

# **Beijing 2008 – the Games of Reform?**

*An analysis of the debate concerning China as Olympic host and a  
normative evaluation of the IOC's responsibility*

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# 1. Introduction

*"A journey of a thousand miles began with a single step."<sup>1</sup>*

## 1.1 Miss World 2002 in Nigeria

“Two weeks ago, Isioma Daniel would have had no idea that writing an article about the Miss World beauty contest would lead to religious riots, more than 200 deaths and calls for her to be killed.”

(<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2518977.stm> )

The incident that took place in Nigeria in November 2002 illustrates in many ways a central assumption in this thesis: that an international event may stir up differences, provoke internal as well as external reactions and have a profound impact on a host country. In some aspects the Nigerian example is very different from the case of China and the Olympics, which I am going to focus on in this thesis, but in others it illustrates perfectly the relevance. Despite the differences, hosting an international event is for both Nigeria and China an honour as well as a challenge. Having the world's attention focused on the country with all its characteristics represents opportunities as well as risks, and will provoke criticism and debate among observers. The friction of conflicting values, internally and with the outside world, is intensified and brought to public attention, and may spark an open conflict like the one witnessed in Nigeria, as well as other, less tangible effects. It may even leave imprints and result in changes in the host country.

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<sup>1</sup> Quote taken from Cranmer *The Sayings of Lao-Tzu*, 1950:51.

In the case of China, as we shall see in this thesis, the core of the debate has been - to give a brief and preliminary account - whether the country should be allowed to host a prestigious event such as the Olympic Games, based on the country's unsatisfactory human rights record.

Nigeria, on the other hand, won the right to host the pageant after the Nigerian Agbani Darego was crowned Miss World 2001 - the first black African to win the title. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2507595.stm>) The country got a prestigious occasion to present itself to the world, to show that Nigeria held the same international standard as other countries that had hosted the event in the past. This simple beauty contest became a critical test regarding the state of the Nigerian society and the stability of the country. No one predicted the devastating outcome. Therefore the shock was great when a newspaper-joke about the prophet Mohammed and the Miss World contest led to uprisings, violence and turmoil in the Northern Province. The authorities in Nigeria were unable to control the furious protesters, and could no longer guarantee the security of the contestants, so eventually, after four days of violent riots the outcome of the crisis was to move the event to London. More than two hundred people were killed, over a thousand injured, and the Northern city of Kaduna, where the uprisings for the most part had taken place, was left in ruins. (Information provided by various news sources on web: [www.nrk.no](http://www.nrk.no), [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com), [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com))

## 1.2 Nigeria and China

There are, as I have already mentioned, many differences between the Miss World 2002 contest in Nigeria and the Olympic Games scheduled to be held in Beijing, China, in 2008. But many problems associated with the latter case, which I will deal with in this thesis, were further underlined with the Miss World pageant 2002. If we briefly compare the two, there are obvious similarities. They are both international, prestigious events, globally televised and watched by millions of people around the world. Both host countries have received critical attention and been subjected to wide debate in the West because of their human rights practices. With the Nigerian case, long before the riots erupted, the contest had come under fire from women's groups and human rights activists for picking Nigeria, where women in the mainly Muslim north have been sentenced to death by stoning for bearing children out of wedlock. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/2562471.stm>) This practice is in clear

opposition to international human rights standards, and many different actors, including Miss World contestants from several countries, were opposed to the pageant being held in Nigeria on these grounds. They used the above-mentioned example of violations to pressure the government into re-evaluating these practices. Various participants threatened to withdraw from the pageant if the Sharia sentences were upheld, and similar pressure for improvement of human rights has been put on Beijing as host to the Games in 2008. I am not of the opinion that China will experience the same riots and devastations as Nigeria did; among other reasons the content of the Olympic Games is not as controversial to the Chinese as the beauty pageant was to some religious groups in Nigeria. Still, a similar spotlight effect from the outside world will put a pressure on China in relation to the Olympics as well. As we shall see in this thesis, many interpretations have been put forward about the possible effects the Olympics in Beijing may have on China and the human rights situation, and the different predications point to positive as well as negative effects. My aim here is to take a systematic approach and analyse the debate, to provide a framework for understanding what exactly the controversy is about, and thereby preparing the ground for a normative assessment of the dispute.

### 1.3 Why write about this debate?

An important reason why I chose to write a thesis about this subject is the fact that although the debate has been there and the IOC decision is clear - and most probably irrevocable - this nevertheless is a potent issue that will stay on the international agenda, becoming increasingly important in the years leading up to 2008. Possibly, for some observers with an attentive eye on this issue - and not too distracted by the sporting events - a peak of interest will be during the actual Games, when some side effects may be most evident. Hopefully there will be an analysis and a concluding afterthought in retrospect. This thesis is certainly an attempt to contribute to that happening. I want to make the arguments which have been put forward in the debate explicit, so they can be either confirmed or rejected when the verdicts are to be passed. Also, the questions posed and assumptions put forth in this debate are relevant not exclusively in connection with China and the Olympics, but also in connection with similar large-scale events in other non-democratic countries and countries with serious human rights



problems. Nigeria is but one example here. How can potential negative consequences be identified, taken into consideration and possibly prevented? Should human rights standards be a measure used to determine whether a host country is suitable or not? These questions are implicit, but only partly or to a limited degree confronted in this thesis. The main aim of this thesis is to present the case of China and the Olympics per se, analyse the debate in a systematic way, and approach some of the broader and more general questions towards the end. If not all possible questions related to this issue are treated, at least the general framework provided by this study can hopefully make this task easier for others investigating this subject, either when dealing with this specific case or with other related cases. The task of this thesis is therefore to investigate the debate and its foundation, in order to extract its various components, preparing the ground for a normative assessment of China as host to the Olympic Games in 2008 and the IOC's role in this context.

## 1.4 Formulating the problem

This thesis tries to answer not one, but several related questions. A formulation of the problem could be narrowed down to, and split up into, the following:

1. **Why** did we have a debate about China hosting the Olympics?

Hereunder the sub-questions

- -What **actors** have been involved in the debate?
  - -What are their **positions**?
2. Based on a normative discussion with human rights as an inherent measure, and the Olympic Charter in mind, **should** China host the Games?

## 1.5 The structure of the thesis

After this introductory chapter which deals with the main problem of the thesis, methodological aspects, time frame and sources, I go on in chapter two to presenting the debate with its characteristic features: actors, positions and a comparative assessment of the changes between the first and the second Chinese bid. The second part thus analyses the *agency* and *context* of the debate.

In chapter three we approach the background material which to a large extent explains why the debate has come up, looking into the human rights situation in China, the Olympic legacy and previous hallmark events in China. Chapter three also further underlines my reasons for selecting this specific topic.

In chapter four we go into the actual debate, and study a selection of the many arguments put forth, categorizing them into four sub-groups; short-term and long-term, positive and negative effects.

In chapter five a normative evaluation is conducted and concluding remarks are made, putting forth a normative challenge for the IOC in preventing human rights violations.

## 1.6 Methodological problems

When investigating a problem, it is important to make conscious choices as to how the study should be conducted, and take into consideration potential methodological problems inherent in the various approaches. A consistent methodology provides a good help to the researcher herself, and at the same time a common set of “rules” is a prerequisite for mutual control and criticism within a scientific community (Hellevik 1999: 6). Here I will try to make clear which choices I have made in relation to this thesis and discuss some of the weaknesses. Making this clear from the beginning provides the reader with the opportunity to be involved in this central process, and also makes the choices which shapes and colours the results evident and open to scrutiny.

## 1.7 Three methods of investigation and evaluation

This thesis is threefold; it is composed of three central and different, yet complementary elements. Firstly, the thesis includes a **case analysis** of an event; the debate about China as host to the Olympic Games. Robert K. Yin defines a case study as empirical research where one investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin 1994:13). This is highly applicable to this debate and its context, and part of the reason why I have included chapter 2 and 3 before dealing with the arguments in the debate in chapter 4. In *The Dictionary of Political Analysis* (Plano 1982:16-17) "Case Study" is defined as:

*Research aimed at uncovering detailed information about a particular political event or phenomenon. The case study deals with a single case or event, as contrasted with comparative studies or the sampling of many cases through some form of survey research. The case researcher ordinarily does not rigidly observe the canons of scientific methods. Rather, the effectiveness of the case study depends upon the common sense and imagination of the investigator, the thoroughness and objectivity with which the study is conducted.*

I find my thesis to fit well with the above cited descriptions, but some elements of other methods are also employed, which I will now turn to.

The methodology also comprises a **comparative** element, in contrasting among other elements the two bids to host the Games, the Olympic legacy and previous hallmark events in China. In *The Dictionary of Political Analysis* (ibid: 24) "Comparative Study" is defined as:

*A form of inquiry involving the determination of differences and similarities between two or more units of analysis. A political event or case can be compared*

*with other similar cases, with hypothetical cases, or with cases occurring in a time sequence.*

By comparing and contrasting the different elements, the background is presented and the case study is put into a wider framework, further underlining the relevance of it.

Finally there is a **normative** element, hereunder the evaluating and concluding chapter 5, where the general framework provided in the first two main parts is thoroughly discussed. In *The Dictionary of Political Analysis* (ibid: 81) "normative" is defined as:

*Pertaining to value judgements or standards. In political analysis a normative statement or theory expounds a subjective preference in contrast to an empirical statement that seeks to describe what actually exists. While normative statements incorporate a "should" or "ought" question or judgement, empirical statements involve an "is" type of statement that can be tested and have its accuracy verified. Normative positions are not subject to scientific testing or verification because they cannot be proved either true or false. They are philosophical positions, culture-centred and relative to time and place, over which reasonable (and sometimes unreasonable) persons may disagree.*

However, a normative argument or position can be more or less well founded, something which this definition does not take into consideration. There is a crucial difference between just opinionating and presenting a more comprehensive point of view. What I will strive to do here is the latter, by studying the material in depth, making a serious effort to understand the opposing parties' points of views and approach the problematic issues in a nuanced way.

The first two parts together constitute an analysis in order to prepare the ground empirically and analytically for the normative debate. This thesis is thus partly explorative and descriptive (Hellevik 1999:88) and partly normative. An objection to this approach could be that it is too wide, but I found that a more narrow approach would result in an incomplete understanding of the contested subject.

## 1.8 Limiting the content and the aspect of time

The debate I am about to investigate has unfolded over time and in many different media, something which makes it challenging to the selection of what to include. This thesis deals with a contemporary, still ongoing debate. To some extent, the debate forms part of the more general human rights debate about China, which became extensive after 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1989 with the Tiananmen crackdown. This is a commonly accepted reference in time when dealing with human rights in China, and I too will emphasize this as a kind of "starting point" for the current human rights focus and pressure on China. The specific debate about the Olympics, which is a central concern in this thesis, was initiated in 1992 with the Beijing Bid Committee's first bid for the Olympic Games 2000. This round of the debate lasted up until 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1993 when the Beijing Bid lost to Sydney. The debate was mainly silenced after the Chinese defeat, but resurrected with the second bid initiated in 2000. The debate once again was heated and intense up until winning the bid on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2001, and still some time after this. My focus here will concentrate on this time frame, with a naturally strong focus on the comments put forward immediately before and after the two bids and decisions in 1992/93 and in 2000/01. The second debate is the most central, with the first bid functioning as a framework and contrastive aspect outlining the "history" of the debate. The background material is in general from 1989 and up until the present time, except for some longer historical recapitulations when dealing with the Olympic Games.

## 1.9 Objectivity

I have aimed at presenting a balanced debate, and have made efforts at introducing the opposing parties as objectively as possible, giving each point of view about the same amount of space. As to the arguments presented, consequentialist ethics is found in the various arguments in the debate, both from NGO and others. Other arguments are more deontological, and some constitute a combination of the two. I have not tried to separate them into different categories based on the ethical sub-categories they fall into. I also do not take a stand as to which ethical line of thought is more preferable. However, Universal Human Rights, as in the

United Nation's Declaration and other UN conventions and treaties, provide a general deontological or duty-ethical framework. It is an assumption and a starting point in my thesis that there are some basic and universally recognized principles, broadly accepted and foundational, and this assumption is not critically questioned in this thesis.

It is impossible for an observer to be completely neutral, and although I have tried to present the debate and the background chapters in a neutral manner, it can be argued that even in the choice of topic itself for this thesis, there is a subjective opinion underneath (Hellevik 1999:433). I have allowed my more personal opinions to become apparent in the normative and concluding chapter towards the end. This is, then, presented as a more subjective account.

## 1.10 Using the internet as a source

A substantial part of the debate has taken place on the internet, and most of the arguments and analyses are still accessible there. Using the World Wide Web (hereafter the web) as a source of information and documentation has both positive and negative implications. A number of sources I will refer to have been downloaded from the web. This causes potential methodological problems concerning authenticating the sources. As Syvertsen (1998:12) points out, most web-sites are not subjected to any form of editorial control, and there are no routines for the standardization and updating of information. Despite this problem, I have used the web because a great part of the debate unfolded there<sup>2</sup>, and the most frequently consulted pages, those of the NGOs and central, western media are generally considered reliable sources of information. Some of the internet sources can also be found in written form, in newspapers or reports, but the immediate and easy access provided by the internet made the choice of this option preferable, thus saving much time and expenses, and providing the reader with an easy access to the sources. The reliance on the internet was also central because of the comparative part of the thesis, and the need for a continuous update on the debate. It is an ongoing and lively debate that thrives in the immediateness of the web, and therefore needs to be studied there.

