the Russian government and leadership’s ideology away from international appeasement. As suggested by those inside the political scene, including Kremlin

advisers, Putin's ideological shift was clear, reflecting belief that use of force and power was the only way to prove one's strength.⁴⁵ This shift was a clear departure from the period following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union characterized by a certain appeasement to the West. Putin's new stance indicated an end of cooperation with the West in part, White and Sonne hypothesize, because of the change in political climate domestically after Putin's announcement of his intention to return for a third term replacing Dmitry Medvedev. The lack of overt public support for his return caused Western commentators to question Putin's domestic support, and in reaction to sustained increased Western pressure, Putin took a more aggressive posture.

As a result, despite the initially positive signals and noticeably conciliatory tone of the Russian delegation during the Games' bidding process, once awarded the Games Putin saw the Sochi Olympics as an opportunity to regain the "political magic" and stability of his regime. Many of his subsequent decisions were directed at deflecting and destroying any middle class opposition, winning back favor with the heartland electorate by promising a return to traditional populist values, and currying favor with the economic oligarchy through awarding lucrative contracts. If this vein of thought is correct, it might explain why Putin pushed through the anti-gay legislation, which was both a reversal of his earlier stand on the issue and a catalyst for undesired international scrutiny, as well as allowed sweeping new domestic restrictions on public demonstration rights.⁴⁶

Sochi 2014 Olympics Case Study

Introduction

In order appropriately to evaluate the impact the hosting of the Olympic Games had on the Russian government's ability to carry out its social and political agendas, one must place those policies within the greater framework of the domestic political and economic system as it existed in 2005 when Russia bid to host and at the time of the 2014 Games.

Russia submitted its initial bid for the Sochi Olympics in July 2005 during Putin's second term, Sochi was selected as a possible host city in June 2006, won the bid to host in July of 2007, and hosted the Games in February 2014. At the time of the initial bid for the 2014 Games, Putin had been elected in 2001 with 53% of the reported popular vote and had won re-election in the 2004 elections with about 71% of the votes. Following Sochi being announced as the winning bidder in 2007, Medvedev served as President and Putin as Prime Minister from 2008 to 2012. Putin won the 2012 election for President with 64% of the vote. Other than his brief four-year hiatus from Russia's presidency in order to nominally "abide by" term limits, Putin has had a virtually unhalting reign of power across Russia for 16 years. Given this consistency of Russian leadership, Putin's motivation behind bidding for, and the impact of hosting, the 2014 Olympics is particularly interesting.

The dates of Russia's submitting its Sochi bid and hosting the Games themselves directly correlated with periods during which Putin was securely in power. Thus the Games were not a tipping point for getting Putin into office or helping him

regain power, but rather were a well-thought out tactic employed during his tenure to advance specific portions of his agenda and reflected full use of the power and prerogative of his office.

At the time of its bid for the 2014 Games in 2005, the Russian economy was its strongest. Thus, Russia both satisfied the preconditions set out by the International Olympic Committee to demonstrate that it could shoulder the costs expected to be incurred by the Games and portrayed itself as a more attractive option than other host candidates. In 2005, the Russian GDP Annual Growth rate was at 9.6%, whereas South Korea's was at 3.92% and Austria's was at 2.14%. Russia looked to be the fastest growing of the host candidate nations with the greatest economic resources for staging successful Games and appeared to have sustainable long-term growth prospects. However, by 2012, the economic situation in Russia was vastly different, with the 2012 Annual GDP Growth Rate having been recorded at 3.4%.⁴⁷ Russia's GDP Annual Growth Rate in 2013, on the eve of the Olympics, was measured at 1.3%, suggesting its winning the Olympics failed to provide the economic buoyancy expected or provide a platform for sustained growth from the influx of investment and goodwill. Compounded with the drop in its Annual GDP Growth Rates, the inflation rate, which is ideally kept around 3% in healthy functioning economies, rose up into the teens in the wake of Russia's winning the bid and did not come down during the four years leading up to the 2014 Games. This decline in economic growth rate suggests that the economic boost advertised as a collateral benefit of Russia being awarded the Games did not in fact provide even a short-term positive economic impact. Instead, the bidding and preparation for the 2014 Sochi Games

coincided with a slow-down of the Russian economy despite the best efforts of the Russian government to maintain economic growth in order to absorb the costs of hosting the Olympics.

Despite the volatile economic situation during this period, a poll conducted by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research in 2012 of Russians found the “top fourteen problems that the Russian nation face(d)”, to be drug abuse, corruption and pollution. This is particularly enlightening and may reflect the manner in which the Russian media manipulates and distributes information, as only 36% of those polled identified tensions between the government and opposition as a significant problem, only 34% identified election fraud, and 26% identified hunger.⁴⁸ Interestingly, these three issues identified by the Russian people as the top problems were also the biggest concerns that the International Olympic Committee hoped that Russia would address and which the Olympics themselves highlighted. Perhaps host nations having these issues is a common reality for the IOC, or perhaps despite its rhetoric, the IOC ignores the real issues facing bidders in making its host selection.

Not only did foreign and domestic investment increase in preparation for the Sochi Olympics, but also -- as we will see in other cases as well -- the Games brought employment to Russia as the host nation. It is important to note that the figures on employment released by the Russian government and those released by the World Bank are slightly different (with the Russian reported data being slightly higher across the board). The World Bank recorded data pegging the 2005 Russian national employment rate at 57.5% at the time of the onset of the

Sochi bid rising to 60.1% in 2013, just prior to the 2014 Games.⁴⁹ While these numbers may not appear significant, in the context of Russia's large population that is often thought of as hard to mobilize, this nearly 3% increase is very substantial.

In a survey conducted by the World Bank Group directed at the general issues facing Russia in 2014 (the year of the Sochi Games), the top factors reported as impacting Russia's "Achieving of Shared Prosperity" were the need for better entrepreneurial opportunities, sustainable economic growth, a growing middle class, and greater voice and participation for citizens to help ensure greater accountability.⁵⁰ In a similar survey conducted by the World Bank Group in the same year, factors identified as "Contributing to Poverty Reduction" included private sector development, economic growth, anti-corruption, and development of Russian regions. Many of these target issues were to be addressed by Russia's hosting of the Games.

Policy 1: Ethnic/Land Disputes in the Sochi Region

The choice of Sochi as the destination for the 2014 Olympics posed significant challenges and certainly was not an obvious or ideal destination for a winter Olympics. Given Russia's expansive territory, there were a number of other areas that would have proven less controversial and offered established winter sport venues with more reliably favorable winter climates for sports competitions. Boris Nemstov, one of Putin's main opposition figures and a native to the region, strongly spoke out against choosing Sochi as the bid venue, stating that "[Putin] has found one of the only places in Russia where there is no snow in the winter.

