

One nation, many dreams?

Analyzing the impact of the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics on Chinese
identity and unity

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Abstract

China is home to numerous ethnic minority groups, which each have their own culture and traditions. When there are numerous ethnic groups living together in a nation, there is a chance of conflict and clashes between the different groups, especially if the government has implemented controversial policies regarding those matters. The Chinese government's Sinicization policy is such an example. To clarify, the government has implemented this particular policy in order to bolster Chinese nationalism and unity, by assimilating ethnic minorities and their culture into one unified China. However, this can also lead to resistance and discord rather than unity, which would project a negative image of China towards the rest of the world. The notions of nationalism and unity can be thoroughly linked to the Beijing Olympics of 2008. Hosting such an event would be an ideal opportunity to bolster nationalism and unity in the country, since the people would be proud of their nation's progress and sport successes. The main goal of this master thesis is to research whether this is indeed true in the case of the Beijing Olympics. Therefore, the main research question is as follows: *'To which extent did the hosting of the Beijing Summer Olympics strengthen or weaken Chinese nationalism and unity?'* In order to answer this research question, a wealth of academic articles and primary sources have been consulted. The most valuable sources were a set of surveys conducted by different academicians and research groups, which delved into development of nationalist sentiments among Chinese, Hong Kongese and Taiwanese citizens over time, as well as surveyes which documented the opinions of Chinese citizens about the then-upcoming Olympics to be hosted in their country. From the data of these sources, it could be concluded that there was indeed a surge in Chinese nationalist sentiments among Chinese, Hong Kongese and Taiwanese citizens, with the latter albeit less significantly, during the Beijing Olympics. There was a nearly unanimous amount of enthusiasm and positivity regarding the Olympics among Chinese citizens, as they believed it would bring their country international recognition and economic prosperity. Additionally, the feelings of Chinese nationalism among Hong Kongese and Taiwanese citizens immediately dropped off after the Olympics ended. Therefore, despite there been resistance against the Olympics in Tibet and Xinjiang, respectively marked by series of protests and terror attacks, it can be stated that the Beijing Olympics overall temporarily strengthened Chinese nationalism and unity throughout the nation and thus had a positive impact on these notions.

KEYWORDS: *China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, Xinjiang, Beijing, Olympics, nationalism, unity, Sinicization*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On 13 July 2001, the International Olympic Committee announced that the Summer Olympics of 2008 were awarded to Beijing. The Chinese city received a majority of votes from members of the International Olympic Committee, and was thus chosen to host the 26th edition of the Summer Olympic Games. Back then, China could be characterized as a developing country that was growing and modernizing at a rapid pace. Hosting the Summer Olympics would be a prime opportunity for the nation to showcase itself to a global audience and gain more influence on the global stage of politics. Additionally, the Chinese government has been emphasizing the importance of and investing in sports and the public health of Chinese citizens since Mao Zedong's leadership, as Mao founded the All-China Sports federation in 1952.¹ To be able to host the Summer Olympics could be seen as the ultimate pay-off to president Jiang Zheming and his predecessors' investments.

However, the fact that the Olympics were awarded to China became increasingly controversial over time, and it peaked just before the start of the event. To exemplify, the Chinese government has a questionable human rights track record, owing to the notorious suppression of religious movements, such as Falun Gong, and minorities living in China, such as Tibetans and Uyghurs.² On a similar note, the contested history and relationship between China and both Taiwan and Hong Kong garnered a significant amount of both domestic and international attention. Another major concern was the widespread pollution and deterioration of air quality in China, especially in larger cities, including the Olympic host city of Beijing.³ Although China could make a large name for itself on the international stage by hosting the 2008 Summer Olympics, it also needed to be wary of increased international attention for social and ecological issues that were plaguing the country.

As China can be considered an international superpower today, it is interesting to study the reasons behind its rise to power, especially the importance of organizing global events that increased its worldwide prestige and influence. The 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics is a prime example of such an event, as well as a milestone in modern Chinese

¹ Dong-Jhy Hwang and Li-Ke Chang, "Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics," *China Perspectives* 2008, no. 1 (2008): 6, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.3223>.

² Sarah Cook, "Falun Gong: Religious Freedom in China," *Freedom House* (Freedom House, 2017), <https://freedomhouse.org/report/2017/battle-china-spirit-falun-gong-religious-freedom>.

³ Elizabeth Stewart, "IOC Praises Efforts to Reduce Air Pollution in Beijing," *The Guardian*, July 8, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/07/china.olympics2008>.

history. Additionally, some of the controversies related to the Olympics are still relevant nowadays, as China still shares a rocky relationship with Hong Kong (in light of the recent protests) and Taiwan. To exemplify, the cause of these protests was an extradition bill passed by the Chinese government, which would allow for extraditions of Hong Kongese people to Mainland China. Critics feared that this bill would undermine Hong Kongese judicial independence, as well as endanger any Hong Kongese political dissidents.⁴ The protests that followed garnered a massive amount of attention from both domestic and foreign media, putting the Chinese government into a difficult position, with their attitude towards Hong Kong being put under international scrutiny.

1.1. Research question

For this thesis, I will research whether the hosting of a global mega event, the Olympics, has affected Chinese unity and nationalism. The case of China and the 2008 Beijing Olympics is an especially interesting one, considering the problematic and contested nature of the term ‘Chinese unity’. To exemplify, the ideal of Chinese unity might be threatened by certain ethnic minorities, such as the Uyghurs and the Tibetans, as well as the Taiwanese and Hong Kongese, as they cannot fully identify themselves with the government that has been oppressing them. Although it should be noted that there are much more large ethnic minority groups in China, such as the Manchu and the Hui, this essay will focus on the Uyghurs and the Tibetans as they receive more domestic and international attention and are thus more problematized. As the Olympics are a global mega event and thus a huge chance for China to consolidate itself as a strong and unified nation, there was also more international attention for the tensions between China and Hong Kong/Taiwan, as well as the mistreatment of the Tibetan and Uyghur minorities. They had a prime opportunity to make their grievances known to a global audience.

My main research question is as follows: *To which extent did the hosting of the Beijing Summer Olympics strengthen or weaken Chinese nationalism and unity?*

⁴ BBC, “The Hong Kong Protests Explained in 100 and 500 Words,” *BBC News*, September 4, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-49317695>.

Sub questions:

- How did sport become a tool for bolstering Chinese unity? For this sub question I will reflect on how the Chinese government has been investing in national sport and public health programs since Mao Zedong's leadership, as well as shed a light on president Zeming's desire and motives for organizing the 2008 Summer Olympics. The notions of unity and nationalism will thoroughly feature in this section.
- What was the Chinese government's overall strategy related to promoting nationalism and national unity leading up to and during the Olympic Games? For this sub question, it is important to reflect on the Chinese government's desire for a strong and unified China. Nationalism, patriotism and especially Sinicization, as a major policy will be important concepts to feature in the answering of this sub question.
- How was the domestic reception to the Olympic Games? For this sub question I will analyze both the common populace and the government's views, as well as Hong Kongese, Tibetan and Taiwanese views on the Games and the aftermath. This will be done for example by analyzing opinion surveys aimed at inhabitants of the Mainland, particular actions undertaken by a group of relevant actors, such as Tibetan protests against the Olympic games, as well as including relevant opinions and quotes from government officials. It is interesting to see whether there is a juxtaposition between the 'mainland's' and the Taiwanese/Hong Kongese's opinions. I will also include disruptive events in the Soft power, de-Sinicization and nationalism and patriotism are important concepts related to this sub question.
- How was the international response to the Olympic Games? Examples of foreign responses to be included are the evaluation reports of the International Olympic Committee, and international media coverage of events before and during the Olympics. To exemplify, relevant Western newspaper articles and reports by human rights organization contain important information for answering this subquestion. I will mainly focus on responses from Western countries, such as the United States, as they have been very vocal regarding their disapproval of China, and there are many sources containing their statements. It is interesting to compare domestic and international coverage to each other, as it also allows for insights into China's international image and reputation, and thus its potential for garnering soft power. Therefore, soft power is an extremely important concept related to this last sub question.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

A few key concepts, in particular nationalism, patriotism, soft power, Sinicization and de-Sinicization will play important roles in this thesis, as they will be recurring themes and thoroughly analyzed in order to answer the sub questions of this essay. In this section of the thesis, these major concepts will be outlined, and their importance/usefulness will also be explained.

Nationalism & patriotism: One thorough definition of nationalism, provided by the renowned Merriam-Webster dictionary, is as follows: “a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups.”⁵ Patriotism can be defined as showing love or devotion for one’s country.⁶ It should be noted that due to the complexity and versatility of these terms concerning their usage, no ‘true’ definition exists. Different academics and schools of thought have emphasized varying characteristics of nationalism. To exemplify, primordialists argue that nationalism is an ancient concept rooted in fixed and unchanging (national) identities.⁷ On the contrary, modernists state that the concept of nationalism is tied to modernization and the subsequent emergence of new nation states.⁸ Ultimately, most definitions refer in some way to an individual and/or collective’s relationship with the nation they inhabit, or where they feel they belong to.

These two concepts will be recurring throughout the entirety of this thesis, as they can be linked to all of the proposed sub questions to feature in this master thesis, as well as the main research question. Both the similarities and differences between nationalism and patriotism will also be highlighted numerous times, in order to make a clear distinction when both concepts are called upon and might blend into each other.

⁵ Merriam-Webster, “Nationalism,” in *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nationalism>.

⁶ Merriam-Webster, “Patriotism,” in *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/patriotism>.

⁷ Umut Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 49.

⁸ Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 72

Power: Power is an important concept in the field of international relations and politics. A powerful nation can not only exert its influence on other countries, but also have a strong grip on domestic affairs. In International Relations theory, two types of power can be distinguished: hard power and soft power. Hard power can be defined as military and economic might, in which a strong nation can influence and alter the interests and behavior of other nations via sheer force and coercion.⁹ Soft power, on the other hand, can be defined as the ability to attract and co-op, to ‘seduce’ and convince others into cooperating with your demands.¹⁰ Others’ interests can be influenced and shaped through appeal and attraction. If a certain country has ‘attractive’ political values, policies and cultures in the eyes of other nations, it can be said that they possess a great amount of soft power. Although soft power is usually analyzed in its ‘outward’ effects with regards to foreign policy, there also more domestic effects of soft power, in which governments strive to appear attractive towards its own citizens, and thus influence public opinion and behavior.¹¹ Soft power is a desirable currency to have in large quantities, as it allows governments to attain both global and domestic approval, without having to resort to more direct and violent means.

This thesis will be more about soft power, as hosting global mega events is a prime opportunity to present your own nation to a global audience, as well as send a message to its own citizens. By hosting such a successful mega event, the Chinese government can show an image of a successful, modern and ambitious China to not only the world, but also the Chinese populace.