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<sup>2</sup> For an example of the debate see this link: <http://www.brunchma.com/archives/Forum14/HTML/000529.html>

## 1.11 Concluding remarks

In this introductory chapter I have presented the topic for this thesis, and explained why I think it is important to examine this debate more closely. It is a case study of a debate concerning China, but hopefully some of the findings can be transferable to other similar situations, both future Olympic Games and other large-scale international events. I have discussed some of the aspects concerning methodology, and I have explained my choices of approach to the topic. I recognize that the choice of subject may already contain a subjective position, but I will strive to present the debate and arguments as objectively as possible, and I have made clear that the final normative chapter unavoidably constitutes a more subjective evaluation. Now in chapter two, I will go on to examine the debate from a general perspective, how, when and why the Chinese bid for the Olympics became such a disputed matter.

## 2. The process around the debate

*"When perfected people are in a chaotic society, many of them keep their virtue, their way, and their inexhaustible wisdom hidden, finally to die without saying anything. The world does not know to value their silence."*<sup>3</sup>

### 2.1 The debate

From where, and why, did the debate about China hosting the Olympics come? Who are the parties to this debate? What are their positions? These are basic questions to ask in order to approach the focus of this thesis. In this section I will introduce the debate, and without looking too deep into the actual arguments, which will be more closely dealt with in a separate chapter (chapter 4), we will look at the different *actors* who have been engaged in the debate, and briefly see what their *positions* are, as well as the *debate in general* and how it has evolved.

#### 2.1.1 *From where and why did the debate come?*

The origins of the debate can be traced back to 1992/93, when China made its first bid to host the Olympics for the Year 2000 Games. The international opposition to China getting the 2000 Games was strong, particularly since the bid was initiated only three years after the Tiananmen massacre that had shocked the world. Many Western critics and NGOs warned against resuming a normalisation of Sino-relations too fast, without any convincing signs of improvements in the human rights situation from the Chinese authorities (Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International). They broadly claimed that allowing Beijing to host the Olympics meant giving a stamp of approval to the regime and its human rights record, as well as causing more human rights problems.

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<sup>3</sup> Quote borrowed from *The Tao of Politics, Lessons of the Masters of Huainan*, Cleary 1990:94



Although it was a very close race between the two front-running cities, Sydney and Beijing, the critics were successful in their opposition, and Beijing lost the bid to Sydney, albeit by only two votes<sup>4</sup>.

Many claim that Beijing lost the first bid because of the strong opposition to the human rights situation, and to the undemocratic regime in China. With the second bid, the international climate had changed a great deal, and the IOC votes to some extent reflected this change.

From losing by two votes in 1993, Beijing this time won the bid by 56 out of 105 votes in 2001, with three more than the required majority and 34 votes ahead of second-placed Toronto (<http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/13/beijing.win/>).

This change may indicate in one sense a shift in the interpretations of which effects the Olympics will have, as well as a change in the perception of which measure is better for the human rights situation; i.e., whether *inclusion* or *exclusion* is the more effective approach in order to influence an actor and possibly bring about the desired changes. While the early 1990ies were marked by a more confrontational attitude in pressuring China on human rights, gradually there has been a shift towards dialogue and careful persuasion.

Since the debate first appeared with the bid in 1992/93, and then re-appeared in 2000/2001, it is interesting here to conduct a small, tentative comparison between the two bids and the two rounds of the debate. To get an understanding of the debate and to grasp the controversy better, we need some answers to among others the following questions:

- -Who are the central **actors** in the debate?
- -What are the parties' **positions**?
- -How do the positions **change** from 1993 to 2001?
- -What **kind of** debate is this? – Can it be seen as related to a more general **inclusion/exclusion** debate in political and academic circles?

The answers to these questions will provide a general starting point for this thesis, and guide us into the core of the dispute: the debated question of which *effects* hosting the Games may have on human rights in the country, and based on an evaluation of these arguments, we

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<sup>4</sup> Sydney won in the fourth and final round, with 45 over 43 IOC votes. (Drozdiak 1993: <http://the-tech.mit.edu/V113/N44/olympics.44w.txt.html>)

arrive at the normative question whether China *should* host the Games. These two broad questions will be treated in separate chapters later in this thesis.

## 2.2 The actors

The most prominent critics to China hosting the Games are represented by the large human rights non-governmental organisations (hereafter NGOs), most importantly Human Rights Watch (hereafter HRW) and Amnesty International (hereafter AI). Specifically concerning China, we also have the NGO Human Rights in China (HRIC), which actively has engaged this debate, as well as a number of other smaller, less known advocacy networks. On these NGOs' web pages, and in other media, much of the debate has unfolded. The NGOs as initiators have been pointing out some problematic aspects of China hosting the Games, and urging their "opponents": the International Olympic Committee (hereafter the IOC), IOC members and corporate Olympic sponsors, to act responsibly and demand guarantees from China that human rights violations will not take place in connection with the Games. The NGOs have urged the IOC to set up monitoring mechanisms to ensure that human rights are respected both in the construction period leading up to 2008, and also during the actual Olympic Games in 2008. The IOC and its various individual members have for the most part been reluctant to engage in this debate, claiming that sports and politics do not mix, and that they will only judge the applicants on technical criteria.

(<http://asia.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/12/china.games.politics.post/index.html>)

In a visit to Beijing in late August 2001, after the decision was made, IOC President Jacques Rogge said, "It is not the task of the IOC to get involved in monitoring, or in lobbying or in policing" the human rights situation in China

([http://iso.hrichina.org:8151/iso/article\\_id=1221&subcategory\\_id=204](http://iso.hrichina.org:8151/iso/article_id=1221&subcategory_id=204)). Still there have been statements from various IOC members defending the decision and emphasizing the potential positive effects, as well as giving statements actively supporting the Beijing bid before the final decisions both in 1993 and 2001. To give an example of this, the previous IOC President Samaranch has been reported as saying that holding the Olympics in Seoul in 1988 helped transform South Korea from a military dictatorship to a modern democracy, indicating with this that a similar process may take place in China

(<http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/12/beijing.olympics.post/>). These statements demonstrate the difficult balance the IOC and its members attempt to strike, trying in one part to keep neutral to “political issues” and rejecting the idea of involvement on behalf of the Olympic organization in the human rights issue, and on the other hand giving their optimistic interpretations in the dispute, thereby willingly sharing their political visions. The above mentioned statement by Samaranch, and other similar quotes from IOC members that we will come back to in chapter 4, prove that the IOC and its members have not managed to stay completely neutral or passive to the debate, despite the “sports and politics do not mix”-rhetoric frequently employed.

Besides the two most central actors mentioned above: the NGOs and the IOC, other actors in the debate include official statements from China, the EU, the USA as well as other governments, in particular Taiwan and Tibetan representatives. The Chinese Bid Committee has of course been very engaged in the debate, defending Beijing’s bid. Exile and dissident Chinese have stated their opinions, and various journalists and reporters in newspapers and other media have reported on the debate and put forward their own analyses. Individual representatives of different national parliaments and other individual actors have also had their say in the dispute, and as we shall see in chapter 4, the interpretations of the contested subject are many and divergent, ranging from outcries and fierce warnings to hesitation or warm embrace.

## 2.3 The positions

### 2.3.1 NGOs

Both HRW and AI were highly critical to the idea of China hosting the 2000 Games, in part because of the symbolic value and particular honour attached to hosting the first Olympics of the new Millennium, but mainly because the bid in 1992/1993 came only a few years after the Tiananmen massacre, and the general feeling was that China’s human rights record did not merit hosting this prestigious event. The openly stated as well as the more subtle resistance to China getting the 2000 Games, was replaced by a more nuanced approach

for the 2008 Games<sup>5</sup>. CNN journalist Kirsty Alfredson reported in an article “Beijing 2008: The Games of reform?” that “there was a significantly softer approach” from the critics to the second bid, and that rights groups too had “softened”.

(<http://asia.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/12/beijing.human.rights.post/index.html>)

AI did not have an official pro/con-stance on the 2008 bid, but stated that China had a long way to go to demonstrate a healthy human rights practice, and the organisation also questioned why the people of China had to wait for the Olympics to see their rights recognized (ibid.).

### 2.3.2 *Western governments*

The USA and the EU both made official statements opposing the Chinese bid in 1993, but did not issue any public statements clearly against the bid before the decision in 2001. The Bush administration declared itself “neutral” in the Olympic race in 2001, and the EU expressed concern about the human rights situation in China, but was not explicitly opposed to the bid. The debate, however, went on in parliamentary groups, and a few representatives were in favour of working for an official statement against the Chinese candidacy. The U.S. Congress was urged not to introduce a resolution opposing Beijing as host to the 2008 Olympics

([http://www.findarticles.com/cf\\_0/m0WDQ/2001\\_June\\_23/76143587/p1/article.jhtml?term=beijing+for+2008+games](http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m0WDQ/2001_June_23/76143587/p1/article.jhtml?term=beijing+for+2008+games)). A somewhat surprising fact in this connection was that it was the executive director of the Dui Hua Foundation, a non-profit organization promoting human rights in China and the United States, who advised the congressmen on this matter. This shows that some human rights NGO are reluctant to the tactics of openly confronting and criticising China, and discourage the use of exclusion and isolation policies. The work of The Dui Hua Foundation rests on the premise that:

*A well-informed dialogue conducted on the basis of equality and mutual respect between the United States and China will not only benefit human rights in the two countries, but will also narrow the differences between them.*

([http://www.duihua.org/about\\_duihua/about\\_main.htm](http://www.duihua.org/about_duihua/about_main.htm))

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<sup>5</sup> One of the foremost critics in 1993, HRW stated in 2001 that they were not *a priori* opposed to China getting the Games ([www.hrw.org/background/asia/q&a-china0305.htm](http://www.hrw.org/background/asia/q&a-china0305.htm)), indicating a more open and inclusive attitude compared to 1993.

This is in line with the inclusion/cooperation strategy. Overall, with the second bid, the actors in the debate emphasized a cooperative and engaging approach, giving weight to the possibility that the Games could have a positive impact on the human rights situation in the country, and that by excluding China little or nothing would be gained.

### *2.3.3 Chinese dissidents*

However, one voice, which spoke up against this tendency, was the prominent Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng. In 1993 he was freed after 14 years in jail just prior to Beijing's last attempt to host the Games. He supported the 2000-bid, and believed the Games would influence China's human rights situation in a positive way. But shortly after this bid failed he was rearrested by the Chinese authorities. Presently he lives in exile in the USA and has reversed his earlier support for the Olympics in Beijing, a shift which runs counter to the mainstream trend. Jingsheng's main objection is that the pressure on China for human rights is not as strong today as it was back in 1993. "Giving Beijing the Games will only encourage China to further violate human rights", he said to CNN.

(<http://asia.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/12/beijing.human.rights.post/index.html>)

His view is supported by other exiled dissidents, like Harry Wu, also living in the United States. They see the Olympics as a "reward", and they do not acknowledge China as worthy of receiving this.

### *2.3.4 Corporate sponsors*

The major targets of the NGO campaigns have been the IOC and big corporate sponsors to the Olympic Games, such as the Coca Cola Company. The IOC has repeatedly claimed that politics and sports do not mix, and that they only measure the candidate cities by technical, not political qualities (ibid.).

Despite this official stand, individual comments by IOC members have been made, proving that they are not immune from the discussion, nor united in opinion. The picture is mixed, with some IOC members supporting and others opposing the Olympics in Beijing, and we will come back to some of the arguments later in this thesis, in chapter 4.

Efforts to engage sponsors seem so far to have been unsuccessful. With nearly 1.3 billion people living and consuming in China, and a fast growing economy, the potential market is very big and tempting for foreign investors. So far the NGOs have not managed to convince the sponsors of the potential risks and downsides to their involvement, such as a tarnished corporate image if associated with the Chinese regime's violations (<http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/02/china0208htm>). Even before the vote in Moscow on July 13, a number of major companies began jostling to win the favour of Beijing city officials by aligning themselves with the Beijing 2008 bid. "The Beijing games would be a catalyst for a high level of economic activity in this city, and whenever you have a high level of economic activity you have business opportunities," said Tim Stratford, the vice-chairman of General Motors' China Operations to CNN. Global sponsors of the International Olympic Committee, such as McDonald's, the Coca-Cola Company and Eastman Kodak have marketing rights to the 2008 Games regardless of where they are held. Those three and many more have already broken into the emerging and potentially lucrative Chinese market. (<http://asia.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/12/olympics.business/index.html>) HRW has initiated a campaign urging the Coca Cola Company to join lobbying the IOC for human rights guarantees from China. So far, Coca Cola has responded by saying the decision is not theirs to make, directing the appeal to the IOC<sup>6</sup>.

## 2.4 The two rounds of the debate – what has changed?

Besides the evident difference in outcome between the 1993 and the 2001 decision, which changes and disparities can be identified when comparing the two bids? Has China changed significantly in this eight-year period? Which tendencies can be linked to shifts in public opinion, and what influenced ultimately the decisive IOC members' votes? In this section I will explore some possibilities. They will be sorted into **internal** and **external** changes, providing two broad and general categories of conditions that have simultaneously been conducive to the development.