He has decided to build these ice rinks in the warmest parts of the warmest region. Sochi is subtropical...Other parts of Russia need ice palaces – we don't.”.¹⁵¹

Beyond the practical concerns over the feasibility of hosting winter competitions in a “subtropical” climate, the Caucasus region was openly hostile to accepting Russia’s claims of sovereignty and resisted the measures of greater government control that would come with hosting the Games in Sochi. The Northern Caucasus region is made up over 40 distinct ethnic groups. Each has a culture of clans and many are comprised of significantly Muslim populations. This semi-autonomous region contrasts sharply with the rest of Russia, which is largely Russian Orthodox and accepting of the Kremlin’s strict control and governance. Sochi sits directly north of Abkhazia, a breakaway region within Georgia, and next to the five Northern Caucasus republics within the Russian Federation. The region has been plagued with ongoing sporadic violence, in some cases spanning back as far as the 1930’s in the case of Ingushetia.⁵²

As a region reluctant to submit to Russian authority, the Northern Caucasus region continued to present a challenge for Russian government into the 21st century. Following its initial bid to host in Sochi, Russia struggled to bring ongoing violence and rebellious factions seeking independence under control, and uprisings continued throughout the course of Russia’s bid and preparations to host the Games. This lack of control contrasted with the effective control that

the Putin regime had over much of Russia during this time, and was particularly at odd with the image of stability and control projected to the Russian population. To secure tranquility, the Russian government was forced to enter into a precarious deal with those republics whereby “Moscow would appoint governors who would be loyal to the Kremlin and, in return, that governor would remain in power provided no large-scale conflicts erupted”.⁵³ Even with its choice in governors, Russia has watched the region continue to be characterized by ongoing violence. Fearing large-scale conflict from rebels from the awarding of the Sochi Games, the Kremlin refused to interfere further because committing troops to “secure the region” would seem overtly have seemed hostile in the eyes of the International Community. Having conceded that Russia could only maintain control up to a point, the Russian government had to rely on an informal truce to cause as little real disturbance to preparation for the Games in the region while using a threat of increasing its military force to discourage actual terrorism from spoiling the Games.

A second group that posed a threat to the Games was descendants of the displaced Muslim Circassians who had been expelled from the Caucasus region to the Ottoman Empire in 1864 by Tsar Alexander II. This expulsion campaign was conducted in an attempt to secure the Caucasus region and its inhabitants, who were perceived to be a threat to the Tsar’s attempt to establish defined borders for the Russian Empire. While the Tsar’s army was successful in forcing the relocation of hundreds of thousands of Circassians to the Ottoman Empire, many Circassians died in the battles to secure the territories in the region or as refugees en route to the Ottoman lands. Despite this expulsion, and many deaths

on both sides, the campaign failed fully to secure the borders of the Russian Empire.⁵⁴

After announcement of the awarding of the Sochi Olympic bid, the Circassian descendants protested that the Games represented a further desecration on what they called the “mass grave” of their ancestors.⁵⁵ Circassian activists formed the “No Sochi 2014” campaign in 2007 in an effort to garner public support against the choice of location, but were largely unsuccessful beyond drawing short-lived media coverage to the little-known history of the Expulsion Campaign.⁵⁶ While this group was ethnically native to the land and the Campaign was a potentially unpleasant detail to be brought forward on the Olympic Games’ very public forum, it was not until the Chechen Islamist militant Doku Khamatovich called for Muslim extremists to rise up in protest of the Games that the Russian government paid particular attention to the Circassian descendants. As a result, activists argued that the Russian security services “increased document checks and (put) pressure on women in headscarves and men with long beards across the Caucasus”.⁵⁷ Continual threats from Islamist militant groups also gave Russia justification for heightened security at the 2014 Games. A small concession to the Circassian protests and the international media was made at the Olympic Games venue when the Russian government installed a Circassian House in the Olympic Park. This, however, was the only acknowledgement the Russian government made to the protesters, and President Putin defended the choice of Sochi as venue in a speech dismissing the Circassian issue as an attempt to undermine Russia’s global influence.⁵⁸

Social commentators stress the importance of successful hosting of the Games, with a world television viewership of three billion, to the host nation's prestige. The choice of "such a high-visibility test" site increased the pressure on the Russian government and raised the stakes of its success or failure: it would be judged as a courageous act if deemed successful or "judged foolhardy if it fail[ed]".⁵⁹ Especially given the spotlight put on Putin's active support and personal involvement in the Games, the blame would have fallen squarely on his shoulders rather than upon his subordinates.⁶⁰ Choosing an unstable region of the country like the Caucasus over which the Russian government had recognized it had little control was quite a gamble, but if it paid off Russia's dominance of the region would be acknowledged by the international community.

A third obstacle to Russia's hosting of the games at Sochi was its proximity to UNESCO protected land and World Heritage Centre sites, with concerns that the Games' infrastructure would have potential deleterious impact on certain habitats and migration routes. Prior to the Russian government's announcement of its Sochi bid, there were conservation laws preventing building on sites later used for the 2014 Olympics. Conveniently, once the idea of hosting the Games in the region was floated, the conservation laws were altered to allow for the necessary infrastructure development. The WHC claimed that, despite its best efforts to voice its concerns over the possible consequences of hosting the Games in Sochi, Russia's response was a "costly advertising campaign that distort[ed] the real situation and aim[ed] to hide the potential damage to the unique natural complexes of the Western Caucasus".⁶¹ In 2015 UNESCO announced that it

would be closing its Moscow branch, stating that the decision to do so had been made in 2008 and cited financial reasons.⁶² Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gatilov reiterated the UNESCO claims that the closure had “absolutely no political reasons for this, no sensations in our relations, and no cessation of cooperation”. However, extensive press coverage in 2008 strongly argued against the proposed sites and stressed the need for UNESCO to protect “one of the few large mountain areas of Europe that has not experienced significant human impacts,” so Russia’s ignoring (UNESCO’s) objections cannot be dismissed as a possible precipitating factor in UNESCO’s withdrawing from Russia.⁶³

Policy 2: LGBT Persecution

The timing of the implementation of specific laws aimed at LGBT individuals in Russian society coincided with Russia’s bid to host the 2014 Games. While homosexuality had long been considered a taboo subject in traditional Russian Orthodox doctrine, and even in secular contemporary Russia, there had been no laws prohibiting LGBT practices. In fact, homosexual relationships had been decriminalized in 1993, and transgender citizens were allowed to change their registered gender on identity documents from 1997 onwards.⁶⁴ Certainly, there had been no indication when Russia submitted its Sochi bid for evaluation by the IOC that LGBT groups would be targeted by new repressive laws prior to the Olympics.

However, on June 29, 2013, just over six months before Sochi’s opening ceremonies, President Putin signed into effect two new strict laws and

announced them to the much surprised Russian nation. The first of these laws prohibited distribution of material that promoted nontraditional sexual relationships to minors, and the second criminalized the intentional or public offending of religious sentiments. Based its broad interpretation of these new laws, the Russian government was able to outlaw several planned demonstrations planned by LGBT protestors in Sochi.⁶⁵ With a broad reading of these measures, accompanied by threats of jail time, deportation for foreign organizers, and heavy fines, the Russian government was able to implement additional measures to restrict public organizations, assembly and restriction of individual personal rights, as well as suppressing LGBT activists.

Introduction of these LGBT laws was met with public outcry within the domestic community and among prominent international human rights activists. The Russian LGBT community responded with a campaign of “Speak Up, Not Walk Out”. That specific campaign reacted to the government's hostile policies by encouraging other nations to undermine Russian suppression by participating in the Sochi Games, rather than with typical threats to boycott the 2014 Olympics, emphasizing that “to withdraw from (them was to) even risk to transform the powerful potential of the Games in a less powerful gesture that would prevent the rest of the world from joining LGBT people, their families and allies in Russia in solidarity and taking a firm stance against the disgraceful human rights record in this country”.⁶⁶ This was one of the first Olympics where the persecuted group openly called for active participation in an Olympics, rather than for boycott, suggesting that having pro-LGBT athletes and groups at the Games would influence Russia to rescind these measures. This is consistent with

scholarly research that formal Olympic boycotts have had little efficacy on changing the unpopular host nation's policies to which the boycotts are aimed.