Sinicization and de-Sinicization: Sinicization can be defined as the process in which ethnic minorities in China are assimilated into the Han Chinese majority in a cultural and linguistic manner.¹² The language, ethnic identity and culture of these minorities are slowly eroded, whereby they are forced to adapt to the cultural standards set by the Chinese government. Sinicization has been a cornerstone of the government’s domestic policy since the beginning of the 21st century, as by assimilating separate cultures, the Chinese government strives

⁹ Paul Michael Brannagan and Richard Giulianotti, “Soft Power and Soft Disempowerment: Qatar, Global Sport and Football’s 2022 World Cup Finals,” *Leisure Studies* 34, no. 6 (2014): 704, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2014.964291>.

¹⁰ Brannagan & Giulianotti, “Soft Power and Soft Disempowerment,” 704.

¹¹ Kingsley Edney, “Building National Cohesion and Domestic Legitimacy: A Regime Security Approach to Soft Power in China,” *Politics* 35, no. 3–4 (April 28, 2015): 262, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.12096>.

¹² Nathan Ruser et al., “Cultural Erasure: Tracing the Destruction of Uyghur and Islamic Spaces in Xinjiang,” *APSI* (Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2020), <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/cultural-erasure>.

towards a strong and unified China.¹³ A more extreme example of Sinicization can be found in the Chinese government's treatment of the Uyghurs, whereby Uyghur cultural heritage is destroyed, and mosques are redesigned and forced to include Chinese symbols.¹⁴

De-Sinicization is the opposite of Sinicization, and can consequently be defined as resistance against the aforementioned assimilation process. De-Sinicization can be primarily found in Hong Kong and Taiwan, as both the Taiwanese and Hong Kongese have been gradually gravitating towards the notion of possible independence from the mainland over the past few years. Recent examples are the 2019-2020 mass protests against the Chinese government in Hong Kong, and the fact the Taiwanese government passed a controversial de-Sinicization act in 2018, which led to the omission of massive parts of Chinese history from Taiwanese history text books.¹⁵

Both these concepts are of vital importance to this essay, as while the Chinese government tries to bolster Chinese unity through Sinicization policies, acts of de-Sinicization form a major threat against the government's ideals. Additionally, in order to attain soft power, a nation has to present a positive image of itself to a global audience, especially when the entire world is watching that particular nation through its hosting of a mega event. The controversial nature of Sinicization policies, as well as the increased attention for resistance in the form of de-Sinicization, might threaten this positive image.

¹³ Nathan Ruser et al., "Cultural Erasure: Tracing the Destruction of Uyghur and Islamic Spaces in Xinjiang," *APSI* (Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2020), <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/cultural-erasure>

¹⁴ Chris Buckley and Austin Ramzy, "China Is Erasing Mosques and Precious Shrines in Xinjiang," *The New York Times*, September 25, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/25/world/asia/xinjiang-china-religious-site.html>.

¹⁵ CGTN and Xinhua News Agency, "Beijing Criticizes Taiwan's De-Sinicization Act," *CGTN*, August 15, 2018, https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d774d7941544e79457a6333566d54/share_p.html.

1.3. Historiography

National identity

The notion of national identity is one of the major concepts in this thesis, with China and the 2008 Beijing Olympics ‘merely’ serving as case studies or ‘backdrops’. Not only the Chinese national identity, but also that of the Taiwanese, Hong Kongese, and some of the ethnic minorities living in China, such as the Tibetans and Uyghurs, will be addressed, and relevant similarities and differences in the development of these identities will be compared to each other. Furthermore, this thesis will also include what exactly makes the Chinese identity unique regarding its characteristics and historical development, as well as the relationship between identity and other important concepts, such as soft power. However, before I zoom in on these specific cases and topics, it is paramount to first zoom out and define what national identity exactly entails.

There are two opposing major stances regarding the origin of national identities, namely primordialists and modernists. According to the first approach, nations and ethnic identities are natural, ancient and fixed.¹⁶ Primordialists argue that people have a single ethnic identity, which cannot be changed or influenced by historical processes.¹⁷ Although the primordialist approach is largely discredited by subsequent approaches and theories, it is still a noteworthy framework when it comes to theories regarding identity and nationalism.¹⁸ Primordialism is often referred to in works concerning nationalism and ethnicities, if only to make a juxtaposition between itself and more ‘relevant or accepted’ positions.

Since the end of the previous century, the notion of national identity has become an increasingly popular subject among historians, some of which have been advocating a more modernist approach to the subject, which will be exemplified in the next two paragraphs. This approach directly contrasts that of primordialism, as rather than assuming that nationalism is an ancient and static concept, it is actually a fairly young concept, dating back to the rise of modernity and industrialism at the end of the eighteenth century.

¹⁶ Umut Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 49.

¹⁷ Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 55.

¹⁸ John Coakley, “‘Primordialism’ in Nationalism Studies: Theory or Ideology?,” *Nations and Nationalism* 24, no. 2 (October 4, 2017): 327–28, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12349>.

One of the most prominent and influential authors in the field of identity and nationalism is Ernest Gellner. In his works, Gellner links the notion of nationalism to another particular concept: industrialization.¹⁹ According to him, modern, industrial societies, were the first type of societies to require complex forms of communication over large spaces. In this process, a shared, uniform language is being developed.²⁰ Having a uniform language is the entry barrier to gradually adopting a fully shared culture, as the state and the concept of culture became intertwined.²¹ To quote Gellner himself: “Modern people do not in general become nationalists from sentiments or sentimentality atavistic or not, well-based or myth founded: they become nationalists, through genuine, objective, practical necessity, however obscure.”²² Some aspects of Gellner’s theory were highly criticized, such as the fact that he dismisses the emotions and passions that are associated with nationalist sentiments: Expressions of nationalism require beliefs and investments behind them, instead of nationalism being an automatic process that follows from industrialization.²³ Another point of criticism raised by scholars, such as Nicos Mouzelis and Anthony Giddens, is the lack of a strict causality between nationalism and industrialism.²⁴ They argue that there are nations or regions where industrialization has occurred without being coupled with the development of nationalism, and vice-versa.²⁵ Latin America and the Balkans are named as examples of regions where nationalist sentiments sparked despite the absence of any form of industrialization, referring to how Spain and the Ottoman Empire, which respectively controlled large parts of these regions, had to deal with increased unrest through nationalist uprisings.²⁶

Two influential contemporaries of Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Anthony Smith, both argue that nationalism precedes industrialization. However, it should be noted that Anderson and Gellner’s ideas can both be ascribed to the modernist school of thought regarding nationalism, whereas Smith belongs to a different category, which will be touched upon shortly. Anderson’s main contribution to the historiography on nationalism and national

¹⁹ Damian Tambini, “Explaining Monoculturalism: Beyond Gellner’s Theory of Nationalism,” *Critical Review* 10, no. 2 (March 1996): 252, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08913819608443420>.

²⁰ Tambini, “Explaining Monoculturalism,” 253.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 253.

²² D.V Kumar, “Gellnerian Theory of Nation and Nationalism: A Critical Appraisal,” *Sociological Bulletin* 59, no. 3 (2010): 397, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23620890?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A05fe5915857b77b9eb3ffb9a9873428d&seq=5#page_scan_tab_contents

²³ Kumar, “Gellnerian Theory,” 397.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 399.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 399.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 399.

identities is the concept of ‘imagined communities’. Anderson emphasizes that an individual still feels cohesion with fellow countrymen, despite probably never meeting them face-to-face – hence the ‘imagined’ part.²⁷ To quote Anderson himself: “It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”²⁸ Another important concept in Anderson’s work is ‘print-capitalism’. This term entails the publishing of books on a broad scale, with the consequence that people gained access to all kinds of information, which were published in different languages.²⁹ Before the ‘printing revolution’, most books were only available in Latin, making them unreadable for the common folk. The increased accessibility of books led to an increase in literacy rates, which along with a parallel growth in communications, industry and commerce, marked the path towards a ‘linguistic unification’.³⁰ This made the next step towards nationalism easier, as nationalist sentiments could now be easily spread on a large scale through printed works.

Anthony Smith can be considered as one of the leading proponents of the ethnosymbolic approach of national identity. This approach emerged from theoretical critique on the modernist approach.³¹ The ethnosymbolic approach emphasizes the importance of ethnic groups as precursors to the modern nation, as well as ancient memories and associated myths about a golden age and heroes.³² Smith argues that his theory is more effective at explaining a nation’s origins than the primordialist and modernist approaches, as an ethnosymbolic approach is more successful at explaining why and when a specific ethnic group would start a nationalist movement, as well as the context behind their actions and why their actions would be able to gain widespread support.³³ Furthermore, Smith’s approach enables people to understand the value of collective symbols, values, myths and especially memories.³⁴ Smith further argues that modernist approaches fail to understand the value of collective memories, and their role in shaping a nation.³⁵ He further criticizes the modernist approach by stating that modernists undervalue the concept of identity as a mere malleable

²⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

²⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

³¹ Umut Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism : A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

³² Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 67.

³³ Smith, *National Identity*, 30.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

concept that be easily influenced by political elites, and that that they wrongly attach too much value to modernism as a deciding factor for the rise of nations.³⁶ Lastly, Smith also strongly criticizes the theory of primordialism, as they see national identities as ancient and purely static, and thus fail to explain why nation states emerge and change, and why many people choose to emigrate and identify themselves with other ethnic communities.³⁷

From 1980 on, coinciding with the ‘cultural turn’ in social sciences, a host of ‘new’ approaches to nationalist theory came about. These newer theories can be characterized by being more diverse compared to their predecessors, as they are influenced by notions such as postmodernism, feminism, post-colonialism and globalization.³⁸ Although in the case of this thesis, I would argue that only the latter is really relevant, especially as China is currently a main actor and (rising) superpower in an ever-globalizing world, with the Olympic Games being a global mega event that perfectly captures the spirit of globalization. An example of a more globalist approach to identity can be found in Wang Zhuojun and He Hualing’s article “*National Identity in the Era of Globalization: Crisis and Reconstruction*”. To exemplify, national identity can be approached in terms of actors on an individual and collective level, or in terms of ‘function and content’ and split into political identity and ethno-cultural identity.³⁹ National identity can be defined as an “individual’s self-cognition and active identification with the legitimacy of the political community in which he lives”.⁴⁰ At a national level, national identity can be seen as the qualities and behavior a state displays when it comes to international relations.⁴¹ Regarding the ‘content’ approach, national identity is not only a source of national interests, but also one of cohesion and legitimacy. National identity on a political level entails to which extent a nation’s citizens can identify with their government’s actions and ruling philosophy.⁴² On the other hand, national identity on an ethno-cultural level dabbles more into citizens’ sense of belonging and identification with the prevalent cultural beliefs and norms in their country.⁴³

³⁶ Anthony D. Smith, “Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism,” *International Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1996): 446, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2625550>.

³⁷ Smith, “Culture, Community and Territory,” 446.

³⁸ Umut Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 169.

³⁹ Wang Zhuojun and He Hualing, “National Identity in the Era of Globalization: Crisis and Reconstruction,” *Social Sciences in China* 35, no. 2 (2014): 140-41 <https://doi.org/10.1080/02529203.2014.900889>.

⁴⁰ Zhuojin & Hualing, “National Identity in the Era of Globalization,” 141.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 141.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 141.

