

The Olympics as a Catalyst for Change:

Less Than Three Years and Counting to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games

by,

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With less than three years remaining before the opening ceremonies of the next Summer Olympics, Beijing will be the focus of the world. Countless articles have already examined Chinese governments policies and whether or not the Olympics can be a vehicle that allows the Chinese people to express themselves more freely. Some condemn China for its human-rights record and seeming unwillingness to change its ways while others argue that the Olympics will bring more cultural openness to China and improve human rights in the long run. Others wonder if the Chinese are interested in the true ideals of the Olympics – or if the Olympics are simply a venue for accelerated economic development. And still others ask the question whether sports might become a healthy substitute for war in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as philosopher William James declared in 1910 “that sport is the moral equivalent for war.”<sup>1</sup> These questions and many more were on my mind as I headed to Beijing, on May 1, 2005, one of the biggest national holidays in China.

What I discovered was that when it comes to construction for the Olympics in Beijing these days, “location, location, location,” often means “eviction, eviction, eviction.” Old hutong neighborhoods, rich in long-standing cultural traditions are being demolished to make way for developments such as new shopping centers, hotels and parks. This coupled with growing labor concerns and a flood of nationalism that could threaten the games themselves is providing ample challenges for the Beijing government. The pending Olympic Games have already been an agent for

physical change in Beijing, but only since the post-Mao era have things began to change in the psyche of sports and as Susan Brownell (*Training the Body for China:1995*) calls it, “the changing of the body culture.”<sup>2</sup> Despite these challenges, I headed to Beijing with the notion that the Olympics can contribute to improved human rights and act as a positive catalyst for change in China.

Since the games were awarded to Beijing in the summer of 2001, the Chinese have made unprecedented economic and cultural investments in their preparations for the 2008 Olympic Games, reaching all of the milestones outlined by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). They are moving so fast that the IOC has asked them more than once to slow down and reevaluate some of their designs and concepts. IOC president, Jacques Rogge advised China to pace themselves, lest they spend money too quickly and allow the games to get too grand. “I am usually in the position of telling people to hurry up. I am now saying, ‘Slow down.’”<sup>3</sup> Despite the pace and early successes, their actions do not always share the lofty goals of Chairman Mao’s frequent assertion that “in sports, it is the friendship, not the victory, that counts.”<sup>4</sup>

Even though there are a myriad of construction projects going on all over the city, if you didn’t know Beijing was host for the 2008 Summer Olympics, you would be hard pressed to find any evidence of the Olympics themselves. As of the summer of 2005, most of the major hotels don’t seem to know where the Olympic stadium or the Olympic village are to be located and none of the maps in any of the major hotels had this information. I wanted to visit the Olympic sites, even if they were simply open fields but had a hard time even getting a hotel or taxi driver to take me there. The dust from the many construction sites and the large cranes that littered the expressway straight into the downtown however tell a different story, that the Olympics are indeed fueling much of the construction boom in and around Beijing.

Despite the lack of Olympic logo's signaling the arrival of Olympic games, a visit to Tiananmen Square gave me a strong sense that the Olympics are indeed coming. As I entered the main square, aggressive vendors, many of them elderly ladies selling an assortment of kites, postcards, pirated Nike hats, Olympic logo items and even plastic Olympic medals, accosted me. Bordering on harassment, I quickly made my way across the square towards the row of large China flags that marked the center of the square. Another Olympic clue is the large clock with the Olympic logo positioned across from the square. This clock is counting down to the exact point when the Olympic games will begin, at 8:00 in the evening on August 8, 2008. The Chinese are famous for their symbolism and this is no exception. The number eight is a lucky number and the Beijing Olympic Committee managed to get the opening ceremonies moved to take full advantage of the number of "8" coming together: the eighth year, eighth month, eighth day, eighth hour and perhaps even the eighth minute.