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<sup>6</sup> I am here referring to a question I posed by mail to the Coca Cola Company and the reply I received March 11 2003.

## 2.5 Internal changes

Evidently, many changes have taken place in China in the years between 1992/93 and 2000/01. I will not trace all of these, but extract a few tendencies that I find relevant to the explanation of why the outcomes were different in the two Chinese Olympic bids. I believe the explanation is mostly due to external changes, but first I will include some internal changes that may be relevant as well.

### 2.5.1 Movement in the human rights area

In Chinese official rhetoric on human rights we can trace some evident changes between 1992/93 and 2000/01. In 1992/93 China was very much on the defensive after the 1989 Tiananmen incident and the ensuing massive international criticism. The authorities had not yet learned to manage this criticism, and they frequently avoided responding to accusations, referring to “state sovereignty” and “internal affairs”. In Risse et al.’s stages we can place China in the Stage 2 “denial” phase<sup>7</sup> (Risse 1999), and this attitude was not particularly appreciated by the West or other critics on this subject. Despite Chinese authorities releasing some prominent dissidents as a sign of goodwill, just before the final verdict on the 1993 bid, they did not succeed in convincing that they were sincere in their cause (Reporters sans Frontières 1994 Report: 83-85). In the eight-year period between the two bids we have seen some movement in the human rights area, at least on the surface, or on a rhetorical level. China is now engaged in more than ten official dialogues on human rights with foreign governments. ([http://www.duihua.org/about\\_duihua/message.htm](http://www.duihua.org/about_duihua/message.htm)) The question remains open for discussion whether these are purely instrumental moves to keep the critics at a convenient distance, or if there have actually been improvements resulting from the dialogues. This is a big and complex subject, and although I will return to it later in this thesis, it is something that continuously needs to be evaluated. It is a far too large assignment for me to embark on *in depth* in the context of this thesis, so only tentative analyses will be offered here.

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<sup>7</sup> For more elaboration on Risse’s Spiral Model see 3.4

The authorities have signed the two major International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>8</sup> and on Civil and Political Rights<sup>9</sup> ([http://iso.hrichina.org:8151/iso/article.adp?article\\_id=2726&subcategory\\_id=263](http://iso.hrichina.org:8151/iso/article.adp?article_id=2726&subcategory_id=263)), but signing these documents alone does not in itself make the country committed to them. Nevertheless, these changes indicate a movement in the right direction, when seen from a human rights standpoint.

### 2.5.2 *Opening of the country*

One uncontested fact is that China has become more open and integrated in the global community during these eight years. In December 2001 the country formally became a member of the WTO, and many observers are hopeful about the effects this integration process will have on, among other things, the legislative system and human rights. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/521857.stm>) But although there are reasons for optimism, the WTO membership is no guarantee *in itself* for an improvement of human rights in China, HRW states (<http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/china/china-wto.htm>). Still, the gradual opening of the country provides a reason for hope that this process will lead to an improvement in the protection of human rights. This process may also have increased the demand that it is China's turn to host the Olympic Games, since there are more commercial interests now operating in the country.

### 2.5.3 *The bid*

Another difference between 1992/93 and 2000/01 is of course the bid in itself. After losing to Sydney in 1993, the Beijing bid committee put a lot of effort and prestige into improving the second bid, and rethinking their tactics. "This time the city's far more professional bid clearly helped wipe away lingering doubts in the minds of many committee members" (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/1437826.stm>).

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<sup>8</sup> Signed in 1997, and ratified February 28, 2001, but took a reservation on the right to freely organise and join trade unions.

<sup>9</sup> Signed in 1998.



To help sell the Olympic 2008 bid, the bid committee enlisted a British public relations firm and former members of the Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games. They also put strong emphasis on the positive effects the Olympics would have on China, in their view, such as being “a catalyst for further reform and more openness in China”. (<http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/12/beijing.olympics.post/>).

The composition of contestant cities also has its influence on the outcome. In 1992/93 the different bids came from Beijing, Berlin, Istanbul, Manchester and Sydney (<http://the-tech.mit.edu/V113/N44/olympics.44.txt.html> ). Australia had previously lost with the Melbourne/Brisbane bid, and waged a very hard campaign for the 2000 Games. When Manchester lost one round, Sydney inherited most of Manchester’s votes, giving Sydney a narrow majority in the final round. In 2000/01 the contestants were Beijing, Istanbul, Osaka, Paris and Toronto. The race was much closer in 1992/93 than in 2000/01, something which besides other factors may indicate that the opponent candidates to Beijing were considerably weaker in the second round.

## 2.6 External changes

Many different tendencies can be identified, when evaluating the changes between the years 1992/93 and 2000/01. I will try to list some of those that I find the most relevant in this context, and see what they mean for the different outcomes.

### 2.6.1 *Inclusion vs. exclusion*

There are reasons to think that the international climate has changed a great deal in the period between the two bids, and that the shift has been in favour of a more inclusive approach. Many argue that in order to exert influence, one needs to involve the actor one wants to influence, and giving Beijing the Olympics is one example of this. The central point is that exclusion and boycotts are judged to be less effective in some circumstances, and only risk entailing further negative effects, rising nationalism for instance, while inclusion and positive engagement commit the actors to each other and are more effective in transforming and reshaping the preferences of the selected actor. This debate is in some aspects related to the

sanctions debate, where cultural pressure can be used as means to pressure a country into changing its practices (Syse 2001).

### *2.6.2 The Tiananmen tragedy*

The climate was also more favourable in 2001 since there were no big scandals, at least not any on the scale of Tiananmen. In one sense there are reasons to think that if Tiananmen had not happened, or at least not been broadcast live to a Western audience, Beijing would have won the bid in 1993, but that is of course only a speculation. It is a fact, though, that Tiananmen stained the Chinese reputation for many years, and that the proximity between this incident in June 1989, and the Olympic bid initiated in 1992 is partly the explanation why Beijing lost the bid in 1993.

### *2.6.3 Familiarisation of the human rights problem in China*

In 2001 China's human rights situation was a well known problem, and one could say there had been a marked increase in awareness about China's human rights record. Perhaps there is also more willingness now, at least on the part of NGOs and some of the media, to scrutinise the situation, and closely follow the situation in the country. On the other hand, the Chinese human rights situation has become a topic so familiar that it may have led to more indifference and a general belief that there is nothing substantial one can do about the problems. The image is that the Chinese authorities will do whatever they like no matter what the world thinks or says. The Tiananmen crackdown, as we saw in 2.6.2, is further away in time, and the public may have become used to the situation.

### *2.6.4 China's turn to win*

In some circles, there is a widespread perception that China lost the 2000 Games wrongfully, and that they deserved to win the second bid. "They lost the bid by only two votes", said an IOC member who asked not to be named. "It's time for Beijing to have it

back.” (<http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/15162.html>). The population argument is also very persuasive. To many it would have been perceived as an expression of Western arrogance if the most populated country in the world had been denied the honour of hosting the Games after making a serious bid for it twice. “The bid committee appears to have convinced many with the simple argument that China's time had come, and that what they said were the century-old Olympic dreams of a quarter of the world's population could no longer be denied” (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/world/asia-pacific/1437826.stm>), reports BBC’s Duncan Hewitt.

### *2.6.5 Economic potential*

The final external change contributing to the explanation why China succeeded with the second bid may be that western societies are even more preoccupied with maintaining good relations with China in 2001 than they were in 1993. They were certainly more careful and unwilling to risk offending the country again by taking an official stand opposed to the second bid (see 2.3.2). This may largely be explained by the increasingly important economic potential China represents. It has become unpleasant and potentially harmful to take a critical stand against China in a prestigious and sensitive matter such as this. Both the USA and the EU took official stands against Beijing getting the Games before the 1993 decision, but they did not do the same in 2001 (<http://asia.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/12/beijing.human.rights.post/index.html>). Many forecasts project a bright economic future in China. According to a report by the International Investment Bank, China's economy is forecast to grow at an average of six percent annually during the coming two decades, and become the second largest in the world next to the United States by 2030 (<http://www.china.org.cn/english/MATERIAL/28528.htm>). China-based multinationals have been lining up to sponsor Beijing's Olympic bid committee. Beijing's victory in the battle to host the 2008 Olympic Games is worth a lot of money to Western businesses (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/1436911.stm>). It seems a more careful and less confrontational approach is sought by Western governments on behalf of investing companies, in order to secure a cooperative climate with the Chinese.

## 2.7 Summary

In this introductory chapter we have seen that the debate about China hosting the Olympic Games has been conducted twice, first in 1992/93, which ended with Sydney winning the bid and defeat for Beijing, and again in 2000/01, which resulted in victory for Beijing as Olympic host city in 2008. In both rounds of the debate the NGOs have acted as critics and watchdogs, bringing the issue to the general public's attention and urging the IOC to take human rights into consideration. The positions have changed somewhat in favour of China in the time between the two bids, indicating among other things a more inclusive, cooperative and less confrontational approach being sought.

## 3. Background

*"When water is polluted, fish choke; when government is harsh, people rebel."*<sup>10</sup>

### 3.1 Introduction

In order to understand the specific concern with China, why this country has been selected as the topic of interest in this thesis, or why the debate around Beijing hosting the Olympic Games has taken place, it is necessary to look at the constituent elements in this debate: China's human rights situation and the Olympic Games' history, and analyse the "backdrop" they compose. These are both elements that have been subjected to public criticism. It is also interesting in this connection to take a look at some recent large-scale, international events held in China, and examine which human-rights problems that have been identified relating to these. This will be the third element in my presentation of the "backdrop" that have provided fuel for the critics in the debate we are dealing with in this study.

### 3.2 China's Human Rights Record

There has been enormous publicity about the human rights situation in China in the West after the Tiananmen-massacre in 1989 (Tomashevski 2000: 213). Before 1989 relatively little international attention was given to the internal situation in China, but with the live broadcast images of demonstrating students up against military tanks, people and governments around the world were alarmed about the human rights conditions in the country. According to Tomashevski, there have been several "waves" of interest and concern from the West. The first peak of attention to the human rights situation in China was in the aftermath of the Tiananmen

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<sup>10</sup> Quote borrowed from *The Tao of Politics, Lessons of the Masters of Huainan*, Cleary 1990:10

massacre in June 1989. From this point onwards, China became a country of particular concern to human rights advocacy networks and liberal governments around the world.

The second peak was related to de-linking human rights from US-China trade in 1994, and the third to the 1995 UN Commission on Human Rights, when US efforts to condemn China almost succeeded (for more information see Tomasěvski 2000: 214). With the debate around the Beijing bid to host the Olympics, and winning the bid for the 2008 Olympic Games, I propose that a fourth peak of international focus can be identified.

### 3.3 Questions

The questions relating to this debate are many:

- -Has China improved its human rights record since 1989, and if so: in which areas, and to which degree?
- -Does China *deserve* to host the Olympic Games, considering their human rights performance?
- -To which extent do the Games *in themselves* pose a threat or an opportunity to the promotion and implementation of human rights?
- -What can be said about China as host of large, international events, judging from recent experience?

Question two and three will only briefly be treated in this chapter; the second question I will return to in chapter 5, the third question is treated more thoroughly in chapter 4. I will not try to give complete or definite answers to these four difficult questions in this section, but I will elaborate on them and present some evaluations. In this chapter I will present some facts about the human rights situation in China, its development and what the situation seems to be in 2003, and I will also look briefly at some of the problematic aspects of the Olympic “industry” per se, and finally see what experience from previous international events held in China can say about conditions for human rights during these.

### 3.4 Recent history in light of the Spiral model

Although the Chinese have suffered terrible human rights violations throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution as central and gruesome “chapters” in themselves, the human rights record of China was relatively shielded from international attention from the mid-1970’s up until 1989 and the Tiananmen-massacre. With this turning point, China was again put on the map as a very repressive country. International focus and pressure had to be initiated and sustained in order to improve the country’s situation and prevent a similar bloodshed in the future. Initially, Beijing officials responded to criticism with a rejection of other states’ involvement in Chinese “internal affairs”, claiming state sovereignty. This has been a common response from repressive regimes, and also the tactics employed in “Stage 2” following Risse et al.'s terminology (1999). In responding to criticism and dealing with the human rights issue, China has moved through a series of stages corresponding largely to the theoretically described socialization process of the “Spiral model” introduced in Risse et.al. (1999:22-35). The five stages in this model include the following:

- Stage 1: “Repression and activation of network”
- Stage 2: “Denial”
- Stage 3, “Tactical concessions”
- Stage 4: “Prescriptive status”
- Stage 5: “Rule-consistent behaviour”

Presently, Chinese officials are no longer denying the legitimacy of Universal Human Rights, which means they have moved beyond Stage 2. China has taken part in the human rights regime through membership in the UN since 1971, thus being a state party to the UN Declaration on Human Rights. The country is signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights<sup>11</sup>, it has signed and ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>12</sup> ([http://iso.hrichina.org:8151/iso/article.adp?article\\_id=2726&subcategory\\_id=263](http://iso.hrichina.org:8151/iso/article.adp?article_id=2726&subcategory_id=263)), besides being state party to the various conventions concerning children, women, refugees, racism,

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<sup>11</sup> October 1998

<sup>12</sup> Signing in 1997, ratification in 2001, but took a reservation on the right to freely organize and join trade unions.

genocide and torture. Thus formally, the country agrees with and supports the ideas and ideals represented in the different treaties. With the Bangkok Declaration in 1993, the debate about “Asian Values” and relativism was sparked, and still the Chinese authorities in general support this relativistic line (Lesteborg 2002: 99-100). Stage 3 “Tactical concessions” is actively employed, for instance the release of known dissidents is very much used as a sign of goodwill and symbolic gesture when Chinese leaders want to influence a big decision or create a positive atmosphere. In an article by Antoaneta Bezlova the practice of releasing dissidents to achieve certain goals is referred to as Beijing's "hostage politics" (<http://www.oneworld.org/ips2/nov/china2.html>).