The International Olympic Committee responded to LGBT activist demands for reconsideration of Sochi as the site for the 2014 Games by issuing a statement that it had "received assurances from the highest level of government in Russia that the [anti-gay] legislation will not affect those attending or taking part in the Games".⁶⁷ It did not immediately condemn the policies of Russia as the host country, finding itself in a difficult position trying to reconcile the IOC mandate of non-discrimination with Rule 51.3 of the Olympic Charter, which states that the "conduct of the participants must comply with the laws of the host state".⁶⁸ However, the Russian Sports Minister addressed Rule 51.3 of the Olympic Charter and its application to the Sochi Games, asserting that, while LGBT athletes and spectators were welcome to compete in and attend the Games, the new Russian laws would in fact be enforced during the Games and if a "sportsman with nontraditional sexual orientation...goes out on the street and starts to propagandize it, then of course he will be held accountable".⁶⁹ The Russian government's stance was that "even if he's a sportsman, when he comes to a country, he should respect its laws".⁷⁰

There are a number of competing theories as to why Putin chose to implement these new highly controversial laws and the specific timing for their announcement. One theory postulates that Putin desired to project a strong personal masculinity. Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany, posited the theory that Putin "has to do this — to prove he's a man" given that he is "afraid of

his own weakness. Russia has nothing, no successful politics or economy. All they have is this”.⁷¹ Her sentiments support the theory that Putin publicizes his masculinity through his physical prowess displayed in public stunts, participating in rough sports, and assumed the lead organizational role in spearheading the Sochi Olympics in order to portray to the world that both he and the Russian state were “strong, tough, victorious, and— naturally — manly”.⁷²

Another important element of Russia’s identity is its traditional Russian Orthodox religious heritage, providing the government with a unifying populist cause. Often, it suits Russia to draw the distinction between its traditional values and the “looser” morals extant in Western nations. Russia often points to the decline in morality and loss of Christian values that formed the foundation of nations as leading to their inevitable collapse. It can be postulated that, in its bid to build Russian support for Putin’s leadership, the Russian government instituted new anti-LGBT laws to consolidate religious and conservative factions behind the regime. The Russian government defended the new anti-LGBT legislation as protecting its people from opening themselves up to a “direct path of degradation and primitivism, resulting in a profound demographic and moral crisis”.⁷³ The Russian government’s stance that, in enacting anti-LGBT legislation, it was simply defending traditional values was well received by nationalists. Believing their values were under attack from non-traditional lifestyles, and with propaganda fueled by the state-run media outlets, large groups rallied in support of the anti-LGBT laws and there were increased attacks on LGBT persons and migrants, at times with police collusion.⁷⁴

Evaluation of the Regime: How did it come out?

Unfortunately, given the economic sanctions imposed upon Russia by the U.S. and other nations almost immediately following the Sochi Olympics, it is hard to evaluate any causal connection between Russia's subsequently deteriorating economy and its hosting the Games. Russia's annual inflation rate rose to nearly 16% in 2015, leaving its economy and the Russian people in a very unstable and challenging position to sustain their standard of living within the global economy and certainly without the improvement as was promised during the bidding for the Games.⁷⁵

The Games did bring significant direct foreign investment into the Russian economy. This suggests that, despite the less than optimal effect of the Sochi bid on expanding the economy and the subsequent instability of the ruble, the general sentiment towards investment in Russia certainly improved post-Olympics. Typically, in order to improve investor confidence, a country has to offer hope of sustained long-term economic and social stability and growth, as well as introduce investor-protective laws and government policies to encourage foreign investment. Yet, when a nation secures an Olympic bid, it signals to the international community that it is open for foreign investment because it has met the IOC's criteria to host the Games and therefore, despite lack of stability, growth or rule of law protections, may provide attractive investment opportunities.

While one could point to the deteriorating Russian economy following the Sochi Games as arguably being a negative result of the Games, hosting the Games had quite the opposite effect on Putin's domestic popularity. As of his inauguration in 2012, Putin's approval ratings as President were at 58%. By 2014, after the Olympic Games, his approval ratings were as high as 81%.⁷⁶ Broken down further, 83% of those who Russians who listened, read or watched news daily approved of Putin as compared with 76% of Russian citizens who consumed news weekly or less often.⁷⁷ Consequently, one could draw a connection between the positive effect of the news media coverage of the Sochi Games and increased support for the Putin regime. Putin himself proclaimed the Games a success, stating that they "opened the door not only to Russia, but also to the Russian soul, to the heart of our people", achieving the "intended" results of celebrating national sports, acknowledging the global sports community and Russia's partners manifested in an "ambitious, high-quality and beautiful" Games.⁷⁸

Some critics of the Olympics argued that, while the redirecting of state funds and enhanced private wealth associated with hosting of the Sochi Games should have angered the average Russian citizen, the image of Putin as a strong leader was exactly what the Russian people had desired. One critic argued, "the Russian people got what they wanted, a czar ruling the country" alluding to a prevailing sentiment among Russians that they wanted to return to a time of domination and vast imperial power.⁷⁹ Since the masses may have desired Putin and Russia to return to the world stage as dominant players, being awarded and hosting a successful Olympics certainly strengthened Putin's position and bestowed a level

of legitimacy on his government. It remains to be seen whether Sochi will have been a good investment for the Russian nation.

Beijing 2008 Olympics Case Study

Introduction

In 2002, China began to market the economic and political progress fostered and spurred by the upcoming 2008 Beijing Olympics as China's "peaceful rise".⁸⁰ Zheng Bijian, the director of the Chinese Communist Party-affiliated China Reform Forum, first publicly used this phrase following his trip to the U.S. to encourage investment in the increasingly stable and non-threatening China of the 21st century that was assuming its place alongside other major international powers. Subsequently, this phrase was altered slightly to "peaceful development" in hopes of erasing "the threatening connotation of rise".⁸¹ The push for foreign direct investment was essential for China to be able to move forward and legitimize itself as a major state player, and to dispel international suspicion of China as a security threat or otherwise an unwise investment based on its "international socio-economic contradictions".

In 2000, when China made its bid for the 2008 Games, it was facing a level of unrest unprecedented since the time of the Cultural Revolution. This was due in part to the "near explosion in telecommunications and access to foreign people, knowledge and cultural values dramatically alter[ing] political and social discourse," and in part to disruption from its stated plan to reorganize state-owned enterprises.⁸² With the closure of thousands of state-owned enterprises, the unemployment rate soared and the gap between high net-worth officials and

redundant urban workers or previously drafted servicemen who struggled to find employment after the widespread restructuring, widened. This problem was greatly exacerbated by the pressure of massive internal migration to the cities from the countryside totaling somewhere between 100-150 million people, looking for jobs in the already overcrowded cities.⁸³

These social dislocations led to significant worker unrest. The Chinese government's response to this unrest was swiftly to enact laws against "illegal gatherings" and to provide make-work jobs en masse to quell the public outcry. The protesters were also more vocal and articulate than in the past as they were better educated than their earlier counterparts and included, particularly, many educated and generally worldlier former servicemen. This posed a significant challenge to the government.