Soft power and its importance

Another important concept to feature in this thesis is soft power. This term was originally coined by the renowned American political scientist Joseph Nye, who defines the concept as follows: “intangible power resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions”.⁴⁴ Nye also defines soft power as the ability to attract and co-opt other nations into doing what you desire. An attractive culture, political values and (foreign) policies can be considered as ‘soft power currencies’. Countries with a more authoritative government do not have very attractive domestic political values, and thus lack soft power. Nye originally invented the term in an attempt to challenge the then prevalent view that American power was on decline; it was expected that the Soviet Union would overtake America’s military might, and that Japan would surpass America’s economic strength.⁴⁵ Nye assumed that there was another form of power missing, as America still had a massive global influence due to its widespread cultural values and exports.⁴⁶ He came to the conclusion that the ability to gain the attraction of other nations, and thereby possibly influencing their behavior was a relevant and separate form of power, which he ultimately assigned the term ‘soft power’ to.⁴⁷ Whereas hard power seemed to be all the rage during the twentieth century, which can be characterized by two major ‘hot’ wars and one Cold War and overall military aggression, soft power became more influential in the post-Cold War era, owing to the increasing democratization and globalization of the world.

Jonathan Grix is one of the most prominent academics when it comes to researching soft power on a more global level, in particular the relationship between soft power and mega events, as he applied these concepts to numerous case studies.⁴⁸ Grix argues that by hosting global sport events, a country can essentially become a ‘guardian’ of attractive universal sport values, and thus reduce their aforementioned soft power deficit.⁴⁹ If the country in question hosts a successful global mega event, it can present itself as attractive nation by showing that

⁴⁴ Jonathan Grix and Donna Lee, “Soft Power, Sports Mega-Events and Emerging States: The Lure of the Politics of Attraction,” *Global Society* 27, no. 4 (2013): 526, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2013.827632>.

⁴⁵ Joseph Nye, “Soft Power: The Origins and Political Progress of a Concept,” *Palgrave Communications* 3 (2017): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2017.8>.

⁴⁶ Nye, “Soft Power,” 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁸ Jonathan Grix and Barrie Houlihan, “Sports Mega-Events as Part of a Nation’s Soft Power Strategy: The Cases of Germany (2006) and the UK (2012),” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 16, no. 4 (April 2, 2013): 572–96, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-856x.12017>.

⁴⁹ Jonathan Grix and Donna Lee, “Soft Power, Sports Mega-Events and Emerging States: The Lure of the Politics of Attraction,” *Global Society* 27, no. 4 (2013): 527, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2013.827632>.

they can handle the responsibility of organizing such a large-scale event, and that they champion those universal, desirable sport values.⁵⁰ Additionally, hosting mega events can be considered as a form of public diplomacy, as foreign governments and policymakers can change their opinion and policies towards the host country as result of a successful hosting.⁵¹ It can be stated that sport can play a key role in nation building on both a domestic and international level: by delivering continuous good performances and even winning trophies, the populace becomes proud of their country and its sport heroes. By signaling such domestic collective pride and unity on the international stage, other countries can also become impressed. Sports mega events, foremost the World Cup and the Olympic Games, are communicative practices that can be successful in attracting the attention of billions of people across the globe and are therefore a perfect platform to showcase the hosting nation's culture and values, thus portraying a positive image.⁵²

Since Nye originally introduced the term 'soft power', there have been various transformations and new applications of the term. As stated in the previous paragraph, Jonathan Grix established a direct link between the concepts of soft power and global mega events. Another recent transformation of 'soft power', can be uniquely applied to the case of China. The term 'soft power' has been surging in popularity among Chinese scholars and politicians.⁵³ The administration of the Chinese government, as well as various Chinese scholars, have repeatedly emphasized that it values a 'peaceful rise', in which it aims to share its traditional culture and associated values, such as harmony, with the rest of the world, getting them to understand and embrace Chinese culture.⁵⁴ To that extent, Chinese international strategy apparently seems to be more based on soft power rather than hard power. China's domestic political values are often criticized, with the state's questionable human rights track record, lack of democracy and censorship serving as major criticisms. Although Chinese scholars are not reluctant to agree with such criticisms, they do point out that it is difficult to make a comparison between the West and China, as they had differing

⁵⁰ Jonathan Grix and Donna Lee, "Soft Power, Sports Mega-Events and Emerging States: The Lure of the Politics of Attraction," *Global Society* 27, no. 4 (2013): 527, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2013.827632>.

⁵¹ Grix & Lee, "Soft Power, Sports Mega-Events and Emerging States," 529.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 529.

⁵³ Xin Li and Verner Worm, "Building China's Soft Power for a Peaceful Rise," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 16, no. 1 (2010): 71, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-010-9130-2>.

⁵⁴ Li & Worm, "Building China's Soft Power," 71-72.

development paths throughout history.⁵⁵ They emphasize that their country has “its own reform agenda, based on China’s painful historic experiences.”⁵⁶

Besides Nye’s classical definition of soft power, with the three pillars of political values, culture and foreign policies, the Chinese scholar Honghua Men has broadened this definition with another new aspect, which serves to better understand soft power related to China’s case, namely the nation’s economic development.⁵⁷ Within Chinese academia, there have also been debates regarding which currency of soft power is the most important, with some emphasizing the importance of culture, while others are more inclined towards political values.⁵⁸ To expand on the former, China clearly has an identifiable foreign cultural presence. An example is the mass establishment of Confucius Institutes, particular institutes that aim at promoting and raising awareness of the Chinese language and culture on a global scale.⁵⁹ Additionally, various other aspects and establishments of Chinese culture and arts, such as food, calligraphy, traditional medicine and associated treatment methods, and martial arts can be found all over the world. These institutions can often be found packed tightly together in various ‘Chinatowns’ around the world. Lastly, the Chinese New Year celebrations are well-known and observed in various parts of the world, and has also been integrated in global commerce, with various large companies acknowledging the holiday and even holding various promotions related to Chinese New Year.⁶⁰

Two Turkish scholars, Nilgün Eliküçük Yıldırım and Mesut Aslan, have also conducted extensive research into the importance of soft power for the Chinese nation, including the government’s soft power strategy. They subscribe to the notion that China has been launching a ‘soft power offensive’, as the nation aims to garner global influence via ideological, cultural and institutional avenues.⁶¹ However, they also argue that there is a lack of attention for the other side of soft power – defensive soft power. A ‘charm defense’ is also part of the Chinese soft power strategy, as China tries to protect her foreign image through soft power.⁶² Comparing to its offensive soft power strategy, China’s defensive strategy is

⁵⁵ Xin Li and Verner Worm, “Building China’s Soft Power for a Peaceful Rise,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 16, no. 1 (2010): 71, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-010-9130-2>.

⁵⁶ Li & Worm, “Building China’s Soft Power,” 78.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶¹ Nilgün Eliküçük Yıldırım and Mesut Aslan, “China’s Charm Defensive: Image Protection by Acquiring Mass Entertainment,” *Pacific Focus* 35, no. 1 (April 2020): 142, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pafo.12153>.

⁶² Yıldırım & Aslan, “China’s Charm Defensive,” 142.

more reactionary and preventive. To exemplify, the Chinese government has been investing tremendous amounts of money in both domestic and foreign digital media and entertainment companies, ranging from video game platforms to social media outlets.⁶³ By doing so, it can regulate content on such platforms, thereby making it more difficult for hostiles to disparage China's international image, in both the domestic and global sphere. To give a domestic example, the Chinese internet infrastructure is often mockingly nicknamed 'The Great Firewall', as many global social media websites, such as Facebook and YouTube, are inaccessible and 'replaced' by Chinese equivalents, such as Weibo.⁶⁴ Certain search terms, such as 'Tiananmen Square incident', are banned.⁶⁵ On a global level, China has a large foothold in the international gaming industry. Some of the most popular games, such as 'League of Legends' and 'Fortnite', are fully or partially owned by Chinese companies, and the biggest video game company, Tencent is a Chinese company.⁶⁶ Although the topic of gaming does not fit in well with the more classical aspects of soft power, associated live events, such as gaming shows and championship, provide opportunities to exert control over the public's perception of China. A famous 'Hearthstone' player got banned from the game after he expressed his sympathies for the Hong Kong protesters.⁶⁷ In the live chat function of particular games (partly) owned by Chinese companies, words like Taiwan and Uyghur are censored, being replaced by six asterisks.⁶⁸ Although these examples have caused outrage among players and media outlets, and thus can be perceived as negative publicity and an overall detriment to China's offensive soft power, they also serve as examples of Chinese defensive soft power: The Chinese government and affiliated companies can still freely decide which discourses and views they consider as harmful to China's image, and proceed to immediately take action against these views and shut the offenders down.⁶⁹

⁶³ Nilgün Eliküçük Yıldırım and Mesut Aslan, "China's Charm Defensive: Image Protection by Acquiring Mass Entertainment," *Pacific Focus* 35, no. 1 (April 2020): 162-63, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pafo.12153>.

⁶⁴ Yıldırım & Aslan, "China's Charm Defensive," 163.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 160-61

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 161.

The Chinese identity

When it comes to Chinese identity and nationalism, it is widely accepted that the modern Chinese state and its legitimacy were born from decades of resistance against foreign intervention and domestic corruption. An important related concept is the so-called ‘Century of Humiliation’, which refers to the nineteenth century.⁷⁰ During this era, China lost to the British Empire in the Opium Wars, and was defeated by Japan during the First Sino-Japanese War. These subsequent defeats struck a great blow to the pride of the Chinese nation, and awakened nationalist sentiments among the populace.⁷¹ Shameer Modongal argues that before this humiliating period, it was difficult to consider China as a true nation under modern standards, for example due to the lack of an official flag or an official name for the state, with the name just being derived from the emperor ruling the current dynasty.⁷² Liang Qichao, a renowned scholar during the end of the Qing Dynasty, lamented the fact that his nation had no official name.⁷³ Liang also rejected the idea of a national identity defined by race or ethnicity. Instead, he advocated a ‘great nationalism’, that would encompass multiple ethnicities that were living on Chinese soil.⁷⁴ Ultimately, the Chinese Civil War could also be described as a battle between two differing ideas regarding national identity: The CPC promoted left-oriented state nationalism, while the Kuomintang was in favor of Han-centric ethnic nationalism.⁷⁵ Modongal distinguishes post-civil war nationalism in four stages: leader centric state nationalism (1949-1976), pro-Western liberal nationalism (1976-1989), patriotic state nationalism (1989-2001), and lastly cybernationalism (2001-present).

As the CPC emerged victorious from the civil war, it was able to construct a nationwide feeling against (Western) imperialism, capitalism and bureaucratism.⁷⁶ This helped Mao Zedong to establish a socialist-oriented state nationalism, which attempted to create a sense of nationhood among all Chinese citizens.⁷⁷ According to Modongal, Mao was able to mold his country into a major player on the global stage of politics, which led to the feeling of national shame being transformed into a feeling of national pride.⁷⁸ After the death

⁷⁰ Shameer Modongal, “Development of Nationalism in China,” ed. Zhouxiang Lu, *Cogent Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2016): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2016.1235749>.