As I arrived in Beijing, I wondered if the timing of my trip was off, arriving during the biggest holiday week of the year. Most of the governmental offices were closed including the Beijing Olympic Committee. I wanted to talk to the people of Beijing and was able to make contact prior to my trip with a married couple, two Chinese nationals who were both competitive athletes at one time. I met Yang and his wife May at the posh Beijing Hotel, a beautiful hotel with all of the amenities you would expect and only a couple of blocks from the Forbidden City. They came by bicycle and so did I, so we hopped on our bikes and headed out to get a bite to eat. They were both dressed casually and looked like athletes. Yang works for the Ministry of Sports and helps organize international sports exchanges. By chance we drove our bikes close to his former neighborhood, a hutong that now sits in the shadow of a building under construction. A portion of the neighborhood remains, and in Yang's opinion, his family was given a fair price for their property. As we passed by

on our bicycles, his wife chimed in saying that “most of the people are quite happy to get payment for their hutong property.” Many of these buildings are in fact sadly rundown, full of the dust of Beijing, their brick walls crumbling, often with concrete patchwork slapped on in an attempt to keep the walls from further decay. Although there are still many well maintained and livable hutongs all over Beijing, those in the downtown area are disappearing at an increasingly rapid pace. Although most people go willingly, many are being forced out or evicted from their homes against their will. Recent cases in the United States concerning property and the law of eminent domain remind us that this is a problem in many countries, not just a Chinese problem.

As we reached the local restaurant, they both talked about their time as athletes in China. They are both still in good shape, Yang lifting weights, jogging and both of them riding their bikes when they can around town. May teaches swimming and remembered that after a long and hard day of athletic training, she was required to go watch army movies at night. She started her sports career as a swimmer in Shenyang when she was eight or nine years old, competing for the city in national meets. Later on she joined the PAL (Army) pentathlon team and competed for a number of years. They were both very pleasant and open about their experiences. I wished I had more time to interview them both in detail since they had so much to share.

As we went our separate ways I left the restaurant on my rented bicycle, heading back towards the Beijing Grand Hotel where the “new Beijing,” the land of cell phones, rock music and corporate icons enveloped the flat landscape bordered by the wide avenues, cars, busses and yes, bicycles, and lots of them. In this new Beijing, I was often approached by college-aged students, at first making conversation and then finally telling me about their “exhibition” which I learned the hard way was a front for selling their art work to the gullible tourist. Others were a front for a jewelry store or even still a massage parlor. I did however use it as an opportunity to ask them what

they thought of the Olympics. Most of them thought the Olympics were a good thing but some felt money was being diverted from important projects, many of them hurting the farmers in the greater Beijing area.

Riding a bike around Beijing is one of the best ways to experience the city but it is not for the faint of heart. Despite the hazards, I felt most at ease on the bike, as if people accepted me more as a local – one of them so to speak – and a strange thing happened, it wasn't the local Beijinger's that would stare anymore, it was the foreigners seeming to wonder what a foreigner was doing taking his life in his own hands on a bike. As I rode the city, I wondered where all of the kids were playing, where the next Chinese Olympian was practicing because I didn't see many kids playing, no soccer fields, basketball courts or even much grass at all. I rounded a corner on my bike near the east side of Tiananmen Square where I did see some kids playing soccer on the concrete courtyard in front of one of the national buildings that borders the square. Perhaps this is where the young athletes refine their skills and gain the passion one needs to get in the zone, wu wei, as famous philosopher Chuang Tzu might have said, and become one with the sword.

As with most big cities, the downtown is not where you typically find outdoor sport facilities. In spite of Beijing being a somewhat concrete city, I stumbled upon a large athletic complex made up of several soccer fields and at least ten full-size outdoor basketball courts crowded with young athletes. The soccer fields were not real grass, a hard thing to have in downtown Beijing, but were nice fields with what looked like new artificial turf. The soccer fields were not crowded with players, but Yao Ming, the Houston Rockets basketball star from China would be proud to see the hard fought games being played on the basketball courts all day long. The athletic complex was sponsored by a consortium of local and international companies such as Nike (Suzhou) Sports Co., Ltd., Yue Yuen Industrial Holdings (Limited) and a number of athletic shoe companies. I continued

on my bike tour that morning and soon found myself behind a large group of what appeared to be high-school aged kids, all wearing sweat suits and carrying backpacks stuffed with balls and tennis rackets as they headed out for the day. I was curious where these kids were going so I followed them to what appeared to be a school. It was a Saturday so perhaps they were heading to school anyway or maybe it was a special sports day.