The university student population was also vocal in its opposition during this tumultuous time. With rising demand for educational opportunities, coupled with the government's need for tuition income, many unqualified students had been accepted to a number of universities in order to increase enrollment. As a result, the value of a degree was depreciated and university diplomas did not necessarily translate into better jobs. Many "qualified" students resented the resulting stigma and began to air their grievances, often with hard data and government-created documents.⁸⁴

Chinese privatization of state-owned enterprises followed a fall in real GDP growth from 13% to 6% from 1994 to 1999.⁸⁵ While the concerns over mass unemployment and social unrest were anticipated, they were accompanied by

the political necessity to achieve GDP growth to match population growth. The Chinese government also was greatly concerned that the legitimacy of the CCP itself might be undermined should it not be able to maintain a strong rate of economic growth.

As a result of a decrease in real pay rates and economic uncertainty similar to that faced by the rest of the population, the military-- made up of the People's Liberation Army and the People's Armed Police -- also presented an immediate concern for the CCP during this period. The military's expertise in crowd control and response to orchestrated violence was desperately needed during this period of unrest. If it were lost as a resource to quell uprisings, the CCP's leadership could potentially be threatened. Given the few outlets for disagreement and dissent against the government, public displays of protests were common across China. While the Chinese government had become proficient at controlling such displays, the growing levels of discontent and the danger of their evolving into organized cohesive social movements against the government remained a major concern.⁸⁶

When governments rely on the cult of personality surrounding a leader, faults with the government tend ultimately to reflect solely on that leader. Thus, in China, where Hu Jintao (the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party 2002-2012 and the President of the PRC from 2003-2013) unquestionably had developed a cult of personality by 2008, the possibility of mass demonstrations and coordinated opposition to the government blamed for unemployment and a downturn in prosperity could have potentially been very harmful to the

government's legitimacy. Accordingly, mobilizing the populace and distracting them from their economic concerns was essential to maintaining consolidated control under the central party's leadership and quashing any possibility of alternative leaders rising up to discredit Hu or challenging the CCP.

While China boasted about its economic reforms and increasing average investment rate -- 33% in the period 1978-2008 and 40% in the period 2004-2008-- this growth was of little benefit to the Chinese middle class.⁸⁷ On the contrary, the economic policies of the CCP seemingly constrained the purchasing power of the rising middle class. Non-democratic governments have motivations for constraining the middle class, as this segment of society has often provided the spark in demanding greater political choice and freedoms associated with democracies. The 1989-1990 fall in China's GDP growth created alarm and underscored a need for more political repression of the middle class to ensure the security of the single party rule.⁸⁸ As the Chinese economy grew during the following ten years, the government put in measures to limit the power of the middle class so it could not effectively oppose the government's leadership model in the future despite improved education and greater economic prosperity.

The Beijing Olympics presented an opportunity for the Chinese government to make use of improved nationalistic sentiment in order to strengthen its own position. During its 11th Five-Year Plan (that covered the run-up to the 2008 Olympics), the Chinese government focused on strengthening international trade rather than on the purchasing power of its domestic populace. The stronger its

international trade prospects and balance of trade and credit, the more faith the Chinese populace would have in the CCP due to greater respect shown from the international community.

Policy 1: Relocation/Forced Displacement

The issue of forced relocation associated with the Beijing Games was one of the key concerns of foreign human rights organizations and domestic opposition groups. Construction of the venues and various infrastructure improvements needed to host modern Olympic Games present opportunities for countries to kick-start modernization programs transforming underperforming communities under the guise of preparation for the Games. This practice has often resulted in the uprooting and forced relocation of swaths of people, actions that normally would draw negative attention and be opposed by the international community but that get accomplished largely without objection if done in connection with an Olympics bid.

In the lead-up to the Beijing Games, one of China's greatest criticisms was in its failure to adopt environmentally conscious urban planning, typical of less developed countries. In order to symbolize commitment to joining the most advanced and respected nations of the 21st Century, China instead focused publicly on promoting its massive infrastructure undertakings and its integration of cutting edge technology into Beijing's Olympic preparations.⁸⁹

In order to make space for its planned development projects, the residents of affected Hutong communities had to be moved. This need afforded the Chinese

government a convenient opportunity to move less desirable people out of Beijing under the pretext of Olympic preparations. The Geneva-based Center on Housing Rights and Evictions reported that 1.5 million Chinese had been or would be displaced due to the building for the Games.⁹⁰ However, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu stated only that 6,037 “households” were moved in order to make space for nine Olympic venues and all were compensated and relocated.⁹¹

The number displaced is not uncommon in preparation for Olympic Games. The Center on Housing Rights and Evictions did a study that found that, in each of the seven prior and subsequent Olympic host cities (including Seoul, Barcelona, Atlanta, Sydney, Athens, Beijing and London), the Olympics caused “rising housing costs, resulting in forced evictions, displacement and criminalization of homelessness”.⁹² While displacement was a noticeable issue during the preparations for other Olympic Games, the 30,000 residents displaced in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, and even the 720,000 residents displaced for the 1988 Seoul Olympics, were far fewer than the 1.5 million displaced in Beijing.⁹³ The IOC’s tepid response to the Center’s report and evidence that host nations do not adequately compensate these displaced citizens was that “as a matter of principle, how the Olympic Games impact people's lives is an important matter for the IOC”.⁹⁴

Quashing protests to its Olympic development efforts and other stances on human rights was easily accomplished once the Chinese government enacted a law that required that protestors apply for permits to hold protests and

restricting these protests to three designated areas in city parks where they could air their grievances.⁹⁵ This measure was a highly effective method of deterrence given that protestors were concerned about alerting the police to the intention to protest, as well as the likely retaliation to themselves and their families once the police had their names and addresses. With the permitting process, the authorities had an easier time finding identified opposition leaders.

The security chief for the Beijing Olympic Organizing Committee, Liu Shaowu, released a statement suggesting that "citizens must respect and not harm others' freedoms and rights and must not harm national, social and collective interests," and thus should not oppose the government's Olympic initiative.⁹⁶ The push to silence protestors against the displacement and relocation program was especially effective as it coincided with the reintroduction of the punitive administrative detention programs, Re-Education through Labor (RTL) and Enforced Drug Rehabilitation (EDR), to target dissidents in 2006.⁹⁷ While these programs had been controversial and had in fact been discontinued in 2003, their return reflected the fact that the government was willing to accept possible renewed criticism as the price for maintaining the degree of desired social control. The full extent to which the Chinese government was willing to go to keep dissent and opposition voices out of the public eye was uncovered in 2007 with the discovery of secret detention centers in which individuals were held until being returned forcibly to their home towns rather than being permitted to remain in Beijing and in the public eye.⁹⁸ One such example was Ye Guozhu, a vocal opponent of the forced evictions in Beijing, who was convicted in 2004 of "inciting subversion" and sentenced to five years in prison as a result.

Despite the public outcry from human rights groups around the world, China had no problem enforcing the controversial policies needed to achieve its goal of overhauling its infrastructure in order to accommodate and present the Beijing Games. The surprising lack of pushback from the IOC or blowback from the international sporting community seems to reflect the wide deference and general leniency of the IOC afforded host nations of the Games.