⁷¹ Modongal, “Development of Nationalism in China,” 2.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

of Mao, Deng Xiaoping steered the country towards a more pro-Western and modern course. The Chinese populace got acquainted with Western culture in the form of books and other publications, and Western news outlets such as CNN and BBC became mainstream in China.⁷⁹ However, the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989 negatively affected this newfound appreciation for the West, as the Chinese government and its supporters saw that strong Western (political) values, such as democratization, weakened the Party, and by extension social order in the country.⁸⁰ In the aftermath of the Incident, a strong anti-Western patriotic nationalism emerged, which was only fueled further by international sanctions against China.⁸¹ Chinese nationalists believed that the westernization of the country was detrimental to its development, and that China should follow its own development path.⁸² Chinese nationalism from 2001 is characterized by Modongal as cybernationalism, owing to the rise of social media, introducing a new way for Chinese people to express their nationalist sentiments.⁸³ The feeling of nationalism was arguably bolstered by the fact that China kept enjoying considerable economic growth and became attained an increasing amount of global influence, with the joining of the World Trade Organization and the hosting of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games.⁸⁴

William Callahan, a British political scientist, places extra emphasis on the role of shared history and memories, as well as the manipulation of these aspects, in regard to Chinese nationalism.⁸⁵ During the aforementioned wave of patriotic nationalism in China between 1989 and 2001, the Chinese government launched a nationwide ‘patriotic education program’.⁸⁶ However, Callahan adds that the notions of patriotism and national humiliation were already referred to in textbooks and editorial commentaries dating back to the 1920s, well before the split between the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan.⁸⁷ Therefore, the focus on national humiliation as official policy was not an entirely new concept. The national humiliation discourse was revived as a response to the Tiananmen Square Incident, and

⁷⁹ Shameer Modongal, “Development of Nationalism in China,” ed. Zhouxiang Lu, *Cogent Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2016): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2016.1235749>.

⁸⁰ Modongal, “Development of Nationalism in China,” 3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁵ William A. Callahan, “History, Identity, and Security: Producing and Consuming Nationalism in China,” *Critical Asian Studies* 38, no. 2 (2006): 184, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672710600671087>.

⁸⁶ Callahan, “History, Identity, and Security,” 185.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 185.

became a staple of national education.⁸⁸ The National Library of China claims that there were no new publications about national humiliation discourse published between 1947 and 1990.⁸⁹ According to the party's "Outline for Implementing Patriotic Education" (dating from 1994), the policy's objective was to boost enhance social cohesion on a national level, boost the Chinese spirit, bolster national pride, consolidate and develop a patriotic united front, and rally the masses' patriotic passions to "build socialism with Chinese characteristics."⁹⁰ The patriotic education policy was not so much an attempt to truly educate the Chinese youth, but more a way of influencing the younger population to hold contempt towards a foreign Other, while also presenting China itself as a Victim.⁹¹ This process of Chinese Victimization and Othering as part of the Chinese national identity is well touched upon in various other works of academic literature.

The Japanese political scientist Shogo Suzuki expands on Callahan's remark about China's victim mentality, pointing out that China has had a long history of self-victimization. He argues that from the Chinese 'Self vs Other' perspective, China is the victimized Self, having being humiliated by foreign powers (the Others) several times, such as during the Opium Wars against the British Empire, or its defeats and latter occupation by the Japanese Empire.⁹² Suzuki also argues that China's self-proclaimed victimhood and sense of insecurity continued post-World War II, as China had conflicts with both the United States and the Soviet Union, resulting it into being isolated and alienated from the international community, effectively leading to China now being 'Othered'.⁹³ The image of the victimized Self became increasingly prevalent again after the country's socioeconomic reforms post-Mao, as Western powers became wary of China's rapid economic growth and increasing global influence.⁹⁴ All in all, the the installation of the Chinese patriotic education program is a prime example of portraying oneself as a victimized state, with self-victimization being a defining characteristic of Chinese nationalism throughout the last two centuries.

To offer a more domestic vision on Chinese identity, the Chinese scholar Honghua Men argues that the Chinese identity is based around its uniqueness as a new type of socialist

⁸⁸ William A. Callahan, "History, Identity, and Security: Producing and Consuming Nationalism in China," *Critical Asian Studies* 38, no. 2 (2006): 185, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672710600671087>.

⁸⁹ Callahan, "History, Identity and Security," 186.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁹² Shogo Suzuki, "The Importance of 'Othering' in China's National Identity: Sino-Japanese Relations as a Stage of Identity Conflicts," *The Pacific Review* 20, no. 1 (2007): 32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512740601133195>.

⁹³ Suzuki, "The importance of 'Othering' in China's national identity," 33.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

country, one that pursues openness, development and embraces transformation if the situation demands it.⁹⁵ However, Men finds that the strength of the Chinese national identity is lacking, and that there is no strategy dedicated to its construction and strengthening.⁹⁶ He stresses the importance of establishing this identity, as only then the Chinese nation can maintain its core values, social cohesion and national image, along with expanding its foreign influence.⁹⁷ In order to strengthen Chinese identity, Men sets out four strategy goals: improve the domestic civic consciousness, enhance China's soft power, integrate national, regional and global identities, and finally play an active role in bridging the gap between developing and developed countries.⁹⁸ Men argues that civic consciousness is the intellectual foundation of national identity, and manifests itself through a sense of belonging, responsibility, and national honor.⁹⁹ Following that, Men suggests that there needs to be emphasis of a shared nation among Chinese citizens of different ethnic backgrounds, in order to guide them towards one national identity, albeit with cultural differences.¹⁰⁰ Regarding soft power, Men argues that his nation's government is still too reliant on exerting hard power, and that the currently existing gap between soft and hard power limits the full realization of China's potential.¹⁰¹ Therefore, China should construct and innovate with regards to mainstream social values, improve its way of governing, and advocate a harmonious social development that will be considered attractive in the eyes of other nations.¹⁰² On the topic of Men's third point, China should expand on common interests with other nations, yet also cherish its own unique national identity and regional identities.¹⁰³ By doing so, the government can facilitate positive interactions between international, regional and national identities, as well as increasing global recognition of China's identity.¹⁰⁴ Lastly, according to Men, China should also keep playing an active role as a bridge between developed and developing countries.¹⁰⁵ China will inevitably strengthen its national identity by appreciating global trends, and the interaction between currently dominant and upcoming powers.¹⁰⁶ China fulfills a special role

⁹⁵ Men Honghua, "China's National Identity in Transition: Domestic and International Perspectives (1982-2012)," *Social Sciences in China* 35, no. 2 (2014): 203, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02529203.2014.900895>.

⁹⁶ Honghua, "China's National Identity in Transition," 203.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 203-04.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 204-05.

in the current global order as a rising superpower that is currently at the junction between developing and developed countries.¹⁰⁷

Chinese and Taiwanese or Hong Kongese national identity often blends in with each other. According to research conducted by Lau et al., the amount of Taiwanese teenagers that identified themselves as Chinese rose during the Olympic Games (see figure 9).¹⁰⁸ They argue that Taiwanese students felt a sense of pride as Chinese athletes performed extraordinarily well at the Olympics, winning the most gold medals out of all countries.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, the fact that the Taiwanese share a common cultural identity, based on having a similar language, history and ethnicity, could also have contributed to this.¹¹⁰ However, taking the ever-fluctuating nature of cross-Strait relations into account, as well as the fact that Taiwanese people could no longer cheer for successful Chinese athletes, the amount of Taiwanese that identified themselves as Chinese dropped after the Olympics ended.¹¹¹

According to Lau et al.'s survey, there was a notable increase in the amount of Hong Kongese people identifying themselves as Chinese during the Olympics.¹¹² This can be explained by the fact that China undertook serious efforts to involve Hong Kong during the Olympic Games, in contrast to the more unwilling Taiwan. To exemplify, Hong Kong was one of the cities that co-hosted the Equestrian Games as part of the Beijing Olympics. Additionally, there was an extensive 24/7 live coverage of the Games, with free TV broadcasting and local commentaries available.¹¹³ Such a massive amount of sports coverage on free channels was unprecedented in Hong Kong sports media history.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, entertainment celebrities appeared as guest commentators and anchors.¹¹⁵ Lastly, the successes of Chinese athletes also instilled a sense of (Chinese) national pride among Hong Kongese citizens. However, similarly to Taiwan and perhaps not unsurprisingly, after the Olympics ended, the amount of Hong Kongese citizens that identified as Chinese took a steep decline, with the amount of people identifying themselves as Hong Kongese increasing.¹¹⁶ Overall, it can be said that the

¹⁰⁷ Men Honghua, "China's National Identity in Transition: Domestic and International Perspectives (1982-2012)," *Social Sciences in China* 35, no. 2 (2014): 203, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02529203.2014.900895>.

¹⁰⁸ Patrick W.C. Lau et al., "The Longitudinal Changes of National Identity in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan Before, during and after the 2008 Beijing Olympics Games," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 9 (2012): 1290, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2012.692248>.

¹⁰⁹ Lau et al., "The Longitudinal Changes," 1290.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1290.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1290.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 1290.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 1289.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1289.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1289.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1289.

Beijing Olympics caused a temporary ‘truce’ and surge in Chinese nationalism among both Hong Kongese and Taiwanese citizens, although slightly more with the former.

1.4. Sources and Methods

For my own project, I will conduct research into whether the hosting of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics has affected nationalist sentiments and unity within China. I will present a more ‘complete’ research in my master thesis by including results from various surveys, such as the surveys conducted by Pew Research and Lau. et al..¹¹⁷ These surveys respectively delve into opinions of Chinese citizens regarding the Beijing Olympics, international media coverage of the Games, and whether the Olympics have affected nationalist sentiments among Chinese, Hong Kongese and Taiwanese youth.¹¹⁸

Ultimately, I strive to combine relevant qualitative and quantitative information, derived from various primary sources. This will also include an in-depth analysis of the notions of nationalism and identity in Hong Kong and Taiwan, in which the differences and similarities can be listed and juxtaposed against equivalent developments in the Chinese mainland. To that extent, even more ‘subjective’ sources, such as interviews, can be useful, albeit in moderation. To exemplify, I have found two different interviews that directly juxtapose each other: One interview with Chai Xi, the Chinese ambassador to Malta, and an interview with Golog Jigme, a Tibetan monk and former political prisoner.¹¹⁹ Both men talk about the Olympic Games and the associated protests in Tibet, and have opinions that directly contrast each other.¹²⁰ Lastly, the Beijing Olympics themselves will also play a key role in my thesis, in which multiple aspects of the mega event shall be highlighted and analyzed, from

¹¹⁷ Project for Excellence in Journalism, “The Media’s Olympics: How the News Media Have Covered the Games in Beijing,” *Pew Research Center* (Pew Research Center, 2008), <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/legacy/Olympics-REPORT-PDF.pdf>.

¹¹⁸ The Pew Global Attitudes Project, “The 2008 Pew Global Attitudes Survey in China,” *Pew Research Center* (Pew Research Center, 2008), <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2008/07/2008-Pew-Global-Attitudes-Report-2-July-22-2pm.pdf>.