China has since 1989 been engaged in several bilateral dialogues on human rights with various western countries<sup>13</sup>, the authorities respond to criticism and admit that certain improvements can be made. With this behaviour we trace a clear movement towards Stage 4, “Prescriptive status”, where promises are made, declarations signed and ratified, and the country at least rhetorically accepts and plays by the rules prescribed by the international community. Still there is some inconsistency in Chinese official statements, and arguments defending violations by referring to cultural relativism are often used, so there is still some way to go before the country fully reaches Stage 4. This is in accordance with Foot (2000), who is of the opinion that China is now somewhere in the space between Stage 3 and 4 in Risse et.al.’s Spiral model (Foot 2000: 256).

### *3.4.1 White Papers*

Since 1989, China has been faced with massive international criticism of its human rights policies, and in response to some of this, PRC has produced a series of White Papers to the UN concerning their achievements in the human rights field (1991,1995,1996,2000,2001) (Links to the White Papers can be found on web: <http://www.chinesehumanrightsreader.org/governments/gov.html>). These White Papers together with other official reports defend Chinese human rights policies and claim that the overall situation in the country is good, and that progress is continuously being made. Most human rights NGOs dispute this claim (AI, HRW, HRIC), referring to the many human rights

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<sup>13</sup> Australia, Brazil, Canada, EU, Norway, Sweden, USA ( <http://www.hrichina.org/reports/dialogue.htm> )



problems reported every day, year after year, revealing a systemic and persistent feature of the China Communist Party's rulers despite the leaders' rhetoric on the subject.

### *3.4.2 Fending off UN resolutions*

An interesting feature in the campaign for human rights in China is the massive resistance by the Chinese authorities to a UN Resolution in the Human Rights Commission in Geneva. First initiated in August 1989, less than three months after the Tiananmen massacre, the UN Sub-Commission adopted a resolution entitled 'Situation in China', expressing concern about the events which had recently taken place in China and about their consequences in the field of human rights. Fierce opposition by the Chinese delegation led to voting by secret ballot, and the resolution was adopted by the Sub-Commission. However, in February 1990 when the Commission on Human Rights took a vote on the proposed resolution on China, the result was 17 votes against, 15 in favour and 11 abstentions (Tomasěvski 2000: 214). Chinese resistance to the resolution prevailed. Repeatedly over the years from 1990-1997 and again in 1999-2001, a resolution against China was proposed. Various countries have initiated the draft (USA, the EU, Denmark), and every time it has been countered by a no-action motion proposed by China, which ultimately has received the most votes. Extensive pressure and lobbying has been employed by the Chinese to avoid being condemned in this multinational forum, and avoid scrutiny by the same organ. This indicates that the Chinese authorities attach a high degree of prestige to the UN forum, and is very sensitive to this type of multilateral criticism; the Chinese prefer to handle human rights criticism in bilateral relations.

### *3.4.3 Evaluation reports on China and the present situation.*

The reports of UN Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups, as well as those of the NGOs, regularly remind those committed to the advancement of human rights of systemic and enduring problems in the country's record (Foot 2000: 255). Year after year, NGO reports on China are filled with accounts of strict limitation of freedom of expression, association and belief, arbitrary detention and imprisonment, administrative detention such as "re-education through labour", unfair trials under national security legislation, torture and ill-treatment,

especially widespread among certain groups of “criminals” like Falun Gong practitioners and minority groups in Tibet and Xinjiang, and extensive use of capital punishment, particularly during “Strike Hard” campaigns (this is a brief summary based on recent AI Reports). Refugees and asylum-seekers from North Korea are regularly arrested and forcibly repatriated without being given access to any refugee determination procedures, despite China’s obligations undertaken in the UN Refugee Convention. The violations seem to be a persistent feature of the present-day Chinese society. Furthermore, considering the size of the Chinese population, comprising 1.3 billion or 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the world’s population, there is good enough reason to justify international attention and concern, as well as academic analysis.

On Amnesty International’s web pages the annual reports from 1997 to 2002 are available, as well as a long list of reports on various topics brought to public attention in the period from 1993 to 2003. The different concerns discussed in the reports include crackdown on dissents, dissident detention in psychiatric hospitals, lack of treatment of dissidents in custody, when medical action is needed, worker’s rights, suppression of the rights of association and expression, restrictions and surveillance of internet use, repression of minority groups in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous region and in Tibet, ill-treatment of Falun Gong practitioners, use of the death penalty, reports on torture, and more. These reports supplement the annual reports and together they give a broad and detailed account of the many human rights problems that mark China. The summaries offered are not too optimistic, (“People’s Republic of China: Human Rights in China in 2001 – A new step backwards” <http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/Index/ASA170282001?OpenDocument&of=COUNTRIES\CHINA> ) although positive changes, too, are recorded (AI welcomes the release of Tibet’s longest serving prisoner of conscience: <http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/Index/ASA170162002?OpenDocument&of=COUNTRIES\CHINA> ).

### 3.5 A brief summary of recent AI reports

In the 2002 Report AI states that the year of 2001 was a year of increasingly serious human rights violations in the country, despite the authorities' continued pro-forma willingness to adhere to the international human rights regime. The 2001 Report include accounts of continuous repression of peaceful dissent, no relaxation of the 1999 crackdown on fundamental freedoms, arbitrary detentions and sentences, continued widespread torture and ill-treatment of prisoners, among much more. In the 2000 Report, AI questions the Chinese authorities' sincerity in signing key human rights conventions, based on the serious deterioration of human rights that year. AI also claims that this year represents a serious setback for the policy of dialogue on human rights pursued by some governments. As the international spotlight faded, the Chinese authorities began to crack down with increased intensity on dissidents and activists. The 1999 Report includes some positive moves initiated by the authorities, such as the signing of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and two landmark visits: President Clinton and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson. These visits highlighted the country's growing, but limited willingness to discuss human rights as well as continuing violations. On the negative side, AI reports of hundreds, possibly thousands, detentions of activists and suspected opponents of the government throughout the year. Many prisoners of conscience remained imprisoned, Political trials continued to fall short of international fair trial standards. Torture and ill-treatment remained endemic, in some cases resulting in death. The death penalty continued to be used extensively.

If we look further back in time to the 1998 Report, a very similar overall account is summarized for the year of 1997. The 15th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party was held in September, and the Congress' report referred for the first time to the protection of human rights and stressed the need to "govern the country by law". The government published a paper on religion, acknowledging the principles on freedom of religion in international human rights instruments, but setting restrictions on authorized religious activities in China. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention visited China in October, and in the same month China signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Despite growing official acknowledgement of international human rights standards, serious human rights violations continued. A crackdown on suspected Muslim

nationalists, religious “extremists” and alleged “terrorists”, which started in 1996, intensified in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. A crack-down on Tibetan nationalists and religious groups continued in the Tibet Autonomous Region. Political trials continued to fall far short of international standards, with verdicts and sentences decided by the authorities before the trial, and appeal hearings usually a mere formality. Torture and ill-treatment of detainees and prisoners held in detention centres, prisons and labour camps remained widespread, sometimes resulting in death. Prison conditions were often harsh, with inadequate food and medical care, and many prisoners suffered from serious illnesses as a result. Medical parole was rarely granted to political prisoners. The death penalty continued to be used extensively to tackle growing crime resulting from economic and social changes. The AI 1997 Report include accounts of continuous arrests of suspected opponents of the government. Despite the legal reforms, numerous instances of arbitrary and summary justice were recorded. An anti-crime campaign, known as "strike hard", which was launched by the authorities in April 1996 and accompanied by a crack-down on suspected nationalist opponents and religious groups in Tibet and Xinjiang, was marked by mass summary trials and executions on a scale unprecedented since 1983. "Re-education through labour", a form of administrative detention imposed by local government committees without charge or trial, was increasingly used to arbitrarily detain dissidents for up to three years in labour camps. Members of religious groups not approved by the state continued to be detained. A crackdown on suspected nationalists and religious groups in Tibet was carried out during the "strike hard" anti-crime campaign. A similar crackdown on suspected Muslim nationalists, alleged "terrorists" and those accused of "illegal religious activities" was carried out in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. Thousands of political prisoners detained without trial or convicted after unfair trials in previous years remained imprisoned. They included many prisoners of conscience serving long sentences for their part in the 1989 pro-democracy movement and others jailed for the peaceful expression of their beliefs. Prison conditions were often harsh, with inadequate food and medical care, and many prisoners suffered from serious illnesses as a result. Torture and ill-treatment of detainees and prisoners held in detention centres, prisons or labour camps remained widespread, in some cases resulting in death. The death penalty continued to be used extensively. The number of executions increased dramatically after the launch of the "strike hard" anti-crime campaign in April. Well over 200,000 arrests and at least 2,500 executions were believed to have been carried out within the first four months of the campaign. Most of those executed were summarily tried following official instructions to the

judiciary to speed up prosecutions and trials and to impose "severe" punishments, including the death penalty. The state media publicized arrests and executions daily.

In order to further demonstrate the conditions in China, and the recent year's developments, table 3.1 shows the figures of executions and death sentences recorded in AI Year Reports 1997-2002. The true figures are believed to be much higher, only limited records are available and death penalty statistics remain a state secret in China.

*Table 3.1 Statistics on executions and death sentences recent years in China*

Year	Executions	Death sentences
1996	3500	6000
1997	1644	2495
1998	1067	1657
1999	1077	1720
2000	1000	1511
2001	2468	4015

This is merely a brief account of violations included in the last years' AI annual reports on China; further details are accounted for in the above cited documents. My point here is to demonstrate some of the volume and range of the Chinese problem with human rights represent, in order to further justify the relevance of this study. China is a very repressive country, and this affects almost 1.3 billion people. This gives reason for concern also in connection with the Olympics.

A similar story of continuing violations is told by the human rights advocacy network Human Rights Watch, and on their web-pages one can find HRW World Reports on China from the years of 1989 to 2002, as well as a number of commentaries, appeal letters and press releases concerning various human rights issues in the country. I will not go into any more detail regarding these reports here, only conclude that there is substantial evidence of China's human rights problems, and that the situation is worse than in most countries.

### 3.5.1 No improvements?

In an evaluation report produced by China Human Rights Strategy Study Group, in November 2001, an assessment of the human rights situation is made in a briefing paper by Andrew J. Nathan (“The Human Rights Situation in China: Developments and Dynamics”, pp.30-34, <http://www.chinesehumanrightsreader.org/governments/gov.html> ). Here he states that there is a widespread perception that overall, the human rights situation in China has steadily improved, and this is due to “engagement” or globalisation. He disputes this claim, and points to human rights as something multi-dimensional, thus a more nuanced and detailed approach is in order. Nathan claims that over the last twenty years, human rights in China have improved in some dimensions, worsened in others, and stayed about the same in others.

He lists areas of **improvements** to be: increased average living standards, increased personal privacy, government accession to international conventions, government participation in international human rights institutions and treaties, increased access to information, slightly increased independence of legislative institutions, and greater independence of the media - albeit still governmentally controlled.

Areas marked by a **worsening** situation are listed as: access to health care, access to education, access to retirement and other social welfare benefits, problems of migrants to the cities, human rights abuses in connection with land development and environmental damage (e.g., against protesters), intensified crackdowns against social groups that challenge the government, which comprises laid-off workers and peasants protesting environmental abuse or local corruption, Falun Gong followers.

Areas of **stasis** include, according to Nathan: repression of religious freedom, repression in Tibet and Xinjiang, repression of political dissidence, and use of “labour re-education” to imprison people without trial. These represent severe human rights problems that have remained constant over the years.

Finally, Nathan lists some areas he considers to be **ambiguous**: criminal procedure (getting better?), independence of the courts (improving slightly?), death penalty (getting worse?), psychiatric abuse (getting worse or merely just discovered?), gay rights (movement to decriminalize?).

This briefing paper is dated March 2001, so more recent developments have not been included. There is widespread concern among NGOs that after September 11, repression in Xinjiang has been intensified under the pretext of countering terrorism.

(<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/Index/ASA170122002?OpenDocument&of=COUNTRIES\CH>

INA ) Also the IOC decision of June 13 to let Beijing host the 2008 Olympics, and the potential consequences of this are not considered in the briefing paper.

In a more general comment on patterns that can be discerned, he mentions that the party-state no longer aspires to transform human nature or control what people think, thus moving from a totalitarian to an authoritarian state. This change has widened the sphere of individual autonomy but without consolidating reliable, legally defensible rights. Areas affecting the power monopoly of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) – which includes most civil and political rights - are unimproved, or maybe even worsened, since there is more repression in response to social change.