## **Sports and the Olympic Movement in China**

It wasn't always like this in Beijing. China's ancient culture never really lent itself to sports. Throughout its history, sports in China were looked down upon, as something for the rural or lower class. Many "Western" sports did not complement Chinese culture. Chinese culture in this sense was the aristocratic one, where the dress of the Qing dynasty court for example, with the required headdress and long gowns, made it hard to play a team sport, let alone an individual sport. The long hair and ponytail (in China referred to as "queue") often came untied, hitting opponents and disrupting games. By 1911, the long hairstyle and queue were no longer required and more western sports were introduced through missionaries and the influence of foreign cultures.

China's history in the modern Olympics dates back to the first Los Angeles Summer Games in 1932 with one athlete, Liu Changchun, a track and field participant who was eliminated in the preliminary rounds of the 100- and 200-meter dashes. China took part in the 1936 Berlin Games, and again when the games resumed after World War II in 1948 in London. After the Communist victory in China in 1949, sports were deemphasized, especially on the international front. Consequently, from the 1952 games in Helsinki through the 1980 Moscow games, mainland China did not take part. During these years, "China" in the games meant Taiwan.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's, sports in the post-Mao era began to change on a national level. Sports were no longer simply ping-pong diplomacy like they were in April of 1971 when a

group of fifteen American table tennis players and three journalists were the first delegation to visit China since Mao Tse-Tung took control of the country in 1949.<sup>5</sup> During this period, many of the national level sporting events were staged “friendship” competitions. During the Mao Zedong years, Beijing boycotted just about every international sports event, refusing to share the same venue with fellow Chinese across the Taiwan Strait. China did participate in a few staged events, ‘Friendship First, Competition Second’ was the theme of these so-called events that were called the “Friendship Games.”<sup>6</sup> In 1979, as a result of the normalization of diplomatic relations between the United States, China rejoined the IOC after an eleven-year absence due to the unsatisfactory resolution of the “Two China Problem.”<sup>7</sup> In the second Los Angeles games in 1984, the mainland Chinese reappeared, although Taiwan appeared as Chinese Taipei.<sup>8</sup> Despite a last minute boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics by most of the communist contingent, China competed, winning its first Olympic gold medal at the Los Angeles Olympics. The Chinese women’s volleyball team dominated the international volleyball scene, winning three world titles, including the 1984 Olympic Gold Medal. This was the beginning of what is now an Olympic “gold rush” for the Chinese – their athletes continue to gain confidence in themselves on the international sporting arena.

Four years later in the summer of 1988, South Korea hosted successful games in Seoul and China began to think about its own bid for the 2000 games. They put together a strong bid, but the year 2000 games were not awarded to China in 1993, only four years after the Tiananmen Square “incident” that occurred in the spring of 1989. Despite a close vote (they lost to Sydney by two votes) the international community just wasn’t ready for a Chinese Summer Olympics. The Beijing Olympic Committee decided not to bid for the 2004 games, with Athens being a strong sentimental favorite after losing the bid for the 100-year anniversary games in 1996 to Atlanta. The fact was though that China wasn’t ready in the year 2000 and would have to wait for their time to come. In

the meantime, China reinvented itself as one of the top medal-winning countries, winning twenty-eight gold medals in the 2000 Sydney games and thirty-two in the recently completed 2004 Athens games. Their resurgence at the Olympic stage has drawn worldwide attention. They have over 17,000 athletes in their elite training system while the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) system only has capacity for 1000 athletes on a permanent basis.<sup>9</sup>

## **Hutongs and the pace of change**

As Beijing continues to change daily, racing to put on a show the world will never forget, the pace of change itself comes with its own set of cultural problems as the city and the suburbs grow rapidly. And with that rapid change, it is “old Beijing” that is in large part being demolished to make way for the new China. I spent a lot of time in old Beijing, the hutongs south of Tiananmen Square and those north of the Forbidden City, where I wandered on my bicycle to escape the traffic and noise of the new Beijing, the land of cars, gaudy department stores and new “villages” that are quickly replacing the hutongs. These hutongs were full of kids and old residents alike and although they were dusty and crumbling to a certain degree, they have a charm and quiet unlike the “new” Beijing.

As the hutongs continue to be replaced, suicides and attempted suicides were part of a wave of almost daily protests that swept cities across China from September to December 2003.<sup>10</sup> Although this story has been told by now, I think it is worth repeating once again. Many of those being evicted are landowners who claim they are not being given fair compensation for their land, especially those in Beijing, most of them not able to afford an apartment in the neighborhoods that they are being evicted from with the paltry sums they are getting. Most local officials point out that these residents are in fact being paid for their property and the developers and the government should expect them to leave their property as agreed.