¹¹⁹ Chai Xi, Questions and Answers for Interview with Ambassador Chai Xi by the Maltese Media on Tibet Issue and Beijing Olympics, interview by various Maltese media, *Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Republic of Malta’s Website*, April 18, 2008, <http://mt.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/t427096.htm>.

¹²⁰ Golog Jigme, An interview with Golog Jigme, respected monk and “Information Hero” after his daring escape from Tibet, interview by International Campaign for Tibet, *International Campaign for Tibet’s website*, July 29, 2014, <https://savetibet.org/an-interview-with-golog-jigme-respected-monk-and-information-hero-after-his-daring-escape-from-tibet/>.

the opening ceremony and other directly related events, to more ‘abstract’ notions, such as the event’s potential for generating soft power. Overall, I shall combine the quantitative and qualitative information from my sources into a grand analytical narrative that could provide various (new) insights regarding the notions of unity and nationalism in China, as well as the role of the Olympics hereby.

Research methods & challenges

For my master thesis, I will make use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Regarding the former, I have located and selected a plethora of secondary and qualitative sources, ranging from journal articles and government reports to newspaper stories. An example of an important source is a journal article on the portrayals of the ‘real China’, which is marked by clashes between Chinese and foreign media, as they both accuse each other of ingenuine reporting and deliberately spreading fake news, written by Kevin Latham.¹²¹ His work can be compared to and analyzed in the context of other literature related to the writings of the Chinese press and associated governmental interferences, such as Anne-Marie Brady’s article on the Chinese government’s propaganda campaign, which includes manipulation of domestic media outlets.¹²² Another important journal article to feature in my thesis will be Dong Jhy-Hwang and Li-Ke Chang’s article on the development of Chinese sport throughout the twentieth century.¹²³ Hwang and Chang summarize how the notion of Chinese sport has underwent a turbulent history, such as Mao’s promotion of sport and physical culture to the demonization of these aspects during the Cultural Revolution. It offers a good amount of insight on how important sport has been in Chinese culture, and its role alongside the development of the Chinese nation and Chinese nationalism.

On the other hand, I have also found some sources containing quantitative information, primarily in the form of survey results. An example is a survey undertaken by Pew Research, which is aimed at gauging how excited Chinese citizens were for the

¹²¹ Kevin Latham, “Media, the Olympics and the Search for the ‘Real China,’” *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 25–43, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756421>.

¹²² Anne-Marie Brady, “The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 1–24, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756420>.

¹²³ Dong-Jhy Hwang and Li-Ke Chang, “Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics,” *China Perspectives* 2008, no. 1 (2008): 4–17, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.3223>.

Olympics, and whether they felt hosting it would benefit them and their country.¹²⁴ Because the survey contains respondents from China and is aimed at assessing public opinion and possible nationalist sentiments under Chinese citizens, it is directly related to the research question of my thesis and thus will certainly be a useful primary source. However, it can be noted that the survey's demography is quite limited and specific, and is thus not fully representative of every Chinese citizen. Therefore I do not presume some kind of national consensus regarding the Olympics, but in my analyses I rather want to point out that the Beijing Olympics has in fact affected nationalist sentiments under Chinese (and Hong Kongese and Taiwanese people in other sources) to a certain degree.

Due to the fact that I have found much more qualitative sources and information compared to quantitative sources, it can be said that my methodology for this thesis is quite skewed towards qualitative research. Nonetheless, the quantitative sources I found will also play a vital role in answering the research question of my thesis, as analyzing the results of the surveys I found is helpful for identifying and measuring nationalist sentiments among populaces. However, it should be noted that such surveys often contain a limited sample, and are thus not fully representative of an entire population. Therefore, it might be difficult to truly answer the research question of this thesis, unless I gather a significant amount of quantitative data, that covers a large enough population.

Another challenge that I have to face for my thesis is my lack of knowledge and skill regarding the Mandarin and Cantonese languages. Because of this shortcoming, I have to rely exclusively on finding English and translated sources, which limits the scope of my research and the possible amount of sources I can collect and use. This especially reduces the amount of usable primary sources, as such sources coming directly from Chinese, Hong Kongese or Taiwanese actors or websites are not always translated. I should also be aware of possible mistranslations, potential cultural biases and also the possibility of cultural nuances being lost in translated sources.

¹²⁴ The Pew Global Attitudes Project, "The 2008 Pew Global Attitudes Survey in China," *Pew Research Center* (Pew Research Center, 2008), <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2008/07/2008-Pew-Global-Attitudes-Report-2-July-22-2pm.pdf>.

Source types & challenges

Regarding the nature of my primary sources, I have included various written, visual and oral sources for my master thesis, ranging from interviews to surveys, photographs and documentaries. A collection of the visual sources I have used for my thesis could be found in a visual appendix at the end of my work. To give a short overview of major primary sources that are featured in this thesis:

Newspapers

China Daily

The Guardian

New York Times

Tibetan Review

Articles published on the website of China Daily are used to gain more insight into Chinese newspaper coverage regarding the Olympics. They also form an interesting juxtaposition when compared with articles from foreign media, as such media outlets would be more skeptical and critical about the Olympics compared to Chinese media. The fact that China Daily is quite one-sided in their coverage is both a strength and a weakness: Although the articles are a rich source of Chinese coverage, they are also subjective, reducing their journalistic value. The Guardian and the New York Times have published numerous articles about the Olympics, ranging from concerns and criticism regarding the Olympics to coverage of Olympic events as the Games were underway. The Tibetan Review is an editorially independent monthly publication based in Delhi, India. It proclaims that it is not funded by any government, nor is it affiliated or related to any interest group. Most of their articles are focused on Tibet, and are overall critical of the Chinese government, especially regarding their handling of issues related to Tibet. By looking at the subject matter and the tone of articles in these different newspapers, various different perspectives on the Beijing Olympics are distinguished and compared to each other. An example is the conflict between Chinese and Western media regarding coverage of Tibetan protests, as media outlets from both sides accused each other of deliberately producing biased news articles.

Human right reports

Human Rights Watch

Amnesty International

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International are two well-known human rights organizations which frequently produce publications on human rights violations. They have also published numerous critical reports on the 2008 Beijing Olympics, in which they not only condemn the Chinese government for their treatment of the Tibetans and the Uyghurs, but also highlight several other major examples of domestic human rights violations, such as locking up and torturing overly critical journalists and human rights activists, or forcing Beijing residents to be evicted from their homes to make way for preparations for the Olympics. Human Rights Watch's reports on Tibet and Xinjiang serve as important sources for subchapter 4.2, which includes Tibetan and Uyghur perspectives on the Beijing Olympics, as well as context to the increased governmental pressure on the Uyghurs in the run-up to the Olympics, and the Tibetan Uprising of March 2008. These reports include useful statements by Tibetan and Uyghur eyewitnesses, as they share what they witnessed during these events. Amnesty International has published a series of reports and press kits on Chinese human rights violations in 2007 and 2008. One of these reports has been an important source for subchapter 5.2, which delves into human rights organizations' perspectives on the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Examples and statistics regarding Chinese human rights violations have been selected and thoroughly featured throughout that particular subchapter, in order to paint a picture of what one of the world's most prominent human rights organizations has to say about the Beijing Olympics.

Pew Research reports

Two reports from Pew Research that investigate international media coverage about the Beijing Olympics and how the daily life of Chinese people were affected by the Olympics. The first report by Pew Research is helpful with providing an understanding of the Chinese populace's opinions about the Olympics, and how organizing that event has impacted various facets of their daily life. Again, analyzing and incorporating the data from these reports in my thesis strengthens my arguments and findings regarding Chinese public opinion about the Olympics, and brings me a step closer to answering the subquestion about the domestic reception to the Olympics. Pew Research's second report, which is focused on documenting international media coverage, serves similar function, although it is more broad in scale and

focused on Western media coverage. Analyzing such media coverage is helpful for answering the second and third subquestions of my thesis, which are respectively about the Chinese government's measures of promoting both nationalism and the Olympics, and domestic/foreign reception to the Olympics.

International Olympic Committee Reports

An evaluation report on the Beijing 2008 Olympics published by the International Olympic Committee, and a report on Beijing's original bid for the 2008 Olympics, including additional commentary.

The evaluation report published by the IOC, which is essentially a retrospective of the entire Olympics and the events leading up to it, offers an interesting and authoritative perspective on the mega event, and thus is useful for determining the overall reception to the Beijing Olympics. The report on Beijing's original bid for the 2008 Olympics is a detailed account of the bid's most important characteristics, advantages and challenges, as well as how the bid came to be. The IOC's evaluation report is essentially glowing with praise for Beijing's hosting of the 2008 Summer Olympics, with some minor criticisms related to ticketing issues and a lack of festive atmosphere during some events. Interestingly, the former issue was a predicted challenge in the Bidding Committee's report about China's bid. An interesting similarity between both reports is the lack of attention for the controversies regarding Chinese human rights violations. Despite these controversies receiving major attention from media outlets and politicians on a global scale, the IOC essentially handwaves these issues, as they state that they merely elevated the dialogue regarding the subject of human rights among governments and non-governmental organizations. Human rights are not even mentioned in the bid report. Analyzing and highlighting these issues creates a juxtaposition between the IOC's 'non-political' stance and the more critical stance held by human rights organizations and foreign governments and media outlets in chapter 5.

Interviews

An interview with a Tibetan monk, and an interview with the Chinese ambassador to Malta, and four interviews with Chinese journalists regarding their opinion on the protests in Tibet, as well as how both Chinese and Western media report on the issue.

The two interviews offer respectively a Tibetan and Chinese perspective on the Beijing

Olympics and the related riots in Tibet. As the Tibetans and the Chinese government (which the ambassador is directly affiliated with) are major actors in my thesis, these interviews are interesting and useful primary sources. The views stated in the interviews with the Chinese ambassador to Malta and the Tibetan monk directly juxtapose each other, as they take opposing stances regarding the issue of Tibet. Golog Jigme, the Tibetan monk, who has also co-produced the documentary “Leaving Fear Behind”, states that the people of Tibet are suffering under Chinese rule, as “The repressive policies in Tibetans’ daily lives push people to the line between life and death”. Chai Xi, the Chinese ambassador to Malta, states in contrast that as ever since Tibet has been a part of China (since 1959), the overall quality of life for Tibetans has vastly improved, as they enjoy much improved work opportunities, education and literacy rates. Although these interviews merely state the opinions of certain individuals and people in both Tibet and China can share different perspectives, they are still interesting and valued primary sources. The China Digital Times has published an interview series online, in which four different Chinese interviews are interviewed about their opinion regarding the protests in Tibet, as well as how both Chinese and Western media report on related issues. Three of them wished to remain anonymous. Interestingly, there seems to be a consensus among the four interviewed journalists with regards to their opinion on Chinese and Western media coverage; they all state that Western media is biased to a certain degree when it comes to their coverage of Tibet and other issues related to China and the Olympics, although there are also Western media outlets that report in a more neutral manner. Additionally, the four Chinese journalists mention the bias of Chinese media, as well as the role of the government’s influence on domestic media and their propaganda campaign. The interviews with the four journalists offer a fresh ‘middle-ground’ Chinese perspective, which differs greatly from other Chinese media perspectives, such as China Daily’s articles.