### 3.6 The Olympic Legacy

The Olympic Games have increasingly been put in a critical light over the past years. The growing opposition to this enormous hallmark event has roots in many divergent and problematic issues related to the Games and the Olympic industry. Among these are the repeated boycotts during the Cold War, with Moscow in 1980 and Los Angeles in 1984 as central examples, terrorism, like the attacks that stained the Munich Games in 1972, the corruption scandals in the IOC revealed under Samaranch's presidency, and several drug scandals over the years. A growing grass-roots opposition to and concern about negative implications on host cities and the local community have surfaced in the last decades, with concerns ranging from environmental, economic and social issues, to suppression of public debate and restrictions of citizens' freedom of movement and civil liberties during the Olympics (Lenskyj 2000). One specific worry relating to human rights that has come to public attention in the recent years is the extensive repression of "undesirables" and dissidents before and during the staging of the Olympic Games (Lenskyj 2000: 108). Political repression has been well documented; in fact, Rule 61.1 in the Olympic Charter explicitly prohibits any political, religious or other form of demonstration in Olympic areas. The equally harsh treatment of poor and homeless people has only in recent years received attention. The different forms of violations include street-sweep campaigns where homeless people, sex trade workers, and beggars are harassed by police, evicted from the neighbourhoods, and often arrested, in other words a criminalisation of poverty (ibid.). These street sweeps had by the 1980s become a standard feature of most hallmark events, and the Olympic Games are

especially interesting in this matter since they represent the ultimate example of such events, and also a regular event that takes place every second year.

Some Olympic rules are directly in conflict with universal recognized human rights. Rule 61.1 of the IOC Charter ([http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en\\_report\\_122.pdf](http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_122.pdf)) requires the host city to guarantee that there will be no demonstrations or “political, religious or racial propaganda” in or near Olympic areas (Lenskyj 2000: 108), thus restricting the basic freedoms of assembly and expression. Other human rights problems related to the Games are disenfranchisement of the local community in the decision process, and exploitation of “volunteer” workers, among whom many children. These are recurring features that have been identified with the Olympics over time and in many different host-cities, according to Lenskyj including Mexico City in 1968, Munich in 1972, Montreal in 1976, Moscow in 1980, Los Angeles in 1984, Seoul in 1988, Calgary in 1988, Barcelona in 1992, Atlanta in 1996, Nagano in 1998, Sydney 2000, Salt Lake City in 2002. Already concerns have been expressed that similar violations are about to take place in Beijing (<http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/02/china.0208.htm>). Especially imminent is the forced relocation of people living in areas where Olympic installations are projected and about to be built. Other arguments that have appeared in the debate are among other fear of the Chinese authorities’ methods of keeping order, but these will be treated in the next chapter. My point here is to note that the Olympic organisation already possess problematic features inherent in the institution, and these coupled with a repressive regime may exacerbate human rights conditions and other problems in a host country such as China. This brings us to the final point in this “backdrop”: experience from previous large-scale events in China.

### 3.7 Previous hallmark events in China

China has hosted large, international events in the past, and these can provide good indications of the potential problems that may come about in 2008 with the Olympic Games. I will here briefly comment on two large-scale events that have taken place in the country; the 1990 East-Asian Games and the 1995 UN Women’s Conference. In a letter dated June 8, 2001, directed to the former President of the IOC, Juan Antonio Samaranch, Human Rights



Watch expressed a concern about China possibly winning the bid, and thus hosting the Games in 2008. HRW points to the fact that

every previous major international event that China has hosted, from the 1990 East Asian Games to the 1995 International Women's Conference, has been preceded by arrests designed to eliminate any sign of protest or dissent, and evictions of migrants or homeless people whose presence might be considered unsightly. The Chinese government has also sought to restrict access to such events, refusing visas to journalists and to individuals linked in some way to Taiwan, Tibet, or Xinjiang, or to organizations that have taken stands critical of Chinese government policies.

(<http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/06/iocletter.htm>)

This appeal by HRW points to the core of the human rights problems that already exist in China and that have been exacerbated in connection with large, international events. A look through some NGO yearbooks and other overview books concerning the years 1990 and 1995 in China, reveal a clear pattern.

### 3.7.1 *The Asian Games in 1990*

In Amnesty International's Report 1991 over the year 1990, one specific problem connected to the Asian Games in Beijing is commented on: **Executions**; 270 in June and July alone, following the launch in May of a new campaign to "sternly crack down on crime". Courts were ordered to impose "severe and swift" sentences, using 1983 legislation which provided for summary procedures. Some death sentences were officially described as a means of ensuring "social order" and "stability" before the Asian Games held in September.

The Asian Games are also commented on in the compilation *Country Reports of Human Rights Practices for 1990 for the U.S. Senate and Congress*: "Prior to the September Asian Games in Beijing authorities cracked down on the capital's "floating" population, sending many of them back to the countryside and driving others deeper underground." (*Country Reports of Human Rights Practices for 1990*: 858)

There is reason to be aware of both of these two specific concerns. Judging on current Chinese practices, there is a clear risk these violations and more will take place in the period of time leading up to 2008, and during the Games themselves.

### 3.7.2 *The UN World Conference on Women in 1995*

Looking through NGO reports, there is even more documentation about the human rights related problems concerning the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. This probably stems from the broader international participation compared to the Asian Games, and the fact that many delegates personally experienced restrictions they were not accustomed to on their own freedom and rights. HRW World Report 1996 (p.124), summarizes this:

In China, delegates to the Fourth World Conference on Women got some inkling of the restrictions faced by ordinary Chinese when they found themselves under surveillance, their meetings restricted or cancelled, their papers confiscated and their press coverage censored.

The situation was equal or possibly worse for the parallel NGO Forum<sup>14</sup>. China challenged the U.N. accreditation of independent organizations with whose views it disagreed, and despite U.N challenges and China's public promise to issue visas to all those registered by the NGO Forum, China used its position as host to deny visas to selected individuals. Moreover, security personnel monitored and disrupted NGO workshops and meetings, videotaping participants, their materials, and members of the audience. HRW also reports there were attempts to confiscate NGO videotapes and to remove video equipment. Members of the Earth Times, a daily newspaper that had been freely distributed at all major UN conferences and summits since 1992, were forced to comply with Chinese restrictions, including prohibitions on distribution at hotels and at the NGO Forum site and a ban on criticism of the host country.

In preparation for the meeting, prominent dissidents not already in custody were cleared from Beijing, preventing them from meetings with outsiders. Some were ordered to go on "vacation"; others were simply encouraged to leave the city.

HRW also includes in their report the executions of sixteen "criminal elements", a move to "ensure the security" of delegates to the UN conference, as well as arrests of various

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<sup>14</sup> The NGO Forum is a sub-convention held at approximately the same time as the UN Conference and also in China.

Chinese activists for allegations of tax evasions, swindling charges and other economic reasons. HRW concludes that the Chinese hosts “made a travesty of its commitments to NGOs at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women with nearly total impunity” (ibid: 144). Amnesty International reports of similar violations in their 1996 Year Report. It reports of widespread use of the death penalty with special reference to the sixteen executions carried out in August with the pretext of “ensuring public order during the conference”, and arrests and detention of political and human rights activists during the conference. The Chinese authorities also refused to meet AI representatives or to receive any written documents from them, signalling a clear discontent with their work and an unwillingness to engage in any discussion with this NGO.

*The Country Report of Human Rights Practices for 1995 for the U.S. Senate and Congress* states “government restrictions on the free exercise of internationally recognized freedoms of speech and association hampered the discussion” (p.575). Further reports from the conference and the parallel NGO Forum includes security personnel “inviting” activists to take vacations at government expense outside of Beijing, the alternative to accept this was detention (p.577).

These two experiences with large, international events in China in the recent past justify and give further reason for concern about the Olympics in 2008. It is, however, a strength that many are aware of these risks, but they need to be confronted with the Chinese authorities and warned strongly against if not to be repeated. The organ with the most power to instruct and pressure the Chinese government on this in connection with the Olympics is the IOC, as we will come back to in chapter 5.

### 3.8 Preliminary summary

So far, we have seen the different elements constituting the “backdrop” of this theme, and I have chosen to present these one by one in order to show the relevance and significance each of them represent. Together they give fuel to the debate, and they point forward to some of the central arguments about the Olympic Games in Beijing 2008.

In the next chapter we will take a closer look at the debate, and see in more detail some of the arguments, assumptions and claims that have been put forward. To sum up the “backdrop” constituting elements of this thesis, we have

- China’s human rights record
- The Olympic Legacy
- Previously held hallmark events in China

These elements reveal a history of repeated and enduring human rights violations in the People's Republic of China, and also point to some inherently problematic aspects of the Olympic “industry”. In the next chapter we will see in more detail what the concerns and the aspirations are for the Olympics coming to China. The problems treated in this chapter constitute a background to the objections made by the critics of the Beijing Games.

## 4. An examination of the arguments

–What possible effects can the Olympic Games have for human rights in China?

*"The crafty are good at calculating; the knowing are good at foreseeing."<sup>15</sup>*

### 4.1 Introducing the four categories of arguments

It is possible to discern at least four main groups of effects that have appeared in the debate, four different groups that interpret and predict which effect the Olympic Games may have on human rights in China. One main distinction is **positive** versus **negative** effects, whether holding the Olympic Games, or simply *awarding* the Games to China, constitutes a good choice that will boost protection of human rights and contribute to a change for the better, or a bad choice that will either legitimise the status quo or make conditions worse. The other distinction is **short-term** versus **long-term** effects. With short-term effects I include the effects from the Chinese bid to be selected as host, from the decision of July 13<sup>th</sup> 2001 and up to and during the actual weeks of the Games in 2008. With long-term effects I refer to the arguments that claim enduring effects after the Olympic Games have been held, which impact the event will have on the human rights situation specifically, and the Chinese society's development in general. In the debate all four groups of arguments have been presented and are intermixed, so here in this chapter I will attempt to extract some of the more central claims and present them systematically, by examining the arguments one by one sorted into the four sub-categories.

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<sup>15</sup> Quote borrowed from *The Tao of Politics, Lessons of the Masters of Huainan*, Cleary 1990:25

## 4.2 Short-term positive effects

These are the arguments claiming beneficial effects for the human rights situation before and during the games in 2008.

### 4.2.1 *Pre-selection promises*

“The *challenges* now are to hold China to its pre-selection *promises*, (...) and how to use the Games to press for human rights improvements over the next seven years” (My italics in this and the following extracts). (<http://hrw.org/press/2001/07/olympics0713.htr>)

Human Rights Watch presents with this statement a pro-active attitude on behalf of NGOs working for human rights improvements. They focus on the positive connotations of “*challenges*”, and on China’s own “*promises*” that have appeared in the race for winning the bid. This demonstrates that representatives from the Chinese bid committee engaged themselves in the debate and responded to HRW, among other international critics in this field. This again suggests that Stage 3, “Tactical concessions” in Risse et al.’s terminology (Risse 1999:22-31) is very much a reality in today’s China, as proposed before in the previous chapter: 3.4. Chinese officials are no longer denying the facts presented, but take part in the dialogue and admit that certain improvements can be made. With the “promises” we also trace a clear movement towards Stage 4, “Prescriptive status”, where promises are made, declarations signed and ratified, and the country at least rhetorically accepts and plays by the same rules as the international society. The challenge HRW faces is engaging other central actors such as the IOC and private corporations sponsoring the Games to hold China to these promises, and to establish opportunities for sanctions if these are not upheld. The campaigns on the HRW web site clearly show that this is a central objective they are working for (<http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/02/china0208.htm>). We find a letter-campaign addressed to the IOC President Jacques Rogge, urging for the creation of an IOC human rights monitoring committee, and also a related campaign directed towards the Chief Executive Officer of The Coca Cola Company, the Olympic Games’ longest continuous sponsor, appealing for participation in the lobbying of IOC to put in place human rights safeguards. So far the success of these campaigns has been limited. HRW’s proposal has more or less been ignored by both the IOC and the Coca Cola Company, but the focus and pressure may constitute positive forces in themselves. HRW works as a watchdog and correction vis-à-vis the

behaviour of the Chinese authorities, and the risk is nevertheless present that breaking the pre-selection promises may result in undesired reactions for China and the Games in 2008.

#### 4.2.2 *Media freedom*

Just prior to the IOC's decision to award China the Games, Wang Wei, secretary general of the official Beijing bid committee, said:

“We will give the media *complete freedom to report* when they come to China...”

(<http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/02/china0208.htm>)

This is one of the above-mentioned promises that may be a positive, short-term effect if actually realised during the Games. During the Games, Western media, Olympic competitors, the support apparatus and spectators will all be sensitive to a society with more restrictions than what they are used to, and this may strengthen the criticism against Chinese human rights policies. But this “promise” says nothing about *media access*, and possible discrimination against journalists based on their political or religious views or country of origin, something HRW is concerned may occur. Foreign press that represent possible critical voices may still be denied access without literally breaking this promise; this demonstrates how eloquent Wang Wei's statement is in some aspects. But in later statements Chinese officials have publicly pledged to allow foreign journalists covering the Games *unrestricted access* to the country (<http://hrw.org/wr2k2/asia4.html>). Still, Western media focus will very likely be on the sports events first, Chinese culture, history and people second, society and politics third, and it is most probable that the glossy, exotic and happy side of China will dominate most media presentations.