Is this destruction and subsequent rebuilding of old Beijing being brought on by the pending Olympic games or is it simply a result of the change that is taking place all over China as it continues to grow and modernize? It appears to be the former, as these quiet and graceful neighborhoods continue to be demolished at an unprecedented rate in an attempt to clean up the downtown areas of Beijing for the 2008 Olympic games. I couldn't help but wonder whether the founder of the modern Olympic games, Pierre de Coubertin, would be happy with what he would see as the Olympics continue into the 21 century. Was the Beijing government staying true to the definition of Olympism as defined by the International Olympic Committee (IOC)?

“Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole, the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.”<sup>11</sup>

Riding a bicycle around the hutongs, you are immediately transported to an old world, very quiet except for the occasional vendor selling something from his cart bellowing out his goods, with small bird cages hanging outside doors with singing birds, generational families living together as well as a host of other things that beckon of times passed. Many of the hutongs in the downtown area are depressingly dirty and seem to be falling apart. Was this because the residents had already succumbed to a local developer and their hutong was soon to be replaced by a high-rise business park, department store or an apartment building? The remnants of the broken hutongs are usually cemented or walled off to seal the now smaller hutong. These new dividing walls are often laced with broken glass to keep the hutong residents from climbing over and entering the new buildings.

Other hutongs are ready to be transformed, crumbling behind walls that announce the beginning of the end in many of these neighborhoods. Sometimes a portion of the hutong remains

livable, but you wonder how long they will last as they hobble along with the dust and rubble of construction leaving a thick layer of dust all over the remaining hutong. Occasionally you see someone going into the buildings, perhaps refusing to leave their home. The occasional rickshaw is likely now a tourist attraction and in the north part of the city, groups of rickshaws provide tours of the historic hutong neighborhoods. However, most of those that remain in the downtown area do not have such tours and are literally cut in half, sometimes by a new street, a new office building or perhaps a new apartment complex or hotel. Often times a lone tree sits by itself in the middle of the dust and rubble of a torn city block, once the center of the hutong that surrounded it, now awaiting its fate at the hands of the developers.

## **Labor Pains**

With this construction boom comes jobs, and plenty of them. The laborers are often from outside Beijing, as evidenced by the shantytowns, living quarters literally thrown up near the construction sites. Early in the morning, many of these laborers are dropped off in vans while others live in small cramped living quarters, often times in the neighboring hutong (or what's left of it). Groups of telephones are set up near the work site to allow the laborers to call home. Restaurants on wheels appear early in the morning to feed the crews as they get ready to work, most of them showing up for work between five and six o'clock in the morning and seven or eight o'clock in the evening.

The sounds of cracking eggs, the twirl of the spatula and the exchange of money cannot drain out the sound of the job site running around the clock. The large cranes (not the whooping cranes made famous in Chinese landscape paintings) and the sound of heavy equipment can be heard as the laborers, many carrying shovels, an axe pick or a wrench arrive for their shift. I was a little nervous at some of the job sites, as a foreigner with digital camera in hand is not a welcomed

visitor. Despite not speaking the language I was told to leave a couple of times and other times I just clicked pictures as I rolled along on my bicycle. There is a universal sign that is understood by most that gives you the feeling that you are not welcome. Many of the new construction projects have fancy names and colorful billboards announcing their arrival, with such names as Glory City, the name of a huge residential complex in the downtown southeast of Tiananmen Square. Whether it is on a Sunday morning or Friday evening, the same sites and sounds can be found as the clock ticks on these new construction jobs.

## **Human-Rights Debate continues**

As Beijing accepted the Olympic flag from Athens, the Communist government realized more than ever that it would be under increased international scrutiny over the next four years, on everything from human rights to its labor policies. The extraordinary preparation by the Chinese brings to the foreground important social issues, the most glaring being human-rights violations. On the one hand, the Chinese political establishment adopted the term “human rights” as a sign of its modernity. On the other hand, aided and abetted by the traditional vagueness of international human-rights law, the definition of human rights has been tailored to the interests of the Chinese regime.<sup>12</sup>

To some degree, the Chinese are still arguing that human rights are an internal affair. Xiao Tian, deputy secretary general of the Chinese Olympic Committee in Athens, when asked to comment on the games said, “We hope to concentrate mainly on sports performance rather than human rights. I’m sorry to tell you the understanding of human rights differs as far as nationalities, history, culture and religions (are concerned), and maybe conflict will arise in discussion of this

topic. I'm sorry, I cannot elaborate further.”<sup>13</sup> And so it goes, the party line it seems, a scripted answer to an ongoing and difficult question.