Policy 2: Ethnic Discrimination

China's employment of law enforcement to target political dissidents in the name of protecting the Beijing Olympics was extended to crack down on Tibetan protestors and those who would draw attention to the government's treatment of Tibetans far from Beijing.

In August 2008, just prior to the Games, Chinese authorities clashed with Tibetan citizens in the city of Lhasa on the anniversary of the 1959 uprising against Chinese rule of the region.⁹⁹ The Chinese government and Lhasan officials claimed that the crackdown was simply in response to demonstrating monks and other lawless individuals looting and causing unrest. The Chinese government used this premise to detain 1,315 Tibetans and to ban foreign tourists and journalists from entering Tibet just prior to the Olympics.

Police also used the extraordinary measure of machine gun responses to put an end to the five days of peaceful protest.¹⁰⁰ Reports stated that eleven people had been killed but casualties have been estimated to be in fact ninety-nine people in

total.¹⁰¹ Some observers contend that this was the largest open disregard of human rights and blow to China's international reputation since Tiananmen Square in 1989.¹⁰² While it was in fact perhaps the most widely reported instances of ethnic violence accompanying the Beijing Olympics, it was also an example of the extent to which the Chinese police went to maintain compliance during that period of increased international press attention. When the Tibetans attempted to capitalize on press coverage by disrupting the Olympic torch parade as it went through Olympia, the Chinese government thwarted the attempt by cutting away from live coverage and clamping down on any release to the media of protest footage as was possible with its tightly state-controlled media.

The international community did not address the episode in Tibet and the continued deprivation of freedoms in China as one might have expected. In 2001, the President of the International Olympic Committee, Jacques Rogge, released a statement expressing his hope that hosting the Olympics would improve China's human rights record and stating that, if that record did not improve, there would be repercussions.¹⁰³ In March 2008 after the Chinese violence in Tibet, Rogge reaffirmed his belief in China and that the Olympics were "a force for good" and stated that he hoped the conflict would be resolved quickly and peacefully, as violence was contrary to the Olympic values. Not surprisingly Russia, in the midst of its own Olympic preparations, came out in support of Chinese police actions, stating that it hoped the Chinese would 'do what was necessary to curtail "unlawful action" in Tibet'.¹⁰⁴ The Russian government went so far as to shift blame over to the Tibet protestors, arguing

that the protesters had been attempting to leverage the intense international media attention to the region and disapproving use of the Olympics for publicity towards their cause.

These events occurred just a week after the U.S. took China off its list of worst human rights offenders and Mark Malloch-Brown, Britain's Minister for Africa, Asia and the United Nations, called the Beijing Olympics China's "coming out party" and suggested that China not do anything to threaten their success.¹⁰⁵ Given the state's control of the media, the Chinese government was able to counter this negativity with the release of a report from one hundred politicians and representatives from 30 countries who convened in Lhasa, Tibet and deemed that the Tibetans 'enjoyed a "happy life"', making the violent suppression seem like a single unrelated incident and uncharacteristic of the region.¹⁰⁶

Military presence to suppress dissenting minorities in the lead-up to the Olympic Games was not unique to Tibet. When the Olympic torch parade went through the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, foreign journalists observed that not only were the crowds handpicked but also there was tight security of the event enforced by police and paramilitary troops.¹⁰⁷ That autonomous region is predominantly Muslim, and represents one of the fifty-five recognized minorities in China.¹⁰⁸ As evident by the omission of ethnic diversity in the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympics where none of these minorities was represented, the Chinese government wanted no attention diverted to these minorities during the torch procession. This instance was not unique but rather

indicative of China's desire to be perceived as homogenous and modern rather than allowing a picture to the Chinese and rest of the world that China was actually comprised of many diverse minorities.

Evaluation of the Regime: How did it come out?

China succeeded in using the 2008 Beijing Olympics to portray itself favorably on the international financial and political stage along with other major powers. As it turned out, the Beijing Olympics coincided with the financial crisis of 2008 and as "the collapse of Wall Street highlighted the shortcomings of 'American-style'" capitalism. China's financial stature rose as many countries looked to it as a resource to address the global financial and economic uncertainty".¹⁰⁹ Ballooning costs associated with hosting the Olympic Games often leaves the impression of irresponsibility and poor fiscal planning on the part of the host nation. China, instead, has since been applauded for the period of continued growth that followed its Games, unlike many other nations that have faced intense economic hardship directly following their hosting. While China suffered an economic slowdown in 2015, critics agree that the slowdown did not result from the Beijing Games' \$35 billion price tag, and China's path to improved economic prosperity prior to the Games continued in their aftermath. China's subsequent prosperity strengthened the argument for its governance structure, as it celebrated 30 years of the CCP's rule and economic prosperity against the costs associated with, among many other things, hosting the Games. Chinese President Hu Jintao took advantage of the positive international press associated with the Games to make the argument to the international community that China could

look forward to continuing the success it had demonstrated by hosting the Games.¹¹⁰

While the measures taken to ensure civil obedience during the Games and ongoing suppression of human rights were a hot topic during the run up to the Beijing Games, as humanitarian groups strongly critiqued Chinese measures of displacement and repression aimed at ethnic minorities, these measures were indicative of China instituting stronger controls over civil disobedience. The 2011-2015 Five Year Plan was markedly focused on the quelling of civil unrest and indicative of China's consistent desire to maintain social harmony and squash any political instability.¹¹¹ The political upheaval in Northern Africa (Jasmine Revolution) prompted concerns about consolidating control over the populace and stalling the rising power of the middle class that might pose a threat to the establishment. While the 2008 Olympics were meant to leave the Chinese people in better overall condition, the trade-off between accelerated economic prosperity and continued political stability ended with the government opting to temper overall economic growth to maintain political control.

The measures employed in preparation for the 2008 Games, hailed by the chairman of the IOC's Coordination Commission for Beijing as the "Gold Standard for the Future" in terms of preparation, and condemned by Amnesty International as an "atmosphere characterized by repression and persecution", have been made a permanent fixture of China's governance.¹¹² While the measures were initially intended to limit political dissent and active resistance to China's leap onto the international scene with the Olympics, they became an

integral and permanent tool for its government's restraint of all forms of potential opposition.

Berlin 1936 Olympics Case Study

Introduction

Crushing debt and widespread unemployment prompted by the financial crisis of the 1920's, together with heavy reparation payments following World War I, caused Germany to find itself at a tipping point of political upheaval in the first half of the 1930's. In the 1920's, Germany had borrowed from the United States in order to make reparation payments to France and Great Britain as mandated by the Treaty of Versailles. While the early 1920's were difficult for Germany, after struggling with hyperinflation during 1923, the U.S. financing did allow Germany to make some reparation payments. A significant portion of the U.S.'s loans also went toward funding reinvigoration of the German economy.¹¹³ Unfortunately, this financing was not sufficient to put the German economy on a secure financial footing.