Documentary

A documentary made by a Tibetan amateur filmmaker about the repression of Tibetans by the Chinese government.

The documentary was compiled from 40 hours of video footage, containing many interviews with Tibetans. They describe the struggles they face in their daily life, as they speak out against China’s oppressions and plans to host the 2008 Summer Olympics. It thus offers a direct perspective from many Tibetans. However, as with other visual and oral sources, footage could have been edited and opinions stated by the interviewees can be deliberately

exaggerated and contain falsehoods. Although the producer has claimed to not have made it a political documentary, the overall subject matter and themes are certainly inherently political in nature. Additionally, due to exclusively featuring Tibetan perspectives, it is easy for viewers to gravitate towards the Tibetan side of the issue and attain sympathy for the Tibetans and their plight, at the cost of their opinion regarding the Chinese government and their handling of the issues regarding Tibet.

Chapter 2: Sport as a tool for bolstering Chinese unity

This chapter corresponds to the first research question of my thesis, *'How did sport become a tool for bolstering Chinese unity?'* This chapter serves as an historical introduction and contextualization of the development of national identity in China. It will shed light on the government's motives for wish to organize the Olympics, and how its motives are interlinked to past developments regarding Chinese sport.

2.1. Sport in China before the Cold War

The year 1900 marked the first time when the Chinese population became acquainted with the Olympic Games. A Chinese newspaper published a report from Saigon, a major city in the neighboring French colony of Indochina, which stated that the Paris Olympic games were successfully held.¹²⁵ Chinese historians often consider this event to not only be the start of China's awareness of the Olympics, but also the beginning of China's Olympic dream.¹²⁶ In the summer of 1908, the London Olympic Games took place. Although it took until 1932 for China (under the name of the Republic of China) to participate in the international sporting competition, Chinese educators and philosophers already stressed the importance of improving physical education in their country. Before the 1908 London Olympics took place, a particular article, titled "On Sports Competition, was published in the *Tianjin Youth*

¹²⁵ Shiming Luo and Fuhua Huang, "China's Olympic Dream and the Legacies of the Beijing Olympics," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 4 (February 2013): 444, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2013.765722>.

¹²⁶ Luo & Huang, "China's Olympic Dream," 444.

magazine.¹²⁷ The author pleaded to the government to start investing in the development of sports in their country, as well to make a bid to host future editions of the Olympic Games in China.¹²⁸ The article also included three probing questions by Chinese sportsmen, which reflected the three concrete dreams of China joining in the Olympics: ‘When can a Chinese compete in the Olympic Games?’, ‘When can a Chinese win a gold medal?’ and lastly ‘When can the Chinese host an Olympic Games themselves?’¹²⁹ In the same year, the first physical education school – the Chinese Gymnastic School – was established.¹³⁰

Following subsequent military defeats against the British Empire in the Opium Wars (1839-42 & 1856-60) and Imperial Japan in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), Chinese intellectuals feared an inevitable total decline of their nation. They thought that the strength of the nation could be linked to the physical state of its inhabitants; if the Chinese people were physically unfit, the Chinese nation itself as a whole would be weak and ‘sick’.¹³¹ Xu Jibing, a famous sport advocate who was appointed as the head of the first Chinese physical education school, came up with the following motto: “Strengthen the Chinese national physique, wipe out the shame of ‘the sick man of Asia!’”¹³² Liang Qichao, one of the most celebrated Chinese intellectuals during his time, argued that physical education was the most important form of education.¹³³ According to him, physical culture was a pivotal factor in developing the Chinese nation and its people.¹³⁴ Furthermore, Liang invested new meaning in the term ‘the sick man of Asia’. In fact, he was the first person to use this term back in 1903, as he wrote: “It’s tragic that none of our four hundred million people have a sound physique; a nation composed entirely of sick individuals is surely a sick nation”.¹³⁵ This particular term became widespread in both Chinese and Western literature, and was used to refer to weak and declining nations, such as the Ottoman Empire and the Manchu Empire.¹³⁶ In Western countries, the Chinese were perceived as physically weak and thus inferior. The term subsequently became prevalent among Chinese public opinion, oft seeing usage among

¹²⁷ Dong-Jhy Hwang and Li-Ke Chang, “Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics,” *China Perspectives* 2008, no. 1 (2008): 4, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.3223>.

¹²⁸ Hwang & Chang, “Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics,” 4.

¹²⁹ Shiming Luo and Fuhua Huang, “China’s Olympic Dream and the Legacies of the Beijing Olympics,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 4 (February 2013): 444, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2013.765722>.

¹³⁰ Hwang & Chang, “Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics,” 4.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

Chinese writers. However, as time passed by, the phrase was morphed into originally being a derogatory criticism from the West, even though it was originally said by a Chinese intellectual.¹³⁷ Following the newly attributed origin of the term, a new national consciousness developed, in which the Chinese were determined to cure this ‘sick man of Asia’ by triumphing in international sporting competitions. Chen Duxiu, the founder of the Chinese Communist Party, and Mao Zedong, later Chairman of that same Party, were some of the most influential advocates for improving national physical education and development. Both men emphasized the importance of fitness and hygiene for the country’s population, although they originally rejected the more ‘Western’ competitive element of sports.¹³⁸ Contrasting Chen’s views regarding physical education, Mao’s ideas on improving the national physique was influenced by his admiration for stark nationalism and militarism, as he combined physical education with military drills under his leadership.¹³⁹

2.2. The importance of sport for Mao Zedong and his legacy on Chinese sport programs

With the Communist party being victorious in the Chinese Civil War, the People’s Republic of China was established in 1949. Mao Zedong became the leader of this new China. He foresaw the development of his nation in two phases: First came a bourgeois-democratic revolution, in which the New Democracy would be established.¹⁴⁰ This was however only meant as a transitory period, because by 1953 a socialist revolution would take place, characterized by a significant push for collectivization on a nationwide level. Mao saw sport as an important part of the national culture of his new China, and he encouraged his countrymen to participate in sports and improve their physique.¹⁴¹ In 1952, Mao founded the All-China Sports Federation, which is nowadays still functioning as one of the primary national sports organizations. Mao also argued that Chinese sport had its own unique, national character: it opposed imperialist oppression, and upheld the independence and dignity of the Chinese nation.¹⁴² Under Mao, sport and politics were intimately linked with each other. The

¹³⁷ Dong-Jhy Hwang and Li-Ke Chang, “Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics,” *China Perspectives* 2008, no. 1 (2008): 5, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.3223>.

¹³⁸ Hwang & Chang, “Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics,” 7.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 7.

development of national sports and physical culture was a part of the New Democratic movement, in which sport contributed to Communist political action, forming a front against the evils of feudalism and imperialism.¹⁴³ Sports were to be accessible for the masses, from cities to villages, and from school children to factory workers.¹⁴⁴

However, China could not fully develop an entirely new physical culture, centered around sport, on its own. The Chinese nation sought to learn from other nations, such as the Soviet Union. In August 1950, a delegation from the Soviet Union introduced their model of sport development to their Chinese comrades, while in turn, a Chinese delegation was sent to observe Soviet sports organizations.¹⁴⁵ Physical Education materials from Soviet schools were imported and translated to Chinese, and other innovations such as armed forces teams, sports boarding schools and national rankings and competitions for individual sports were also implemented.¹⁴⁶ However, Mao began having doubts about his country's relationship with the Soviet Union, as well as whether the Soviet model would be benefactor for the development of China. He insisted that China should follow its own path towards an ideal socialist utopia. Ties with the Soviet Union worsened, including a major decrease of Soviet influence on China's national sport program. Furthermore, as part of the Great Leap Forward policies established in 1958, the development of sport and physical culture were neglected in favor of agriculturally-oriented policies.

In 1962, after Indonesia was banned from the International Olympic Council for intertwining politics and sports too much during its hosting of the fourth Asian Games, the nation decided to set up an alternative: the Games of the New Emerging Forces.¹⁴⁷ The creation and emergence of this new international sport event can be considered as an explicit attempt to link the politics of anticolonialism and anticapitalism to sport.¹⁴⁸ During the formation of the GANEFO, Indonesia was joined by nine other countries, including the Soviet Union and China. According to Chinese historians, China saw the newly-established sport event as an opportunity to advance its international status, as well as champion the

¹⁴³ Dong-Jhy Hwang and Li-Ke Chang, "Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics," *China Perspectives* 2008, no. 1 (2008): 5, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.3223>.

¹⁴⁴ Hwang & Chang, "Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics," 8.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴⁷ Russell Field, "Re-Entering the Sporting World: China's Sponsorship of the 1963 Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO)," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 15 (2014): 1854, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2014.922545>.

¹⁴⁸ Field, "Re-Entering the Sporting World," 1853.

emancipation of other developing countries and a revolution on a global level.¹⁴⁹

Additionally, it served a more domestic Chinese purpose, as by sending athletes to compete in the GANEFO, the Chinese populace would be incentivized to increase their vitality and physique in the case of national successes in competitive elite sport.¹⁵⁰ The first GANEFO was organized in 1963 in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, which received heavy financial backing from the Chinese government. The Chinese government further saw Indonesia as an ideological and strategic ally.¹⁵¹ In December 1966, the second GANEFO was hosted in Cambodia, which was once again largely financed by China. However, this time around only Asian nations competed. Another GANEFO event was planned to be hosted in Egypt in 1967, however it was canceled due to political complications. It was then supposed to be held in Beijing, but the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, which was partially characterized by the demonization of international sport, prevented that. As the next edition of the GANEFO was never held, the organization collapsed soon after.

Even after Mao admitted that the Great Leap Forward was mostly a failure, the following Cultural Revolution also negatively impacted the development of Chinese sport. Training systems were dismantled, Chinese teams stopped participating in international competitions, and physical education schools were closed.¹⁵² China also left the Olympic Committee along with other international sport federations, because of the ‘Two different China’s’ dispute and the country’s increasingly isolationist policies. The sociopolitical purge of the Cultural Revolution also affected sport on a more governmental level, as He Long, the CCP’s first Sports Minister, and other deputy sport ministers were declared as enemies of the state for ‘supporting revisionist policies’.¹⁵³ He Long eventually died in June 1969, after repeated sessions of both physical and mental torture.¹⁵⁴ The National Sports System ended up getting denounced as an independent and unpredictable body beyond the Communist Party’s control, with even national star athletes, such as Zhuang Zedong, the World Champion in table tennis, accusing sport ministers of supporting revisionist sport policies and being

¹⁴⁹ Russell Field, “Re-Entering the Sporting World: China’s Sponsorship of the 1963 Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO),” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 15 (2014): 1854, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2014.922545>.

¹⁵⁰ Field, “Re-Entering the Sporting World,” 1854.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1856.

¹⁵² Dong-Jhy Hwang and Li-Ke Chang, “Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics,” *China Perspectives* 2008, no. 1 (2008): 11, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.3223>.