The promised media freedom also has the potential to be a more enduring, long-term effect, but that is hardly what Wang Wei implies in this context. If no reforms are initiated, freedom of speech will remain very restricted in Chinese media, both before, during and after the Games, and it is unlikely that the IOC will interfere with the Chinese policies in this specific area.

All in all, this argument has little potential for change when it comes to human rights in China, but still the possibility that if even this small promise will be broken, and restrictions put on international media, more critical voices towards China will surface.

#### 4.2.3 *Promote the economy and spin-off effects*

... We are confident that the Games coming to China not only promotes our economy but also *enhances all social conditions*, including education, health and human rights. (<http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/02/china0208.htm>)

This is also a statement by Wang Wei, secretary-general of the official Beijing bid committee, prior to the IOC's decision, and it is a far-reaching proposal which also could be grouped under "long-term effects". Still, I have included it in the "short-term group" since it is a part of the Chinese bid, and thus the possible effects presented will evolve from the bid is won in 2001 and throughout the years until 2008, but with a lasting impact onwards too.

"Enhances all social conditions" is a very strong statement, and must be interpreted as part of the bid-committee's last, eager attempts to win the bid. HRW, on whose web page I have found this quote, takes Wei's words as a literal promise, and affirms that China must be held to these promises. There is no question the statement reflects high aspirations to the Games on the part of the bid committee, extending even to education, health and human rights. But it is unclear exactly *how* this influence is supposed to work, besides being a possible spin-off effect from the promotion of the economy and the possible economic growth linked to the Games. HRW is eager to trap the Chinese representatives in their own rhetoric, and hold them responsible to their own promises. They carefully collect statements like this one in order to say "talk the talk, now walk the walk".

#### 4.2.4 *Development of human rights*

Liu Jingmin, the Vice-President of the Beijing 2008 bid committee, claimed in April 2001 that

"By allowing Beijing to host the Games you will help the development of human rights." (<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/print/ASA170232001?OpenDocument>)

This is a more general statement, and although it is very unspecific, it indicates at least a rhetorical commitment on behalf of the Chinese bid committee to promote human rights and actively engage in a process of change. The statement can be placed both under short-term and long-term effects, and I have chosen to group it in the first category due to the fact it was



part of the bid committee's campaign to get the Games to Beijing. Liu Jingmin signals a process of change will follow if the bid is won and the Games are awarded to China, but how this will come about he does not specify, neither in which areas he sees the human rights profit from the event. Nevertheless, if the opposite proves to be the case, the Chinese representatives have an explanation problem, and a preservation of status quo is also not satisfactory to human rights NGOs.

#### *4.2.5 Focus and attention*

Experience with the 1995 UN Women's Conference in Beijing has shown that having thousands of people from around the world in China can focus attention on the country, including on the degree of state control and fear of political protest.

(<http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/q&a-china0305.htr>)

This is again a pro-active statement from HRW that builds on experience from previous large, international events held in China, and demonstrates the potential these may have for improving human rights conditions. Here HRW points to *the spotlight effect*; the international attention and focus the country will find itself in the years leading up to the Games, and the weeks during the actual Olympiad. The vulnerable position a country such as China puts itself in as an Olympic host country, open and exposed to international scrutiny, may be a potential catalyst for increased international pressure and growing internal dissent and opposition. With the world's eyes upon them, the Chinese authorities will perhaps find their space of action more restricted, something which may result in an improvement for human rights in the country.

#### *4.2.6 A summary of short-term positive effects*

The different short-term positive effects which have been put forward in the debate vary in degree of generality and specificity, and while some indicate how the predicted change may come about, others merely state that this will happen without further explanation.

Nevertheless they constitute parts of the debate, and have served as arguments ensuring that

Beijing won the bid, defending the decision or assessing the positive sides to it. A short summary of these arguments include the following core elements:

- **Pre-selection promises**, which may entail a **process of self-entrapment** into argumentative behaviour (Risse 1999:28).
- Focus and attention, the **spotlight effect** generated by the Olympics, also experienced with previous events in China.
- The Olympics also offer a good occasion for the normative **process of shaming**, which in turn will be disturbing for their international image (Risse 1999).
- The specific promise of **media freedom and access** may temporarily improve China's human rights position concerning freedom of expression.
- The Olympics will enhance **all social conditions**, including **education, health and human rights** in general, one argument broadly claims.
- "Help the development of human rights", an argument presenting a **belief** that by allowing Beijing to host the Games improvements will follow, however no further explanation is provided.

### 4.3 Long-term positive effects

These are the more sustaining positive effects predicted to come about as a result of the Games in 2008.

#### 4.3.1 Possible positive impact

"This is not to say that a country's human rights record should be the determining factor in whether a city gets the Games. If rights were the main criterion, the bid of Mexico City might have fallen short. *And it is possible that there can be a positive impact on a tightly controlled society from hosting an international event.*"

(<http://www.iht.com/cgi-bin/generic.cgi?...late=articleprint.tmplhArticleId=256>)

This statement by Sidney Jones, Asia director at Human Rights Watch, New York, is drawn from an article printed in The International Herald Tribune just a few days before the IOC announced Beijing as winner of the 2008 Olympic Games. First she expresses that she is not a priori opposed to a country with unsatisfactory human rights conditions as host country to the Games. This indicates HRW supports dialogue and cooperation in order to gain influence, opposed to other strategies of exclusion, boycott and similar forms of punishment. Next she puts forward a tentative suggestion that hosting an international event may have a positive impact on human rights in a repressive society. This potential may, according to Risse et.al., lie in the flow of ideas, values and norms - including human rights - brought with the international actors, the people present during the event, and also the international focus on the “tightly controlled society” itself. A process of assimilation of ideas and values may occur if the gap between the host country and the rest of the international society is very wide. The host country may seek approval through adjustment of its behaviour in accordance with the international society’s values and norms. But this requires actors in the international society and the Olympic organisers to actively criticise the shortcomings and violations they observe or are informed of in this society. This also requires pressure from within in the country, and so far very little opposition is tolerated in China. Still, hosting an international event may represent a period of intensified learning, and with the frequent use of mechanisms described under Risse’s Stage 4, i.e. shaming, movement towards the final stage in the Spiral model, Stage 5 “Institutionalisation”, may follow.

#### 4.3.2 *A catalyst for reform and openness*

“Most members saw the Beijing Games as a historic event and *a catalyst for faster reform* in China”, said former IOC Vice-President Kevan Gosper (<http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/15162.html>) “This could be an event *which encourages an even greater degree of openness*” he is also quoted to have said in Toronto Star, 15/5/01. (<http://www.beijing-2008.org/eolympic/zcc/salt/salt.html>)

These enthusiastic statements by Kevan Gosper betray a very optimistic view on the part of the former IOC Vice-President, and may be interpreted as aspirations on behalf of the IOC that the Olympic Games will help bring about change in China. That the Beijing Games will be a “historic event” is natural, since China, in spite of its size, population and sports

achievements, never has hosted the Games before. The view that the Beijing Games will be a “catalyst for faster reform in China” is bold and optimistic, and probably not mistaken as far as economy and infrastructure are considered. Whether the same will be true for political reform and human rights implementation is not impossible, but it is more difficult to predict. But this statement may by sceptics also be interpreted as a mere justification of the IOC decision, an unfounded and empty hope, and a camouflage for other interests that really explain why China won the bid. As long as the IOC refuses to seek explicit commitments from China to respect fundamental rights, they cannot pride themselves for being a positive “catalyst” for change. I will return to this more thoroughly in the final chapter. Gosper’s formulation “even greater degree” may also reveal a naïve and lacking insight in Chinese society today, and a misperception of to what extent openness is tolerated by Chinese authorities. For further information on this see 3.5.

#### 4.3.3 *Promote democracy*

In Germany, Interior Minister Otto Schily said the decision should help promote democracy in China. “I am convinced that the Olympic Games will have a positive effect on China’s democratic development,” he said in a statement.

(<http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/13/beijing.win/>)

Again, we see an optimistic aspiration for China’s future, where **democratisation** is introduced as a possible consequence following the Olympiad. With the early 1990ies and the fall of communism over great parts of the world, it is hard not to pose the question “when will China follow?” The country has since 1978 reformed its economy, joined the WTO in 2001, and can hardly be called a communist system as far as the economy goes, but is it inevitable that these developments will lead to democratisation of the political system too? Many books have been written discussing this question and different conclusions have been drawn (Chang 2001; Mok 2000; Patten 1998). It is impossible to predict or foresee if and when this change will come about, but nevertheless Schily makes an interesting point when he states that the choice of China as host to the Olympics *should* help promote democracy. He even expresses he is *convinced* of this, signifying a strong belief in the Olympic Games as a potent event and a possible vehicle or contributing factor of change. The Games in 1988 in Seoul have been praised for contributing to the democratisation of South Korea, and now some suggest the same Olympic effect will benefit China.

#### 4.3.4 *Impact on China's social environment*

While visiting Beijing last August to discuss preparations for the 2008 Olympics, Jacques Rogge claimed the Games would “have a big impact on China’s social environment – including human rights,” without spelling out how.

(<http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/02/china0208.htm>)

This is a similar statement to the one discussed under 4.2.4 by Liu Jingmin, only this one is spoken by the new President of the IOC, and it is after the decision of Beijing 2002 was a fact. With this statement the new President signals a conviction that the Olympics will have a big impact on China’s *social environment* – a rather blurry and unclear term, which I will not try to interpret or elaborate on here, but also on *human rights*, which is more interesting in this context. As HRW points out, he does not spell out how this impact will work, but merely claims it will. He does not specifically say the “big impact” will be a positive one, but this I will assume, since the opposite would be a devastating view on behalf of the IOC and the whole Olympic tradition. Rogge seems to have adopted the Chinese bid committee’s arguments and without further explication states his belief in the Olympiad as a big influence on human rights, a force of change.

#### 4.3.5 *A summary of long-term positive effects*

Finally, some concluding remarks and a summary of the arguments suggesting long-term positive effects in China. The arguments presented under long-term positive effects are more similar and general than the arguments appearing under short-term positive effects, still I have chosen to present them one by one in order to examine them more easily, and also to keep clear **who** presented them. It is interesting to establish and keep in mind who the agent behind the argument is, not just to see the isolated arguments. The agent behind every argument contributes to revealing a motive for the stated position. When the main essence is extracted from the arguments, the following points stand out:

- Human rights NGOs here represented by HRW find it **possible** that there may be a **positive impact** on the human rights situation.

- The Olympic Games may act as a **catalyst for faster reform**, and be an event which encourages an even **greater degree of openness**, claims former IOC Vice-President Kevan Gosper.
- The event may help **promote democracy** in China, Interior Minister in Germany, Otto Schily stated.
- The Games will have a **big impact** on China's **social environment**, including **human rights**, IOC President Jacques Rogge has claimed.

## 4.4 Short-term negative effects

These effects are the objections critics have made, and states what they believe will be the results from Beijing winning the bid.

### 4.4.1 *Not less repressive*

“We can't predict what China will look like in 2008, but we know for certain that the Games by themselves are not going to make China less repressive.”

(<http://hrw.org/press/2001/07/olympics0713.htr> )

This is an affirmation by HRW that if no concrete and targeted action is taken to monitor and pressure the Chinese authorities, status quo or a degradation of conditions is most likely. I include this argument under “short-term effects” because it specifies what China will look like in 2008, thus indicating the developments leading up to the Games, and possibly the Games themselves in 2008.

This argument opposes some of the optimistic aspirations expressed under 4.2 and 4.3, where general and lofty visions are presented, unfounded in any more specific effect-consequence analysis.

Sidney Jones goes on: “If human rights are to be protected, the private sector is going to have to get engaged”, and thereby invites the Olympic sponsors to get involved. “We know for certain that **the Games by themselves** are not going to make China less repressive”, is a more pessimistic or maybe realistic view of the potential of the Olympiad per se. But it does

not exclude all positive effects, instead it points out that hope and aspirations are not sufficient in bringing this about, a more concrete pressure and involvement is needed from the different actors.

#### *4.4.2 Previous events*

“We are concerned, however, that every previous major event that China has hosted, from the 1990 East Asian Games to the 1995 International Women’s Conference, has been preceded by arrests designed to eliminate any sign of protest or dissent (...). (<http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/06/iocletter.htr>)

Here HRW points out a specific concern that is founded on previous experience, namely arbitrary arrests aiming at removing critical voices (see 3.7). These arrests are examples of frequent human rights violations in China, and the objective of HRW here is to make sure the international society is aware of this potential risk, and to urge people and actors involved not to accept it if the host country repeats its pattern of behaviour before the Beijing Games in 2008. By raising this awareness, they also send a strong signal to the Chinese authorities that their actions are anticipated, and reactions from the international community will follow if this occurs again.

#### *4.4.3 Keeping order*

“As part of its bid for the 2000 Olympics, China assured the IOC that it could keep order in the city. Experience shows that the Chinese government’s methods of keeping order often involve violations of human rights” ([www.hrw.org/background/asia/q&a-china0305.htm](http://www.hrw.org/background/asia/q&a-china0305.htm))

This is a similar argument to 4.4.2, but it more generally attacks the “Chinese government’s methods of keeping order”, but without spelling out exactly what the methods consist of. Keeping order is a difficult balance to make in any country: weighing the need for order against the protection of human rights. In a society like China, the need for order is most likely to be favoured, as pointed out here. The task of the international community is therefore

to supervise carefully how this order is secured, and react immediately if unacceptable methods are used, and human rights are violated. However, as we have seen in 3.6, the Olympic Games already have several problems in this department, and this makes it even more urgent to observe what goes on in Beijing.