The German Chancellor at the time, Heinrich Brüning, attempted to stabilize the economy by enacting conservative economic policies following the collapse of the coalition government created by Hermann Müller. Müller, who had led the coalition efforts between the Social Democrats (SPD) and the German People's Party (DVP), had also been the German representative at the League of Nations in 1928 and had negotiated various concessions from the Allies. Taking up the position of Chancellor in 1930, Brüning's response to the worsening economic

situation was a series of proposed staunch austerity measures that included “increased taxation, reduced government expenditure, high tariffs on foreign agricultural products, cutbacks in salaries and unemployment insurance benefits, and continued payment of the reparations imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles”.¹¹⁴ When the Reichstag vetoed a number of the proposed measures, it was dissolved by Brüning, who thereafter governed by presidential emergency decree until a newly formed Reichstag was constructed (mainly dominated by the Communist and Nazi parties). Additionally, the German export economy was devastated by the 1936 passage of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Bill by the United States, which effectively banned all exports to the U.S.

Unemployment during this period was catastrophic, feeding social instability and high levels of dissatisfaction with German leadership. While in 1919 unemployment was at 8.5%, it grew to 14% in 1920, almost 22% in 1931 and reached an all-time high of nearly 30% in 1932.¹¹⁵ Following World War I, many returning German soldiers could not find jobs in the tumultuous period of economic upheaval caused by the Great Recession, and the austerity measures subsequently put in place by the German government to rein in government spending left them with few options for private or public sector employment.

With a more right-leaning government, Chancellor Brüning endorsed more nationalistic foreign policies and, in 1931, Germany bid to host the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin. While public spending was cut by 30% during 1930 and 1931 (21 billion marks in 1929; 17 billion marks in 1931; and 14.5 billion in 1932),

the Olympics bid defied the otherwise consistent government austerity program and provided Germany with a prospect of attracting foreign inflows of cash.¹¹⁶

Hosting the Olympics historically has been very effective in creating short-term relief from high unemployment rates as it creates jobs in almost every sector, especially labor-intensive jobs for men. Thus, by bidding for the 1936 Games, the German government hoped hosting the Berlin Olympics would provide a rational avenue through which it could boost domestic morale, encourage foreign investment, gain international recognition and respect and bring down high unemployment levels.

Brüning did not gain immense popularity with his austerity measures. Instead, he was targeted by the opposition claiming he was sympathetic to the Bolshevik system of land redistribution. Hugenberg (businessman, politician, and leading media proprietor), Schacht (co-founder of German Democratic Party), and Hitler appeared in Bad Harzburg in Brunswick at the nationalist meeting on October 11, 1931 and called for Brüning's resignation, joining in support of a national-unity government.¹¹⁷ Hitler leveraged the rumors of Brüning's sympathy for the Communists for his own benefit, and in order to win the support of the middle class who had lost the most in the economic downturn of the previous decade. Hitler's proposed policies of full employment, "Beauty of Work," re-armament and autarky (self-sufficiency) touched on each of the points the German population was most frustrated by in the wake of the 1920's.¹¹⁸ The goal of bringing Germany back to a state of self-sufficiency and respect within the international community was of the utmost importance to the German people.

Hitler claimed he would dismiss anyone in the government who was associated with the Treaty of Versailles and would move Germany toward a new era of success.

While the bid for the Olympics itself was not initiated by Hitler and his Nazi regime, the opportunity to host meshed nicely with the Nazis' objectives to consolidate the fragmented German people under "regimented Prussian militarism", to distract the international community from focusing upon increasing intolerance in Germany of disfavored elements of the populace, and to realize German expansionary ambitions.¹¹⁹ Hermann Göring stated for the *Official after Olympics Report* that "Olympic Games are the testing grounds for the competitive spirit, which is not only the foundation of happiness and the security of nations, but of human progress in general. To the courageous, self-sacrificing and persevering belongs the crown".¹²⁰ As the second in command after Hitler and the Economic Minister (appointed in 1937), Göring drew parallels between the competitive nature of the Olympics and that of Germany attaining international stature on the world stage after the humiliations of World War I, the Depression and other recent setbacks.

While the Olympic charter purports not to allow the politicization of the Games, it is clear from the many instances of national conflict that coincide with the hosting the Games that host nations consistently take advantage of the international prestige and attention that accompanies the Games to advance their own political goals. In the case of Germany, the primary goals were re-

establishment of national pride and economic stabilization, and then later, Hitler's added secondary goals of ethnic and racial cleansing.

Policy 1: Ethnic Discrimination/Cleansing

While one of the Nazi Party's more controversial policies was the targeting of ethnic minorities for discrimination and exclusion from Germany, this issue was rarely brought to the forefront of international attention or received widespread concern prior to the lead-up to the 1936 Berlin Games. Many of these discriminatory practices were not necessarily unique to the Nazi regime, but rather reflected culmination of prejudices that had developed over the years in Germany and Europe against demographic groups that were perceived as threatening either to the political, economic or social stability of the majority.

Gypsies:

Gypsies, or more accurately Roma, were one such group that historically had been persecuted in Germany but, during the rise of the Nazi regime and in preparation for the 1936 Olympics, persecution became more organized and more widespread. Gypsies had only been granted full emancipation in the 1860's, after five and a half centuries of enslavement across southeastern Europe. In Nazi Germany, the Romani culture was fundamentally incompatible due both to its tradition of laws limiting involvement with non-Gypsy groups and the inherent transitory nature of its members.¹²¹

While the population of German Gypsies in 1910 was approximately 20,000 or less than 0.03 percent of the population, the intensity of discriminatory practices

would have suggested a threat posed by a much larger group. During the Nazi consolidation of power between 1933 and 1939 and Hitler's rise to Chancellorship, this persecution evolved from a town-by-town, municipally ordered segregation in designated areas to nationally orchestrated sequestering within closed concentration camps.

Despite the German government's attempts to corral the transitory Gypsy population, the use of forged papers allowed large numbers to escape to neighboring European states, including Lithuania, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania. Once in neighboring states, Gypsies applied for foreign passports and then re-entered Germany as foreign nationals.¹²² Given the failure of its program to expel Gypsies, consistent with the Nazi Party's broader aim to limit the German population to pure "Aryan" offspring, the German government passed a number of laws in 1933 both prohibiting marriages between Aryans and members of "alien races" (titled the Marital Health Laws) and enforcing forced sterilizations.¹²³

Asserting that Gypsies were responsible for public disturbances, and under the guise of limiting any sort of socially unacceptable behavior in the lead-up to the 1936 Olympics as a public service, the under-represented Gypsies were persecuted with little opposition. The international community, which had limited knowledge of Gypsies or gypsy issues, did little to stop this persecution.

Communists:

Communists, and the greater KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands), posed a serious threat to the consolidation of the Nazi Party's control of the German government. The KPD party was made up of skilled middle-class factory workers and workers who had become redundant but were still living in inner-city areas.¹²⁴ The main fear of Communists arose from their commitment to the redistribution of wealth and strengthening of the middle class, thus making them a direct threat to the National Socialist policies to reinvigorate the economy. In the early 1930's, Communists held numerous large street demonstrations, seeking to mobilize the middle classes and the masses against Hitler's elitist proposals.

In the years immediately following Hitler's appointment as Chancellor (from 1933 through 1939, which included the period of the Berlin Games), "150,000 Communists were detained in Nazi concentration camps and a further 30,000 were executed".¹²⁵ Persecution of Communists during that period was not unique to Germany, as the U.S. and other major international powers endorsed anti-Communist campaigns as well. The President of the American Olympic Committee, Avery Brundage, endorsed the anti-Communist movement with strong rhetoric of his own. He accused "Radicals and Communists," domestically and internationally, of instigating the American movement to boycott the Berlin Games, having already attempted to "wreck the Los Angeles Games" in 1932.¹²⁶ Seeking to keep the Communists' hands off of "American sport" his derogatory language echoed the Germans' cry for Communists and other non-savory ethnic minorities to be kept out of German sports and society as a whole.