¹⁵³ Hwang & Chang, “Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics,” 12.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

enemies of the state.¹⁵⁵ An example of another national sport tragedy that took place during the Cultural Revolution was the suicide of three elite table tennis players and their coach, as they were accused of being spies for other countries.¹⁵⁶ As the Cultural Revolution progressed, sports teams were disbanded, stadiums became places for denunciation meetings, and training equipment and other facilities were destroyed. Additionally, stadiums no longer hosted any matches, as competitions were now fully denounced by Mao's regimes, and athletes were expected to completely devote themselves to the realization of the Cultural Revolution.¹⁵⁷ As an example, former athletes were expected to participate in song and dance in which they praised Chairman Mao. Jung Chang, a contemporary famous Chinese writer, recalls the following story from her childhood: *"In the autumn of 1968 a new type of team took over my school; they were called "Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Teams"... The old textbooks had all been condemned as "bourgeois poison", and nobody was brave enough to write new ones. So we just sat in classes reciting Mao's articles and reading People's Daily editorials. We sang songs of Mao's quotations, or gathered to dance "loyalty dance", gyrating and waving our Little Red Books. Making "loyalty dances" compulsory was one of the major orders issued by the Revolutionary Committees throughout China."*¹⁵⁸

It was not until after the death of Mao and the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 that national sport would make a comeback in China. However, it would still take a few years, as the Cultural Revolution was officially denounced by the Party in a historical resolution in 1981. Both Chinese writers and statesmen argued that the Cultural Revolution was a catastrophe for the development of all facets of the Chinese nation, including sport.¹⁵⁹ Under Deng Xiaoping's new leadership, China gradually began opening up again towards the outside world. The CCP encouraged national sport development and participation in international competitions, so that Chinese athletes could reach the apex of performance in various sports. The post-Mao period was also characterized by a shift regarding the emphasis of sport development: Whereas Mao's sport policies were focused on self-discipline and physical health, after his death the competitive element of sports became more prominent. China enjoyed a successful campaign at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, and the

¹⁵⁵ Dong-Jhy Hwang and Li-Ke Chang, "Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics," *China Perspectives* 2008, no. 1 (2008): 12, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.3223>

¹⁵⁶ Hwang & Chang, "Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics," 12.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

government gained an understanding of the potential of global sport events for boosting nationalism and national pride.¹⁶⁰

Between 1984 and 1986, a series of crucial documents regarding the development of Chinese sport were published. The contents of these documents emphasized that China underwent major developments and improvements regarding national sport, with the many medals won at the 1984 Olympics serving as irrefutable proof.¹⁶¹ Chinese sport achievements were approaching the peak level of sport performance, and Chinese athletes were able to capture the hearts of both a domestic and global audience. However, there was still a gap between the current level of Chinese athletics and the very apex of their international equivalents. In order to close this gap, a revised nationwide sports polity was launched, which aimed at encouraging sport activities in both rural and urban areas, improving currently existing training and competition systems and eventually developing excellence in sporting events. The government was to encourage such excellence by rewarding athletes with financial prizes and honors to athletes with special achievements. The general budget for promoting sporting activities was to be increased. Furthermore, both government and popular publications had to promote sports by educating the public about its positive functions, therefore co-opting them to participate in sport activities and overall popularizing knowledge about various sports. Lastly, all echelons of the Chinese Communist Party were to prove willingness to provide leadership and support regarding any matters concerning the development of Chinese sport.¹⁶²

However, despite all the progress made on improving Chinese sport since the end of the Cultural Revolution, there were still some issues preventing a fully realized emancipation of Chinese physical culture. To exemplify, Chinese achievements in international sport competitions were still well below other modern nations, there were some glaring weaknesses in training and competition systems, the sport reforms were not keeping up the country's economic reforms and there was a lack of overall uniformity in the domestic sports system.¹⁶³ To make up for these shortcomings, the government proposed a new series of national sport reforms. Although these reforms were mostly similar to the previous policies established two years ago, there were some new additions. For example, the government suggested to further

¹⁶⁰ Dong-Jhy Hwang and Li-Ke Chang, "Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics," *China Perspectives* 2008, no. 1 (2008): 14, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.3223>.

¹⁶¹ Hwang & Chang, "Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics," 15.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 16.

enhance political thought on sport, wanted to improve the prizes system and aimed to develop less rigid policies regarding Chinese participation in international tournaments.¹⁶⁴ Although Chinese politics underwent through turbulent events around the beginning of the final decade of the twentieth century, with the Tiananmen Square Incident as a low point, support for improving national sport still remained among the entire government. In fact, China hosted the Asian Games in 1990, marking the first time the Chinese nation hosted an international competition. Additionally, the hosting of this event proved that the Chinese was willing to further cement its presence of the global stage, as the government was in the race for hosting future global mega events. The fact that China was the highest-achieving country during the Asian Games evoked feelings of national pride among the population, including people who were more critical of the government. The president of China, Jiang Zemin, stated that his country would quickly reform and open up to the rest of the world.¹⁶⁵ Ultimately, China's tenacity regarding their reforms and developments were rewarded in 2001, as they were chosen to host the 2008 Olympic Summer Games.

2.3. The government's desire for organizing the 2008 Summer Olympics

Although the Chinese government had been planning to host an edition of the Olympic Games since 1945, their ambitions were not able to come to full fruition until the end of the twentieth century. Shortly before his inauguration as the leader of the Chinese Communist Party, Deng Xiaoping expressed his wish to let China organize the Olympics in the near future during an interview with a Japanese journalist, stating that his country would be ready soon.¹⁶⁶ While Xiaoping was inspecting the facilities for the then-soon upcoming Asian Games, he told present sport officials that hosting the Olympics could boost the national economy, and inspire the population.¹⁶⁷ Additionally, China's improved sport facilities would go to waste if they didn't make a bid for hosting the Olympics. The successful hosting of the 1990 Asian Games reinforced the beliefs among the Chinese people and their government that

¹⁶⁴ Dong-Jhy Hwang and Li-Ke Chang, "Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics," *China Perspectives* 2008, no. 1 (2008): 17, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.3223>.

¹⁶⁵ Hwang & Chang, "Sport, Maoism and the Beijing Olympics," 17.

¹⁶⁶ Shiming Luo and Fuhua Huang, "China's Olympic Dream and the Legacies of the Beijing Olympics," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 4 (February 2013): 447, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2013.765722>.

¹⁶⁷ Luo & Huang, "China's Olympic Dream," 447.

hosting international mega events would not only be beneficial for promoting national sport, but that it could give a boost to the entire country's overall development. China as a whole would learn and grow from such experiences.

On February 28 1991, China officially submitted a bid for hosting the 2000 Olympic Summer Games. However, Beijing lost with a very small margin to Sydney, resulting in the latter city being elected as the host city of the 2000 Summer Olympics. Despite failing to secure the hosting of the Olympics, Chinese state media still chalked up the application as a success, as *The People's Daily* wrote that "the most significant point for the bid is to participate in the Olympic movement; it is a process of pushing forward both material and ideological civilisation of socialist characteristics; it is a way to inspire national pride and unity. Thus, we believe that our motherland, a country of one fifth population of the world and a history of more than 5,000 years, will have an opportunity to host an Olympic Games in the future."¹⁶⁸ In April 1999, Beijing submitted its official bid for hosting the 2008 Summer Olympics. Roughly two years later, in July 2001, Beijing emerged as the winner at the end of the voting process, marking a great achievement in Chinese sport history. During the celebratory ceremony of Beijing's successful bid, Wemin Yuan, the Minister of Sport, reassured that hosting the Olympics has been a dream held for a long time by numerous subsequent generations of Chinese people, as well as a shared wish among all of the 1.3 billion people currently living in China.¹⁶⁹ Both the common populace and the government elites shared the same dream, as they together believed that hosting the Olympics would ensure the continued development of the Chinese nation.

There has been considerable discussion regarding the Chinese government's motivations for organizing the 2008 Summer Olympics. The Chinese bid officials, as well as Chinese media, have stated that the main significance of hosting the Olympics was to get China more acquainted with the outside world, and to cement its status as a respected member of the global community.¹⁷⁰ *The People's Daily*, a government-published newspaper, wrote that successfully hosting the Olympics would unite the Chinese populace, and serve as proof

¹⁶⁸ Shiming Luo and Fuhua Huang, "China's Olympic Dream and the Legacies of the Beijing Olympics," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 4 (February 2013): 448, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2013.765722>.

¹⁶⁹ Richard Xiaoqian Hu and Ian Henry, "The Development of the Olympic Narrative in Chinese Elite Sport Discourse from Its First Successful Olympic Bid to the Post-Beijing Games Era," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 33, no. 12 (2016): 1434, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2017.1284818>.

¹⁷⁰ Yong Zhou, John Ap, and Thomas Bauer, "Government Motivations for Hosting the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games," *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 10, no. 2 (2012): 185, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2012.662984>.

of the development that their nation went through, as an ultimate culmination of socialist achievements.¹⁷¹ Taking all of this into account, Beijing's motivations and goals regarding the hosting of the Olympics are quite different from its predecessors, with Sydney having focused on boosting international tourism, and Athens and Barcelona strived for urban restoration.¹⁷²

By interviewing various officials affiliated with the Chinese government, Zhou et al. have identified three major intrinsic factors that served as prime catalysts for the Chinese government's desire to host the Olympics. The first major factor can be described as the desire to 'showcase', and 'to be recognized and understood'.¹⁷³ By successfully hosting the Olympics, China's international image and prestige would significantly improve, and gain more positive coverage from international media. After all, it has been formerly established that hosting global mega events, such as the Olympics, provide attractive opportunities for showcasing itself in a positive light to the rest of the world. Additionally, there were some widespread global concerns regarding China's ongoing ascension as a developing superpower. Therefore, the Chinese government ensured that their country's rise was as peaceful one, and successfully organizing the Olympics could make a suitable example for their benevolent intentions. Two Chinese officials that were interviewed also stated that they saw the Olympics as a great opportunity for facilitating cultural exchange between China and the West.¹⁷⁴ They emphasized that Chinese culture and policies are often misunderstood in the West, and that the Olympics can improve mutual understanding between the two different 'worlds' and thus clear up any negative assumptions and misunderstandings.¹⁷⁵

The second major factor according to Zhou et al. is boosting national pride and unity among the populace. It is known that hosting special mega events has the ability to boost national pride. It has also been argued that instability and uncertainty regarding a country's future can negatively impact national identification, including when a country is going through a transitional period on a socio-economic level.¹⁷⁶ One could argue that China underwent through such a phase of transition and uncertainty, as the country was still transitioning to a socialist market economy, and was still developing its socio-economic policies. By hosting

¹⁷¹ Yong Zhou, John Ap, and Thomas Bauer, "Government Motivations for Hosting the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games," *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 10, no. 2 (2012): 188, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2012.662984>.