#### *4.4.4 Evictions of homeless people*

(...) “And evictions of migrants or homeless people whose presence might be considered unsightly.”

(<http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/06/iocletter.htm>)

This is another specific aspect of which we need to be aware, something that has occurred in the preparations before big events, and it clearly demonstrates how the weakest groups in society have almost no rights, and nothing to gain from an event such as the Olympic Games. This is not a concern exclusive to China, but an issue that has been brought to attention in many other Olympic host countries. (See 3.6 or Lenskyj 2000)

#### *4.4.5 Forced resettlement*

On February 4th, 2001, when the IOC met in Salt Lake City, it praised Beijing’s preparations for the Games, saying they were “very careful and efficient.” It made no suggestions for how rights concerns, including forced resettlement to make way for Olympic sites, might be addressed.

(<http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/02/china0208.htm>)

Again HRW points to a specific concern, where they have reasons to believe that violations of human rights will follow the preparations of the Games. Construction of these sites is due to begin in 2003. They make sure the IOC is informed of this concern, and ask how these potential violations of rights might be addressed, before they are committed. The IOC has so far responded with a hands-off approach, and made no comment on the subject besides praising Beijing for the preparations saying they were “very careful and efficient”. It is likely that the IOC will remain content with the progress as long as it meets the required



deadlines and technical standards, and not address this concern with Chinese authorities. I will come back to a normative argument of the IOC's co-responsibility on this in the next chapter.

#### *4.4.6 Strike Hard campaigns*

There is also a clear possibility that the Chinese government will repeat its pattern of behaviour and engage a "Strike Hard" campaign before the Olympics, like they did recently in the period from April to June 2001. Amnesty International reported in this period an unsurpassed high number of death sentences (2960) and executions (1781). In response to criticism, the Chinese authorities claimed they had to strike hard on crime before they joined the WTO, and the superior criteria for this campaign was efficiency, not justice or fair trial. "Many of them are likely to have been tortured to confess crimes they didn't commit and few would have received a fair trial."

(<http://www.amnesty.no/web.nsf/printpages/CHAE-52PBPI>)

This is a serious concern expressed by Amnesty International based on recent experience with the entry into the WTO, and involves massive, arbitrary arrests and torture and extensive use of death sentences and executions in China. Capital punishment is contested in many countries, and several states in addition to China still practise it. But no country does so to a larger extent than China, and the juridical process preceding the sentencing is weak and sometimes lacking. This is something for the IOC and the world society to take into serious consideration, and be highly aware of in the time leading up to the Games. The argument presents a general problem China has in the context of human rights, but due to the speeding-up process witnessed before other occasions such as joining the WTO, the context of the Olympic Games exacerbates the situation and extends the problem to be a matter of international concern. It is something that can put the IOC, the Olympic sponsors and all participating in the Games in a bad light if they accept this behaviour, ignore the facts, or avoid condemning it and reacting to it. However by responding to this, a message will be sent to Chinese authorities that they will face bad publicity and possibly strong reactions if they repeat this "Strike Hard" campaign before the Beijing Games in 2008.

#### 4.4.7 *Restricting access*

“The Chinese government has also sought to restrict access to such events, refusing visas to journalists and to individuals linked in some way to Taiwan, Tibet or Xinjiang, or to organisations that have taken stands critical of Chinese government policies.” (<http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/06/iocletter.htr>)

The events HRW refers to here are the 1990 East Asian Games and the 1995 International Women’s Conference (see 3.7), and this argument again deals with media access opposing the argument discussed in 4.2.2. Additionally China’s minority problems are addressed here, when naming the groups of individuals that most likely will be discriminated. Opposition to Chinese authorities is stronger in the minority regions of Tibet and Xinjiang, and Taiwan is a problematic case in itself, formerly a British colony, now given back to China under the “two systems – one country” parole. To avoid criticism during international events a simple solution for Chinese authorities has been to refuse entrance to people from these areas. Chinese authorities also try to keep critical voices from NGOs out, and both forms of exclusion are violations that may occur again during the Games. HRW tries with this argument - formulated in a letter to previous IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch - to get the IOC to seek guarantees from Beijing that this will not be repeated in 2008 during the Games. Although the IOC ignored the appeals from HRW and others before giving the Games to Beijing, Chinese officials publicly pledged to allow foreign journalists covering the Games unrestricted access to the country (<http://hrw.org/wr2k2/asia4.html>). Time will tell if they keep their promise, but it is likely that many will make a public case of it if they don’t.

#### 4.4.8 *A summary of short-term negative effects*

There are many specific concerns about the possible negative short-term effects leading up to and during the Beijing Games in 2008. In this summary I have extracted the main points from the arguments presented above:

- HRW stipulates they **know for certain** the Games by themselves are not going to make China less repressive. They appeal for action and involvement from other

parties in order to prevent serious human rights abuses, that otherwise most probably will follow.

- **Experience** from **previous major events** in China shows that these are preceded by arrests and elimination of protest and dissent.
- China's **methods of keeping order** often involve human rights violations and are worth scrutiny, especially before and during the Olympic Games.
- The situation for **homeless people** may worsen before and during the Games. Past experience give warnings that **evictions** are likely to be used in order to “**sweep the streets**” and remove unsightly elements.
- **Forced resettlement** in order to make way for Olympic constructions and infrastructure is a problem. A very immediate concern that HRW has warned may occur already in 2003, when projected sites are due to start the constructions.
- **Strike Hard campaigns**: This has been a recurring feature of the present Chinese communist regime, recently initiated before China's entry into the WTO. It is a clear risk that a similar campaign will precede the Olympic Games in 2008 as part of the Chinese hosts' preparations.

## 4.5 Long-term negative effects

These are the effects predicting that the Beijing Games will have far-reaching and negative effects extending beyond the actual weeks in 2008.

### 4.5.1 *Encourage repression*

In New Delhi, the Dalai Lama's Tibetan government-in-exile slammed the choice, saying it would encourage repression in China.

(<http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/13/beijing.win/>)

This is a general criticism by the Dalai Lama, one of the immediate reactions after Beijing Games was announced as winner of the 2008 Olympic Games. The Dalai Lama hardly represents an objective voice in Chinese affairs, and there may be reasons to assume this spokesperson's views are deeply coloured by his own experience with Chinese authorities, and his own struggle for an independent Tibet. Nevertheless, his warning is a clear statement, and his view is representative of many others who have intimate knowledge of Chinese authorities.

#### 4.5.2 *Stamp of international approval*

“This will put the stamp of international approval on Beijing's human rights abuses and will encourage China to escalate its repression” said Kalon T.C. Tethong, a spokesman for the India-based Central Tibetan Administration in a statement.

(<http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/13/beijing.win/>)

Another critical opposition voice suggesting an escalation of repression like in 4.5.1, but here an explicit interpretation of a causal chain is presented: *the stamp of international approval* will encourage more repression, Tethong claims. This is of course debatable, but Amnesty International has reported an increase in violations since Beijing was awarded the Games, something that should be disturbing to the proponents of the more optimistic view.

#### 4.5.3 *Consolidate hold on power*

A sharper reaction to the Beijing 2008 decision came from François Loncle, a member of the French Socialist Party and the head of parliament's foreign affairs committee, who saw parallels with the decision to hold the 1936 Olympics in Nazi Germany:

The decision by the IOC goes towards justifying a repressive political system that every day flouts freedom and violates human rights. Following the example of Nazi Germany in 1936 and the Soviet Union in 1980, Communist China will *use the Games*

*as a powerful propaganda instrument destined to consolidate its hold on power,*  
Loncle said in a statement.

(<http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/13/beijing.win/>)

This is another example of an argument that warns about the legitimising effect winning the bid may have. Loncle uses strong and provocative expressions like “Nazi Germany”, and he compares this IOC decision to the historically stained Games held in Berlin 1936 and Moscow in 1980. In these games, ideology played a strong role, but the world has changed since these were held, and capitalism and economic growth have to a large degree taken over from communist visions in China, so the comparison may be questioned. Loncle fears the Games will be used as a propaganda instrument that will consolidate the power of the Chinese authorities, and preserve the status quo, and this again means no improvement for human rights, contradicting some of the optimistic visions presented under part 4.2 and 4.3.

#### *4.5.4 A summary of long-term negative effects*

The arguments presented under long-term negative effects are all in all more general as to which rights will be affected and less specific in their causal analysis. The list is therefore shorter, and they can be summarised as follows:

- Beijing’s winning the bid will **encourage repression**.
- Giving China the Olympic Games in 2008 puts a stamp of **international approval** on Beijing’s human rights abuses.
- Communist China will use the Games as a powerful propaganda instrument to **consolidate its hold on power**.

## 4.6 Concluding remarks

In this chapter we have seen the central arguments in the debate in detail, and they have been subjected to a short discussion. The arguments vary in degree of generality and precision; some refer to specific human rights violations, while others are less exact and predict a trend or direction. The agents of the different arguments have been included in order to keep in mind they have their agenda, so as better to understand their motive for bringing the argument into the debate.

In the following chapter, some of the arguments will be discussed in relation to the normative ideals of the Olympic Charter and the principles enshrined in the Olympic Movement, approaching a normative evaluation of the debate. The ethical foundation of the Olympic Movement will be examined, and I will conclude with an evaluation of the IOC's ethical responsibility in preventing possible negative effects before and during the Olympic Games 2008.

## 5. Towards a normative evaluation and conclusion

*"The beginnings of fortune and calamity are subtle, so people are heedless of them. Only sages see the beginning and know the end."<sup>16</sup>*

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss some excerpts from the IOC's own guiding document: the ethical framework provided in the Olympic Charter ([http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en\\_report\\_122.pdf](http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_122.pdf)). The content of these excerpts will be discussed in relation to some of the underlying themes in the debate: the inclusion/exclusion question and the concept of social responsibility, as well as some of the concrete arguments presented in chapter 4.

In accordance with Frost (1996:4) it could be claimed that in the international setting, the fundamental normative question is not in the first place, "What ought we to do?" but rather "What is the ethical standing of the institutions?" I will begin the normative evaluation in this thesis with an examination of the ethical foundation of the Olympic Movement: the Olympic Charter. In conducting a discussion based on the existing framework of the Olympic Movement, I have extracted quotes that I find interesting in this connection. They have been drawn from the Fundamental Principles, and I have also included two points I find relevant in this context from the rules in the Olympic Charter. These principles and rules are interesting because they are constituent parts of the Olympic Movement's ethical foundation. They need to be analysed in order to make clear what the Charter already states, before we go on to see how these provisions relate to some of the underlying themes in the debate. I will elaborate on the excerpts and explore which possibilities there are for accommodating the

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<sup>16</sup> Quote borrowed from *The Tao of Politics, Lessons of the Masters of Huainan*, Cleary 1990:98

Olympic ethical framework with the concerns as well as aspirations expressed in the debate. Are there explicit or implicit references to human rights in the Olympic Charter? Can the Charter have something to say in the debate about China hosting the Games? These and more questions will be explored in the sections below. I will argue the case that the IOC can and should do more in dealing with human rights concerns, and that the guiding normative framework for the Olympic Movement to some extent already is open for and in conformity with this. The case of China provides the urgent occasion to engage in this process.

## 5.2 The Olympic ideals

First, a brief look at the normative foundation of the Olympic Movement, and the excerpts from The Fundamental Principles. What does this ethical framework have to say in the context of this debate? According to the Olympic Charter, established by Pierre de Coubertin, the **goal** of the Olympic Movement is

*...to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced **without discrimination** of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.* ([http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/index\\_uk.asp](http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/index_uk.asp)) (Emphasis is in this and following quotes added by me.)

Here the Olympic Movement clearly states that it favours a non-discriminatory approach, i.e. a rejection of exclusion/isolation policies<sup>17</sup>. In building a peaceful and better world, discrimination of any kind is in contradiction with the Olympic spirit. This goes against those arguing that the IOC should bar China from hosting the Games on human rights grounds. The Olympics should, as a general rule, be open and inclusive for all youth, people or country, either participating in the Games, or hosting the event. However, we know from history that this has not always been the case. Boycotts were quite normal during the decades of the cold war, evident especially by the actions of the USA and the Soviet Union. Still, the Olympic ideal is not necessarily less true, even if past experience may reveal a different reality.

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<sup>17</sup> The isolation/exclusion debate is closely related to the sanctions debate, for more information and references see Syse (2001)



### 5.2.1 Fundamental Principle 2

(...) 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*.