As the Berlin Games drew nearer, and repressive measures by the Nazis in preparation for their international debut intensified, dissatisfied Germans stepped up their opposition. Anti-Nazi pamphlets grew in number, as noted in Gestapo reports, from 1.2 million seized in 1934 to 1.67 million seized in 1935.¹²⁷ This, in turn, led to stronger measures to root out Communist sympathizers from the German populace.

Homosexuals:

U.S. support of Germany in opposing Communism, together with the feigned ignorance of other repressive policies by the International Olympic Committee, emboldened the Nazi government in its persecution of other unwanted elements in German society. The Olympics offered an image of ideal masculinity, an image at least superficially consistent with Germany's propagated image of the ideal Aryan race. Athletics and the filtering of the German population to present an ideal society with the Berlin Games as its international debut fueled aggressive persecution of homosexuals. Hitler asserted, "gay men were weak and unfit to be soldiers, as well as unlikely to have children and thereby contribute to the racial struggle for Aryan dominance".¹²⁸ His anti-homosexual policy thus fit in nicely with the Olympic image of physical superiority and while the scope of Hitler's true plan to self-select down to a "pure" Aryan race was still unrevealed at the time of the Berlin Games, he was able to implement anti-gay measures as reflective of the Olympic ideal.

While there is no confirmed number of homosexual men who ultimately perished in concentration camps, it is estimated that 50,000 served terms as convicted homosexuals subject to extermination through work.¹²⁹ This persecution was legalized by a June 1935 change in the German criminal code instituted by the Ministry of Justice.¹³⁰ Interestingly, women were not subject to this purge. This may have been because women's events seemed of little importance to the traditional Olympic Games and women's athletic skills were largely ignored by the Olympic organization, or because to the extent there were German women competing in events, it served Germany's purpose to ignore their sexual orientation. Generally though, women were patronized by the German government as being of value principally as necessary for the production of Aryan offspring. Unlike the persecution of the Jews or banning of Blacks from participation in the Games, the international community had no response during the lead-up to the Games to the persecution of the homosexual population in Germany. The masculine mentality of the Olympics and the masculine nature of athletics in Germany provided an ideal excuse for the Nazis efficiently to pursue their goal of excluding, then exterminating, German homosexuals.

Blacks:

Black athletes, of course, presented a stark contradiction to the lauded superiority of the Aryan race favored by the Hitler regime. The Olympic Charter's fundamentals and the International Olympic Committee ban the "discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion,

political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”¹³¹ Germany’s desire to prove that the Aryan race was superior to all other races almost cost it the opportunity to host the Berlin Games.

While Germany asserted its “City [would] offer a most worthy place for the great sporting competition of the nations”, interest groups in the United States strongly disagreed.¹³² As early as 1933, Germany had to answer to the IOC and the international community regarding allegations of racial discrimination. It was called before the League of Nations in May 1933 to respond to those charges. This actually followed Germany’s withdrawal from the League in April 1933.¹³³ It is particularly surprising that Germany chose to attend the session in Silesia given that it was no longer a member of the League, and its decision to attend was indicative of its concern over the “severe blow...if the members of the IOC should have opposed the holding of the Olympic Games 1936 in Berlin.”¹³⁴

Germany had justified its leaving the League by asserting that diplomatic conversations “so utterly failed and caused the Government to leave the League”. However, Theodor Lewald (President of the German Olympic Association), also asserted in February 1934 that the “hope for the future rests on the peoples themselves, and particularly on the sporting youth, - i.e. the youth who has given up the discrimination of victors and defeated years ago and who was the first, after the hatred of the war, to re-establish intercourse on the footing of equality.”¹³⁵

As a result of threats to relocate the Games due to boycotts, Germany eventually permitted black athletes to compete at the Games. Germany was forced to grapple with the heralded victories of athletes such as Jessie Owens and Cornelius Johnson, whose performances strikingly contradicted the Nazi view of black athletes' inferiority. While the threat of potentially losing the 1936 Olympics pushed the Nazis to change their policies towards black athletes, it served only as a temporary impediment to the racially charged agenda of the Hitler regime.

Policy 2: Anti-Semitism

The Nazi antipathy toward Jews was in direct conflict with the ideals of the Olympics. As a result, the German leadership had to make a decision as to the benefits of hosting the Games against the potential temporary setback to fulfillment of its domestic social policy goals. While the process of segregation of the Jewish population began promptly upon Hitler's appointment to Chancellorship in 1933 with the disbanding of all Jewish sports organizations or adherents in December of 1933 and expanded to the complete segregation of Jews in 1935, the process was brought to a temporary halt in preparation for the hosting of the Berlin Games.

In order to placate the concerns of the international bodies, and especially a nascent American boycott movement, the U.S. Olympic Committee President, Avery Brundage, visited Germany in 1935. During Brundage's visit, all anti-Jewish propaganda was removed and all evidence of the German anti-Semitic policies was obscured, resulting in Brundage's favorable report disputing reports

of ethnic and racial discrimination upon his return, which ended discussion of any U.S.-led boycott.

Brundage declared in a letter to the U.S. people, "This country will not tolerate the use of clean American sport as a vehicle to transplant Old World hatreds to the United States. The American Olympic Committee, composed of representatives of over 70 leading amateur sport organizations, after fully investigating all charges and after due deliberation, accepted unanimously the invitation to participate in these Games.... They will never allow our athletes to be made 'martyrs to a cause not their own', or amateur sport to be sacrificed to a political issue. The American Olympic Committee is the only organization which has authority to deal with the representation of the United States in the Olympic Games".¹³⁶

By appeasing the United States and the International Community by allowing Jews from other nations to participate in the Olympics, and the temporary lifting of a number of anti-Jewish laws on January 1, 1936, Germany was able to avoid claims of discrimination and ensure its ability to host the Berlin Olympics.¹³⁷ While hosting the Games allowed Germany to appear reinvigorated after the humiliation of WWI and the Treaty of Versailles, the Games and Germany's Olympics-related concessions were only a temporary pause in its discriminatory policies.

Evaluation of the Regime: How did it come out?

On a whole, the 1936 Berlin Olympics were certainly beneficial to the Nazi regime and the overall German economy. Between 1933 and 1937 (also a period of massive German rearmament), the German government was able to bring unemployment levels down from six million to one million, with many of the previously unemployed going into security and construction services in preparation for and execution of the Berlin Games. The period between bidding for and hosting of the Berlin Olympics saw German national production and income double and the establishment of a state-run social welfare program.

The press from the 1936 Berlin Games was invaluable in changing the international perception of Germany and “acquainting the Olympic visitors with the intellectual, cultural and economic developments in the New Germany”, or at least the Germany the government wanted to project.¹³⁸ In the years surrounding the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Germany enhanced its reputation as the “land of scholars and poets”, and was awarded half the Nobel prizes and a significant majority of the newly approved patents.¹³⁹

While foreign investment was not plentiful in the lead-up to the Games or in its aftermath, the mobilization that the German government was able to kick-start with its own populace permitted it largely to reach its goal of autarky. Hitler, in the XIth Olympic Games, 1936 Official Report, stated that he “hoped that the Berlin Olympic Games have assisted in strengthening the Olympic ideals and thereby have helped to form a connecting link between nations”.¹⁴⁰ More accurately, awarding Germany the 1936 Olympics served to delay international

scrutiny of Germany and sent an initial signal of international acceptance of the Hitler regime. The delay occasioned by the Olympic preparation and the success of the 1936 Games supported Germany's economic revival and allowed it to resume its position as a power player on the international political stage, despite obvious contradictions between Nazi policies and the fundamental ideals of the Olympic Games.