Things are different in China than they were in Greece. Leading up to the Olympic games in the summer of 2004, Greece was not finished until literally the last minute. During the preparations for the Athens games, if even a broken piece of pottery was unearthed, all construction had to stop to bring in experts to see if it was part of an archeological treasure. Beijing on the other hand has pursued unconstrained development with what on the surface appears to be little thought for preserving ancient artifacts. On the positive side, there is continuing dialogue about human rights both in international conferences and in publications. However China continues to act in ways that contradict their newfound willingness to discuss human rights. As a result, China continues to be criticized by Chinese dissidents abroad, by NGO's like Amnesty International, and by Western governments.<sup>14</sup> Soon after the closing ceremonies in Athens, Human Rights Watch launched a “China Olympic Watch” website to monitor issues of censorship and rights abuses in China leading up to the games.<sup>15</sup>

### **Good news, bad news**

It is kind of a good news, bad news scenario when dealing with China's Olympic preparation so far. On an economic level, China continues to do the right things, effectively cooling their growth to avoid a hard landing that can come with such unprecedented growth. As we close in on the year 2006, the CCP is continuing to put policies in place that are cooling down the economy. One of the areas that were impacted early was the construction of the marquee Olympic venues. They continually reevaluated plans and at one point were considering whether to scrap as many as half the new venues for the Olympic games. Yan Huang, who is leading the planning and construction side

of Beijing's Olympic bid said at the time, "There is a real debate going on about these big projects – whether it's appropriate to be spending so much money on them and hiring foreign architects instead of Chinese."<sup>16</sup> Athens spent an unprecedented \$12 billion on the 2004 games and early estimates from Beijing are in the range of \$37 billion, more than three times what Athens paid. They continue to build though and most of the venue's will be ready for the "practice" games in 2007 leading up to the opening ceremonies on August 8, 2008.

China has also made great strides athletically as evidenced by the success of their Olympic team at the Sydney and Athens games. Their great leap forward occurred in Athens when Liu Xiang not only won the 110-meter hurdles, he crushed all rivals in a world-record-tying 12.91 seconds. Most of the Chinese reporters and officials were just as shocked as any of them mostly because it came four years early.<sup>17</sup> Not only did he win the race, he was well ahead of the silver and bronze medal contestants. Chinese nationalism is increasing as a result as is the cultural identity of the Chinese people themselves. After the Chinese performance in Greece, winning 32 gold medals, second only to the United States which won 35 gold medals, the goal now is winning, not simply participating or making friends as Chairman Mao may have exalted. Gu Yaoming, general secretary of the Chinese Olympic Committee (COC) was quoted as saying, "To have a successful Olympic Games, first we have to have good facilities and management, and second our athletes should win more medals. I don't say in the year 2008 we can pass the United States. But we will try."<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile Beijing's rabid urban expansion continues and the costs keep rising, with a total estimate now close to \$40 billion, still more than three times that of the 2004 Athens Games. Tourism will increase as a result of the Olympic Games, but the many natural and manmade tourist attractions, the Great Wall, the 2,200-year-old Terra Cotta Army at Xi'an and Guilin with its beautiful scenery already are drawing more and more tourist each year. The tourism industry in

Beijing has benefited tremendously since the July 2001 announcement of the successful Olympic bid and the many infrastructure improvements make travel in and around Beijing easier. By 2006, Beijing will revamp some 200 km (124 miles) of inner-city roads to form an expressway system and, at the same time, complete the fifth and sixth ring roads around the city.<sup>19</sup>