In this principle we find a reference to something that arguably includes human rights, although other ethical principles also may be referred to. The formulation is somewhat vague, using the term “universal fundamental ethical principles”, thus leaving it more open than directly referring to the UN Declaration of Human Rights. As we have seen previously in this thesis, the IOC has repeatedly stated that they do not wish to evaluate host candidates on their level of compliance with human rights (2.2). A support to this stand can be found in the Olympic spirit of *non-discrimination*, mentioned above. However, this excerpt clearly demonstrates that the Olympic Movement aspires to be something larger than simply a sports event. As a basis for the fundamental principles, there is a normative foundation prescribing respect for a *universal* ethics. This indicates that there is room for protection of human rights in the Olympic movement. In fact, in this principle it is clearly stated that one goal of the Olympic movement is respect for universal ethical principles. If this is a real aspiration, measures to ensure this as well as precautions to prevent the opposite need to be included in the Olympic institution. This brings us to the closely related issue of business ethics and the concept of **corporate social responsibility**<sup>18</sup> (Bomann-Larsen 2003). The IOC, like corporations, needs to take into consideration the possible negative effects its activities may have on the communities it affects. It is decisive that the IOC considers in advance what it aims to achieve - among other things what we find expressed in the Charter - and examines if it is willing to take on responsibility for the anticipated effects (Bomann-Larsen 2003:5). The anticipated effects are not merely the hopes and aspirations expressed by the proponents of the Beijing Games, but also include the warnings and objections put forth by the critics. The principle of **double effect** which originally is drawn from the literature on ethics and war (Walzer 2000) has also proved valuable when dealing with ethics and international organizations (Reichberg and Syse 2003). By "double effect" we mean that actions have both

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<sup>18</sup> While **constructive** engagement only points towards the desirable and direct effects of corporate engagement, **responsible** engagement also entails assessment of harmful side-effects along with active measures to prevent or minimize these (Bomann-Larsen 2003:7) (Emphasis added).

intended effects and unintended effects or side-effects. Morally, we are responsible for taking account of the principle of double effect, and do the best we can to prevent or minimize the negative side-effects. If we assume that this process of critical examination to some extent was performed by the individual members of the IOC, we would expect to find a more balanced view on the part of the IOC in the debate, not the one-sided, optimistic account we have seen expressed by the various members of the IOC (4.2 and 4.3). This suggests that the IOC needs to take into account and evaluate the possible negative effects, and include measures about how to confront these or minimize the risks.

### 5.2.2 Fundamental Principle 3

*The goal of Olympism is to **place everywhere** sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to **encouraging the establishment of a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity**. To this effect, the Olympic Movement engages, alone or in cooperation with other organisations and **within the limits of its means**, in actions to promote peace.*

In this paragraph, we can identify some aspirations: “place everywhere” and “encouraging the establishment of a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity”, as well as a reservation: “within the limits of its means”. The first aspiration is again clearly in favour of allowing China to host the Games. It states a belief that by placing sport *everywhere* at the service of the harmonious development of man, this will help and contribute to the establishing of this peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity, a belief that we have seen expressed in the goal of non-discrimination, and also by the two presidents and different members of the IOC on behalf of China (4.2). The problem here is that the IOC only refers to the **desirable** or **direct** effects of their operations, which in the ethics and business literature is referred to as a **constructive engagement** (see footnote 3 above for definition). That constructive engagement does not necessarily lead to development and welfare, nor necessarily improve human rights situations is well documented (Bomann-Larsen 2003:6). Simply expressing a *will* for the positive objectives does not in itself make them come true. Bomann-Larsen argues in her report that **responsible engagement** is the preferable choice. I agree with this view, and argue here that the IOC also needs to take this

approach in order to avoid complicity to human rights violations. The IOC needs to consider both direct/intended and indirect/unintended effects the Games will have, the principle of double effect needs to be taken in account. As stated by Reichberg and Syse, "the principle of double effect reminds us that a 'right intention' also implies responsibility for unintended side-effects, and indeed should imply what Michael Walzer has called the 'double intention' of not only willing one's intended aim, but also willing the minimizing of negative side-effects" (Reichberg & Syse 2003:18). Here, the IOC has work to do.

Principle 3 also states that the Olympic Movement engages in actions to promote peace. In connection with this objective we find various forms of charity work, for instance, involvement in human development assistance such as awareness-raising and field projects for the promotion of physical education and health through sports, particularly in refugee camps, communities affected by war or conflict, and in rural and particularly underprivileged areas. ([http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/missions/humanitarian/index\\_uk.asp](http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/missions/humanitarian/index_uk.asp))

An example of the IOC's present involvement can be demonstrated with a look at IOC partners, which include various central UN bodies such as:

- the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- the World Health Organization (WHO)
- the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODCCP)
- the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- and the International Labour Organisation (ILO)

(ibid.)

This shows that the Olympic Movement already engages actively in a range of "political" issues, hereunder human rights, and that extending their obligations is not impossible nor in contradiction with its current platform. In fact, the Olympic Movement has constantly been changing and adapting though the times, and more recently protection of the environment has been included as one of the central objectives of the movement. A Sport and Environment Commission was set up in 1996 to advise the IOC on environment-related policy, making the environment a third dimension of Olympism after culture and sports.

([http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/missions/environment\\_uk.asp](http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/missions/environment_uk.asp)) It is not in contradiction with IOC's present objectives nor unusual to expand the Olympic Movement's tasks and set up a similar organ for monitoring and advising on human rights issues in connection with the Games, as HRW has argued for (chapter 4.2.1).

The formulation “within the limits of its means” in Fundamental Principle 3 can be interpreted as a reasonable reservation, admitting that the Olympic Movement can only influence to a certain degree. On the other hand, the reservation may work merely as an excuse. It is an open question who or what imposes these limits. Are they talking about limits of *actual influence*, or limits of *aspirations*? “Limits of means” may include economic resources, which of course are not unlimited, but nevertheless very much a question of priority. It may also refer to limits the IOC has itself chosen to operate within. This is the case with the requests HRW has put forward, urging for the creation of an IOC human rights monitoring committee, so far turned down by the IOC. The activities already engaged in by the Olympic Movement prove that it is not impossible to commit oneself further to the protection and advancement of human rights.

### 5.2.3 Fundamental Principle 8

*The practice of sports is a **human right**. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport in accordance with his or her needs.*

Here the OC explicitly refers to The Universal Human Rights, thereby expressing a direct support to these. The right of practicing sports is a more questionable term, and must be meant as an implicit aspect of cultural rights. Still, this is an evident expression of support to human rights. By accepting and recognizing the human rights explicitly in this way, the Olympic Movement implicitly attaches its ethical foundation to the wider framework of human rights. Fundamental Principle 8 in one way states that practicing sports is a human right, and by referring to human rights, the Olympic Movement presents a strong recognition of and support to human rights in general.

#### 5.2.4 Two rules in the Olympic Charter

Two particular points in the Olympic Charter are also interesting in connection with the debate. I will not go too much into these, but present them and briefly explain why I find them interesting. They both point in a more restricting or limiting direction, as opposed to the more open Fundamental Principles in the Olympic Charter.

### 37. Election of the host city

1. The election of any host city is *the prerogative of the IOC alone*. (Page 56 in the Charter: [http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en\\_report\\_122.pdf](http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_122.pdf))

This rule establishes clearly where the responsibility of electing the host city lies, and all objections or concerns therefore need to be addressed to this organ. This has been the general answer when addressing the corporate sponsors to the Games with concerns about human rights in China: "Our sponsorship of the Olympic Games does not allow us any direct control over the selection of the host nations. These decisions are ultimately made by the IOC, we recommend that consumers share any concerns directly with the IOC." (Richard 2003 [e-mail correspondence].) Again, this is a reminder that the IOC is the legitimate authority when dealing with the contested issues. The IOC members decide the host city, thus the IOC is the responsible authority for the Games as well as its effects.

### 61 Propaganda and advertising

1. "*No kind of demonstration* or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in the Olympic areas." (Page 83 in the Charter)

This point was also brought up in 3.6, and constitutes a violation of the right to assemble and freedom of expression. It is, however, particularly worrying when this rule is applied in a repressive regime such as China. Political or religious freedom is proscribed and repressed in general, not only during events such as this. What the IOC does in this case, is to provide legitimacy to repression on behalf of the Chinese authorities, without interfering with the methods used to ensure that Rule 61.1 is upheld. The "hands off" approach combined with

this specific rule may result in serious human rights violations in the name of Olympism; see 4.4.2 to 4.4.7 for some of the concerns. Again, the IOC needs to consider these side-effects and come up with an acceptable response.

### 5.3 Back to some of the core arguments

“Within the sphere of morality, what participants normally do is make individual moral judgements on an ad hoc basis.” (Frost 1996:78) The IOC as the legitimate authority needs to take on the responsibility for addressing the risks of negative effects early on, and avoid resorting to an ad hoc response if the situation turns out to be so serious they no longer can ignore it. A short summary of the most central arguments predicting negative effects include the following concerns from NGOs and other observers:

Short-term negative effects:

- forced resettlement
- Strike Hard campaigns
- street sweeps
- arrests and elimination of protest and dissent
- the methods of keeping order

Long-term negative effects:

- encourage repression
- a stamp of international approval
- Communist China consolidates its hold on power

It is not in the power of the IOC to eliminate all these negative features of Chinese society, or prevent all of these effects from taking place. However, if these unintended and indirect effects are not at least taken into serious consideration and addressed in some way, the IOC will bear some of the responsibility. As already discussed in section 5.2 above, corporate social responsibility entails an assessment of both direct and indirect effects, and taking measures to

avoid and minimize the harmful effects. By neglecting this, the IOC becomes complicit in producing the negative effects. I suggest that the Olympic Movement and the IOC represent an untapped potential in putting a pressure on Chinese authorities to reform their policies. By not even making it clear for the Chinese Olympic organisers what the IOC finds unacceptable, the IOC neglects its responsibility. Only by dealing with the negative effects, the IOC can take pride in the outcome, which ideally should include - as optimistically expressed in the debate - the Beijing 2008 Games being a catalyst for faster reform, promoter of democracy and resulting in an even greater degree of openness for China and its people.

### 5.3.1 *Two possible short-term, positive effects*

Now, not all potential side-effects are negative for the Chinese human rights situation. As treated in chapter 4, there is the spotlight effect which the Olympic Games will generate. Many argue that attention and focus is a better way of dealing with a problem than exclusion and isolation. This is a disputed assumption, and as we have seen in the previous chapters, Wei Jingsheng, Tibetan spokesmen and other exiled dissidents have strongly opposed the validity of this claim (2.3.3). It is a question of *focus*, what the spectators choose to see, but also as we have seen in rule 61.1, what the IOC *allows* the public to see. The Chinese government naturally makes strong efforts to influence the media in presenting a positive image of the country, but with the NGOs long experience with completing the picture and providing information about the negative aspects and lacks in society, there is a reasonable chance that the attention will be somewhat balanced. Western media is also characterised by its independence and critical approach, and does not simply write what the authorities prefer them to write. It is vital that the human rights problems receive attention in order to improve the situation. Having said that, the debate we are dealing with in this thesis is already and in itself a clear example of the spotlight effect. My hope is that this critical light on the problems China have regarding human rights will not be completely drowned by the focus on the sporting events during the Games.

The promise of media freedom and access has also been mentioned earlier as a short-term positive effect. This would imply a substantial improvement of the current situation in China; however it does not include freedom for the Chinese population or media, so the censorship will not be lifted or softened internally. Still this is a promise that is quite easily

verifiable. Western media will react with outcry if they are denied access or find their freedoms to report restricted in any other way. Then again, what can and will be done if the promise is broken? The Olympic Circus is well on track, and probably no one will withdraw from the Games because of some restrictions put on the media? No contestants, no countries nor any significant media is likely to boycott the big event because of minor restrictions like this. As with the UN Women's Conference in 1995 (see 3.7.2), there will be some complaints, some reports written in the aftermath from the affected parties, but this will probably not result in an increase in engagement to fight the censorship in China. Although the working conditions for Western and Chinese media are very different, the Western media is not ignorant of the conditions in China, and the situation will therefore not come as a shock.

No matter what the situation will be in 2008 concerning media freedom and access, it is a promise that is easily verifiable, and if broken it will further generate the spotlight effect and raise awareness about conditions in China. But that is not enough in bringing about change and improvement, therefore all actors supporting human rights must join forces in pressuring the Chinese hosts and making sure they live up to their promises.

## 5.4 The normative challenge

"Should human rights standards be a measure used to determine whether a host country is suitable or not?" - I asked this question to begin with, and it is now time to answer it having considered many aspects of the debate. I don't believe the Olympic Games exclusively should be held in countries that have reached Stage 5 "Rule-consistent behaviour" in Risse's Spiral Model; that countries which fall short of this requirement are excluded, and only countries that respect and protect human rights in a sincere manner are found worthy as Olympic hosts. However, I believe the Olympic Games can be a potent tool used to prevent the situation from degrading in the countries with less satisfactory human rights records, by actively working for guarantees and supervising the host before and during the Olympic Games. The IOC needs to give a clear message to the host country that human rights are to be respected when preparing for the Games, and during the actual Games. If the Olympic Movement fails to give a clear understanding of their commitment to human rights, or if they continue to ignore problems and avoid confronting them, the Olympic organisation needs to realize it becomes complicit to the problem.



Another question asked in the introduction of this thesis is: "Based on a normative discussion with human rights as an inherent measure, and the Olympic Charter in mind, **should** China host the Games?"

My answer to this is yes, but not unconditionally. The IOC should not accept all kinds of behaviour from the Chinese authorities and organisers. They can not prevent all violations from taking place, but they can communicate what the IOC considers to be in violation of the Olympic Spirit. The IOC needs to take on the responsibility as the legitimate authority in selecting the Olympic host city, and this should include a clearer stand on what will not be accepted in the name of Olympism

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