Evaluation

In evaluating the IOC's awarding the Games to host nations with controversial, even repressive, domestic policies, it is important to compare the IOC's tacit acceptance of these policies with the prevailing global views at the times in question. At the time of the introduction of the new anti-LGBT policy in Russia in 2013, Pew Research Center's polls on global divide on homosexuality found "broad acceptance of homosexuality in North America, the European Union, and much of Latin America, but equally widespread rejection in predominantly Muslim nations and in Africa, as well as in parts of Asia and in Russia". It found that the greatest recent changes in acceptance have been in United States and Canada. The largest outlier amongst regions that supported homosexuality was in Poland where 42% supported acceptance and 46% rejected acceptance. The study found that in more religious countries, there was a far lower acceptance rate of homosexuality; the exception to this conclusion was Russia, which scored low on the religiosity scale but had only 16% support for acceptance of homosexuality.¹⁴¹

The study also found that views on acceptance of homosexuality varied across age groups, with “younger respondents offering far more tolerant views than older ones and, while gender differences are not prevalent, in those countries where they are, women are consistently more accepting of homosexuality than men”.¹⁴² While the gap between men’s and women’s opinion did not differ by a considerable amount, in countries where it did differ (and even in the U.S.), women’s acceptance of homosexuality exceeded men’s by 10%. This may point to a possible link between the predominantly male IOC’s executive board and men’s lower acceptance rate of homosexuality regardless of country. With barely 23 women out of 102 active IOC members and just four of 15 Executive Board members, the IOC could appear to reflect global male attitudes.¹⁴³

The same explanation could be suggested for racial biases during the interwar years when racial minorities were underrepresented in the IOC. Prevailing international anti-Semitic views in the 1930s provide a reasonable explanation for the IOC’s hesitation to relocate the Berlin Olympics even after reports of widespread persecution of Jews by the Nazi government. The interwar period of the 1920 and collapse of the world’s economic system in the 1930’s saw resurgence of anti-Semitism in Great Britain following the Great Depression and was a main platform and major propaganda instrument of the vocal British Union of Fascists under Oswald Moseley. Indeed, there was American anti-Semitism, with large institutions blatantly implementing exclusionary rules.¹⁴⁴ Despite human rights groups and Jewish organizations pressuring the IOC to send representatives to investigate reports of Germany’s repressive measures, there was not public support in the U.S., U.K. or other nations, or within the

Olympic committee leaders of the major nations to revoke Germany's right to host the 1936 Games or to condemn the German government.¹⁴⁵

The Great Depression saw a resurgence in racism in the United States, with African Americans being the "Last Hired and the First Fired".¹⁴⁶ The U.K. had faced the Race Riots of 1919 with white laborers rioting at the country's major ports lashing out at minorities, at the time largely African, Afro-Caribbean, and some Asian refugee who competed for jobs. As a result of demobilization following World War I, there was a surplus of labor in competitive industries, and labor groups such as seamen experienced redundancies and lay-offs stoking frustration which was frequently taken out on Blacks and other minority groups. Protection of minority groups' rights was not established in the 1930's and therefore, despite the IOC's fundamental rules regarding the inclusive nature of the Games, the exclusion of certain minorities from positions in academia, the arts and sports domestically in Germany was hardly a rallying point for international pressure on the IOC to revoke the hosting of the Berlin Games. Simply put, the IOC may have been divorced from its inclusionary charter but was much in tandem with prevailing exclusionary attitudes and practices.

Conclusion

The International Olympic Committee is by its own charter an apolitical organization that is meant to enforce strict regulations towards the pursuit of pure sport competition and encourage a period of peaceful interaction between nations regardless of world events and political tensions. From the Olympics' inception, the Games represented a period of time that the Greeks had a mutual

agreement to lay down their arms and animosities and celebrate athleticism. However, the evolution of the modern Games has resulted in additional considerations behind national participation and motivation behind bidding for, and awarding of, hosting bids. The IOC seems presently to be ignoring its noble and humanitarian founding principles by accepting host bids by authoritarian governments led by governments that employ policies contrary to the Olympics charter. Not only does awarding these countries with hosting the games legitimize governments that should otherwise be condemned for their repressive and exclusionary actions, but the correlation between IOC consideration of these actions seems consistent with “popular” opinion against protecting minorities and, perhaps unintentionally, acts to reinforce the legitimacy of repression and misses a positive influence that it could exert upon protection of minorities and human rights.

Given that the 2008 Beijing and 2014 Sochi Games are contemporaneous, retrospective research and access to relevant IOC records of its deliberations are relatively limited compared to the 1936 Berlin Olympics. One can only hope that with the passage of time more light will be shed on the short and long term implications of these Games. With more access to the IOC’s, Chinese and Russian reports and the ability to view the health of the host nation’s economies and political situations through a more retrospective lens, the impact of the Games on China and Russia, as well as upon future bidding and awarding of host honors will be better judged.

Given the research and information available at this time, I draw a number of conclusions that I believe begin to answer my original inquiries about the Games and the IOC. First, the Games offer a potent platform for the host nation, offering an opportunity for regime consolidation of power, improved international profile and an irresistible propaganda platform. Second, the criteria that the IOC applies to evaluate candidate bids provide certain advantages for authoritarian governments to win bids to host games. Needless to say, these conclusions are tentative, as I did not study the bidding process for, or the internal impact of Olympic Games hosted by nations with democratic governments. While this further study would be important for confirming or perhaps modifying some of my conclusions, it was beyond the scope of this paper.

While nationalism is common across all cultures or governments, and perhaps more significant in those that choose to submit a bid to host the Olympics, an opportunity to increase national pride takes on greater importance for authoritarian governments. Patriotic surge resulting from hosting the games is not inherently antagonistic, yet often this fervor paves the way for the enactment of certain repressive measures in the name of facilitating successful Games and the aura of the Olympic host allows repressive governments to retain, regain or establish legitimacy on the world stage. In winning the bid to host the Games, an authoritarian regime has an opportunity to consolidate power and build popular support for the government.

Because of the high costs of hosting the Games and the IOC's specification of host nation's amenities for participants, delegations and spectators, lavish venues and

modern transportation and security infrastructure, the IOC's selection process does to some extent favor authoritarian governments. With rising costs to host Olympics, fewer nations can justify attendant expenses on a strict dollars and cents payback and must view hosting's "collateral" benefits as valued beyond mere economic benefits.

These observations suggest that authoritarian governments will continue to bid and prevail in the selection process for hosting the Olympics. If these practices become the established pattern and are not challenged by the international community, the implications for repression of minorities and human rights in nations with authoritarian governments are rather grave. When the IOC's awarding of Olympic Games is accompanied with the loss of accountability for human rights violations and increased repression, authoritarian nations will be rewarded for actions that violate international norms and the very principles of the Olympic Charter.

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