As the preparations for the games continue and the business climate improves and policies continue to change, as evidenced by the recent devaluation of the yuan, if they haven't done so already, most companies are asking themselves what their China strategy is and if they don't have one, they are asking themselves "Why not?" All areas of the economy are being targeted, including the high tech industry. In 2003, there were 22 million personal computers sold in China, the second largest market for personal computers in the world, the first being the United States. In 2003 alone, the Chinese telecom market had over 269 million wireless phone subscribers, with over 1.7 billion instant messages being sent.<sup>20</sup> Fast-food giant McDonald's also announced in February 2004 that it plans to nearly double its restaurants in China before the 2008 Summer Olympics. McDonald's operates 580 restaurants in China, but plans to increase that number to 1,000 by the time the 2008 games begin. The company has also signed an eight-year renewal to sponsor the Olympic Games for an undisclosed sum until 2012. The company also said it signed up Chinese basketball star Yao Ming of the Houston Rockets as an official spokesman. He will participate in promotions tied to the Olympics.<sup>21</sup>

## **Nationalistic fever**

At the Asian Cup in the summer of 2004, the downside of nationalism reared its ugly head. Chinese fans heckled and booed the Japanese team and the Japanese national anthem during the final match, of which the Chinese team lost 3-1. Some fans went to the extent of massing outside the hotel where the Japanese team was staying and proceeded to clash with riot police while

chanting anti-Japanese slogans.<sup>22</sup> Is this a sign of things to come in China or more specifically is this what the world can expect at the 2008 Summer Games in Beijing? In the spring of 2005 we saw additional issues between Japan and China, with a textbook being released in Japan that did not properly address Japan's wartime crimes in China. Protests were held all over China, this can also be viewed as a positive development in the rights of Chinese citizens to voice their opinions in public without fear of retribution. Despite the fact of Japan's wartime occupation of China and its reluctance to apologize properly in the eyes of the Chinese (and the world at large), could China's nationalistic passions interfere with its ability to host a safe and friendly 2008 Olympics?

Perhaps this is a time to return to Chairman Mao's frequent assertion that "in sports, it is the friendship, not the victory, that really counts!" Nationalism can also bring out the best in people, and act as a positive agent for change as in another example at the 2004 Asian Cup, when the "Red card to Child Labor" campaign was featured, with ads and special "Red Card" t-shirts worn by 22 children as part of the halftime show of the semi-final match between China and Iran. This campaign was organized to bring the message that Child Labor is unacceptable to people beyond the reach of traditional lobbying methods. There are estimated to be more than 130 million child workers in the Asian and Pacific regions.<sup>23</sup>

## **Looking towards the future**

Are the Olympic Games a form of nationalism that all Chinese can share? As globalization makes the world smaller and smaller, we are seeing instances of what University of Chicago anthropologist Arjun Appaduari (*Modernity at Large*:1996) calls "postnational formation" a social engagement of sorts that is masked in the multinational organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) such as the IOC.<sup>24</sup> Using the IOC in this instance, are the Olympic Games a form of nationalism that all Chinese can share? Or are the Olympics becoming a part of this

postnational formation, as patriotism and nationalism get lost in the global community? Or can sport, in particular, the Olympic Games act an agent for positive change in China and the world at large?

As the culture of China changes, the “body culture” is changing too as a result of the approaching Beijing 2008 Games. Susan Brownell, author of “Training the Body for China” (1995:30) a book about sports in the Peoples Republic looked further into what social scientist Marcel Mauss, in 1939, described as “body techniques.” As an athlete herself participating in the 1986 National College Games of the People’s Republic of China, she reflected on how “body culture reflects the internationalization and incorporation of culture. Body culture is embodied culture.”<sup>25</sup> The “body culture” of the younger generation has indeed changed, and as a result, we are not only seeing more gold medals by Chinese athletes but more confidence in all areas of international politics. The example of body culture and how it is changing in China is something to watch as sports in general and the Olympics ideals in particular help bring positive and gradual change to China on the whole.

China is also stepping up to the plate politically, taking the initiative and making a more positive impact in all facets of international political and economic forums in the region. They have taken the leading role in the six-party talks to help defuse the North Korea Nuclear disarmament problem. Despite these advances in the political landscape, at times it seems as though the Beijing government is taking two steps forward and one step backwards as evidenced by their recent crackdown once again on internet browsing, scouring the internet and putting a lock on any references say to democracy or other items deemed a risk to their “national security” or national political agenda.

With the attempts by the CCP to “cool off” the economy to avoid a hard economic landing, they are using the 2008 Olympic Games in a similar fashion, to “cool off” the dissent and slowly change in positive direction, thereby effectively avoiding what could be change too fast. Despite the destruction of much of old Beijing and the many hutongs in the downtown areas, these forced evictions are a challenge throughout the world, including the United States as evidenced by recent eminent domain rulings by the US Supreme court. A fair and equal treatment of the inhabitants of a city or village, whether that village is on the side of a mountain where a new dam is being built, in the path of progress or modernization as we are seeing in Beijing, or in the middle of a new proposed business park as in Landover, Connecticut, should be the ultimate goal for all nations.

As the Olympics approach, human rights should improve, perhaps slower than the international community hopes, but in the end they will improve. With the rapidly changing landscape in China, the ideological landscape will change as well as Beijing host the biggest party the world will ever see. Stay tuned, as China slowly opens and lands softly in 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> Dyreson, Mark. *Making the American Team*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998. p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Bromwell, Susan. *Training the Body for China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Fainaru-Wada. “China’s ‘Strategy Gold’ pays off.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 29 Aug. 2004. Part W. p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Calhoun, Donald W. *Sport, Culture, and Personality*. Champaign: Human Kinetics Publishers, 1987. p. 141.

<sup>5</sup> Ramsey, Pat. San Diego Table Tennis Association. [http://www.sdttta.org/pp\\_diplomacy.html](http://www.sdttta.org/pp_diplomacy.html). Accessed May 20, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> YongYan, Li. “Chinese athlete: ‘I owe it to the party’” *Asia Times*. Accessed on 13 Dec. 2004.

<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FH26Ad05.html>

<sup>7</sup> Bromwell, p. 30.

<sup>8</sup> Glionna, John. M., and Abrahamson, Alan. “Athens 2004, The Games Plan for China: Olympic Superpower by ‘08.” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 Aug. 2004. Part A, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Glionna, John. M., and Abrahamson, Alan. Part A, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Human Rights Watch, Vol. 16, No. 4 (C). March 2004. p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Bromwell, p. 31. (as referenced in the International Olympic Committee 1991:7)

<sup>12</sup> Vermeer, Eduard B. *China's legal reforms and their political limits*. Richmond: Curzon Press, 2002. Hintzen, Geor. *To Have One's Cake and Eat It? Human Rights in Chinese Culture*. p. 50.

<sup>13</sup> Sports Illustrated. *The Race Just Started*. v101 no9. 6 Sept. 2004. p. 53.

<sup>14</sup> Vermeer, Eduard B. p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Bezlova, Antoaneta. "Rights: 2008 Olympics will open China to the World's scrutiny." IPS-Inter Press Service. 3 September, 2004. The website, <http://www.olympicwatch.org> was created by the Human Rights Watch organization and contains a number of articles and information on human rights violations and areas to watch for the upcoming 2008 games.

<sup>16</sup> Hawthorne, Christopher. "China pulls up the Drawbridge." *New York Times*, 19 Sept. 19, 2004. Part AE, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Sports Illustrated. *The Race Just Started*. v101 no9. 6 Sept. 2004. p. 52.

<sup>18</sup> Sports Illustrated. *ibid.* p. 52.

<sup>19</sup> Salloum. p. 165.

<sup>20</sup> Shinal, John. "China hatches new firms." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 26 Sept. 26, 2004. p. J2. (Sources: Chinese Consulate (San Francisco), Garnett & Helfrich Captial, Carlyle Group; Mohr Davidow Ventures; Piper Jaffray & Co.)

<sup>21</sup> United Press International, "McDonald's: More stores for China Olympics." Beijing, 26 Feb. 2004.

<sup>22</sup> The Economist. "Grudge Match. The ugly side of Chinese nationalism." 14 Aug. 14, 2004. p. 40.

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/public/releases/yr2004/pr04\\_25.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/public/releases/yr2004/pr04_25.htm). International Labour Organization. Accessed 20 November, 2004.

<sup>24</sup> Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at large*. Minneapolis:University of Minnesota Press, 1996. p. 167. Appadurai mentions the Olympic movement as the best studied of examples of postnational formations. "Perhaps the best studied of these examples is the Olympic movement, certainly the largest modern instance if movement born in the context of European concerns with world peace in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This movement, with its special form of dialectical play between national and transnational allegiances (MacAloon 1981; Kan, MackAloon, and DaMatta 1988) represent only the most spectacular among a series of sites and formations on which the uncertain future of the nation-state will turn."

<sup>25</sup> Bromwell, p. 11.