¹⁷² Zhou et al., "Government Motivations," 188.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 192-93.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 193.

the Olympics, an event that has the potential to generate feelings of joy and national pride, the afflicted Chinese citizens could (temporarily) denounce their differences and fears, instead uniting and cheering as one for the upcoming Olympics.¹⁷⁷ People that were more critical of the event could be singled out and face repercussions from not only the government, but also their fellow citizens. To sum it up, organizing the Olympics allowed the Chinese government to exert additional control over their citizens by rallying their national pride, but also take action against dissenters. President Jiang further emphasized that “the bid was made for further domestic stability and economic prosperity; the quest for the Olympics was to raise national morale and strengthen the cohesion of the Chinese people both in the mainland and overseas.”¹⁷⁸

The third important motivation for hosting the Olympics suggested by Zhou et Al. is to advance China’s development as a whole.¹⁷⁹ Research has shown that organizing mega events can serve as a catalyst for the improvement of various infrastructures, such as sports, housing, communications and tourism.¹⁸⁰ They can also serve as economical stimulants for local economies, by attracting foreign investments and tourists. Furthermore, organizing mega events can lead to the strengthening of domestic values and traditions, and promote increased participation in sports, arts, and other cultural activities that contribute to that particular goal.¹⁸¹

As a part of China’s development, the interviewed government officials identify four key development factors that served as motivations for the government to host the Olympics.¹⁸² The first one is *urban development*, as it important for host cities to have a well-functioning and accessible infrastructure.¹⁸³ The hosting of the Olympics sped up the government’s development plans with regards to urban development and environmental preservation. The second major motivation is *economic development*, as mega events attract foreign capital and can create domestic jobs.¹⁸⁴ Additionally, it can generate more funding for future projects and development. The third key factor is improving general management and

¹⁷⁷ Yong Zhou, John Ap, and Thomas Bauer, “Government Motivations for Hosting the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games,” *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 10, no. 2 (June 2012): 194, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2012.662984>.

¹⁷⁸ Zhou et al., “Government Motivations,” 194.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 194-95.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

service quality.¹⁸⁵ This particular factor might be unique to China, as the service quality of the nation's governmental organizations has often been criticized for its bureaucratic nature.¹⁸⁶ In order to fully convenience foreign visitors of any kind and meet international standards, it was paramount to revitalize this particular sector. The final important motive is to promote the development of sports and a healthy lifestyle among Chinese citizens.¹⁸⁷ Government officials argued that Chinese athletes have more chance to win medals in their home venue, and that their victories will continue to further development of national sport.¹⁸⁸ Overall, sports development in China has been serving a multitude of purposes, ranging from improving physical health to boosting national pride and unity. By increasing sports development, the Chinese nation would grow and change for the better in numerous facets.

2.4. Conclusion

To conclude, China has had Olympic aspirations since the beginning of the twentieth century. Their ambitions were not only inspired by the population's newly acquired knowledge of the Olympics, but also a result of a traumatic past. After having suffered subsequent military defeats during the latter half of the previous century, intellectuals concluded that their country was lacking national pride and physique. It was time for the 'sick man of Asia' to be cured of its affliction. Over the next few decades, serious physical education reforms were carried out, especially after the Chinese Civil War. Mao Zedong saw sport as an important part of the new national culture. China was originally aided by the Soviet Union in the establishment of national sport and physical health programs, but as Mao continued to pursue an increasingly isolationist policy in which his nation carved out its own path towards a socialist path, sport and physical education in general became neglected in favor of agricultural reforms. The former reforms grinded to a complete halt during the Cultural Revolution, especially since many government officials affiliated with sport development, as well as top athletes and coaches, were branded as enemies of the state. Those who were accused of revisionist thoughts were purged en masse, and sports equipment and

¹⁸⁵ Yong Zhou, John Ap, and Thomas Bauer, "Government Motivations for Hosting the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games," *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 10, no. 2 (June 2012): 195, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2012.662984>.

¹⁸⁶ Zhou et al., "Government Motivations," 195-96.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

venues were respectively destroyed and repurposed. It took until a few years after the end of the Cultural Revolution and Mao's death for Chinese sports development to recover. China's new leader, Deng Xiaoping strived to open up his country to the outside world, and encouraged Chinese athletes to participate in international competitions abroad. The government made considerable efforts to encourage and hasten national reforms regarding to sports and physical health. Their efforts were rewarded with China being selected to host the Asian Games in 1990, which was a prime opportunity for the Chinese nation to showcase its progress towards the rest of the continent. As the hosting of the tournament was successful, Chinese sporting ambitions increased further in scope as both the government and populace now set their sights on hosting the Olympics. Ultimately, Beijing was elected as the host city of the 2008 Summer Olympics. Hosting such a global mega event would provide an ideal chance to showcase China's progress, ambitions and culture to the outside world. Additionally, the country also had to conduct a plethora of domestic reforms in order to promote national development on multiple aspects, ranging from urban infrastructure to tackling socio-economic issues and boosting the national economy. Furthermore, organizing such a mega event would provide a boost to national pride and unity, as the Chinese people would be proud of their nation's progress and successes. All in all, despite the fact that the development of Chinese sport went through a turbulent history, the country's original Olympic dream would be fully realized more than a century later, with the hosting of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics.

Chapter 3: Bolstering nationalism and unity in China

This chapter corresponds to the second sub question featured in this master thesis, namely *'What was the Chinese government's overall strategy related to promoting nationalism and national unity leading up to and during the Olympic Games?'* This chapter will delve into the developments that Chinese nationalism went through, shed a light on the problematic nature of Chinese unity and highlight the importance of those factors for both domestic and internationally-oriented goals, as well as highlight several measures the Chinese government took to reach those goals. As the Olympics are a global mega event and hosting it is bound to attract global attention, China had to present itself as a modern and developed nation. By analyzing the development of Chinese nationalism and the questionable notion of

Chinese unity, including the role of the government and their policies related to these two concepts, one can gain a better understanding of the government's policies related to the Olympics, and which (historical) contexts they are influenced by. Despite there being contrasting perspectives in Hong Kong and Taiwan, with people having positive feelings towards China and identifying themselves as Chinese, or preferring the notion of a separate and unique identity, this chapter has a deliberate focus on the latter, as one of the main goals of this chapter is to show qualms and resistance against the notion of Chinese unity.

3.1. Nationalism and patriotism in China

It is often agreed upon among academics that modern Chinese nationalism has its roots at the end of the Qing dynasty. After its fall in 1911, the new Chinese nation state emerged. However, it is argued that there was already a form of 'primitive' nationalism, based on a common 'ethno-cultural' awareness among parts of the population, which was primarily characterized by anti-Western and anti-Christian beliefs.¹⁸⁹ These nationalist tendencies manifested itself through numerous rebellions at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as the Boxer Rebellion. The Manchu dynasty's legitimacy gradually weakened, as nationalists expressed their severe discontent regarding the growing influence of Western imperialists and Christianity on their country.¹⁹⁰ Additionally, the subsequent military defeats against respectively the British Empire and Imperial Japan greatly wounded the pride of Chinese nationalists, as they vowed to overcome this 'Age of Humiliation'. This particular rhetoric would continue to be prevalent in Chinese nationalism for decades to follow, especially after China got humiliated at the hands of Imperial Japan once again from 1937-1945, with Japan colonizing parts of Manchuria and committing brutal genocide during the infamous 'Rape and Genocide of Nanjing'.

After the Chinese Civil War and the foundation of the People's Republic in China in 1949, the notion of Chinese nationalism underwent a few changes. It was now thoroughly connected to China's socialist and anti-imperialist tendencies in the form of socialist

¹⁸⁹ Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "The Many Facets of Chinese Nationalism," *China Perspectives* 59, no. 3 (2005): 4, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.2793>.

¹⁹⁰ Cabestan, "The Many Facets of Chinese Nationalism," 4.

patriotism.¹⁹¹ Originally, Mao Zedong proclaimed support for other nations that also suffered under the evils of Western imperialism and capitalism.¹⁹² Through this particular form of nationalism, China linked their own trauma to that of other victimized nations. However, isolationist policies from 1958 caused China to retreat and shift back its focus to purely domestic policies and issues, even breaking ties with the Soviet Union, their greatest inspiration and ally until then. The Cultural Revolution can also be considered as a largely nationalistic movement, as Mao sought to firmly re-establish control over the Communist Party, and purge both the Party and the nation as a whole from capitalist or revisionist influences. For the duration of the Cultural Revolution, the notion of Chinese nationalism was turned into an activist and bloody affair.

After Mao's death and Deng Xiaoping's rise to power, Chinese nationalism became less anti-Western for a decade, and instead embraced Western characteristics as a part of Xiaoping's reforms. Despite his efforts, this 'normalization' of Chinese nationalism did not last for long, as socialist patriotism made a triumphant return in 1989, following the Tiananmen Square Incident. As old enemies, such as Western nations and Japan, established sanctions against China, Chinese nationalism came to be characterized by revitalized resentment and victimization. It essentially evolved in a form of state nationalism, greatly reminiscent of the Chinese nationalist tendencies shortly after the foundation of the Republic of China.¹⁹³ The victimization and xenophobic elements were especially made prevalent through the introduction of patriotic education campaigns in 1989. The most notorious aspect of these campaigns was the publication of new, revised history textbooks, which contained scathing critiques of Japan's attitude towards China throughout the twentieth century, especially during its colonization.¹⁹⁴ In fact, these textbooks, along with Japanese nationalist textbooks that were produced in response, were so controversial, that they proved to be greatly detrimental in regard to Sino-Japanese relations for years to come, both at a governmental and public level. In 1994, an influential document titled '*The Outline on the Implementation of Education in Patriotism*' was published by the Chinese government.¹⁹⁵ This particular document became a cornerstone of the teaching of Chinese history and current

¹⁹¹ Zhouxiang Lu, *Chinese National Identity in the Age of Globalisation* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 162.

¹⁹² Lu, *Chinese National Identity in the Age of Globalisation*, 162-63.

¹⁹³ Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "The Many Facets of Chinese Nationalism," *China Perspectives* 59, no. 3 (2005): 8, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.2793>

¹⁹⁴ Keith Crawford and Stuart J. Foster, *War, Nation, Memory: International Perspectives on World War II in School History Textbooks* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2007), 94.

¹⁹⁵ Lu, *Chinese National Identity in the Age of Globalisation*, 163.

national affairs within the Chinese public education system. In the document, three major periods of Chinese history were distinguished: *'five thousand years of splendid Chinese history'*, *'the humiliation of more than a century of invasion and the struggle to save the country from destruction'*, and *'the People's Republic opens up for progress: gigantic change in the Holy Fatherland for more than four decades'*.¹⁹⁶ The narrative depicted a great ancient civilization, which was resisting Western imperialism in order to return to make a glorious return to power. This particular narrative came to define Chinese national identity, where contemporary Chinese nationalism is rooted in.¹⁹⁷ Overall, the Chinese Communist Party dabbled in state-led nationalism, as it sought to use nationalism to boost its own legitimacy.¹⁹⁸

Starting from the twenty-first century, the notion of Chinese nationalism yet again went through an evolution, partially influenced by the rise of social media. Additionally, Chinese nationalism came to be defined by a complex relationship between the government and its subjects. To that extent, Chinese nationalism has become an increasingly complex and enigmatic concept. At the start of the twenty-first century, the Chinese youth who were subjected to the patriotic education campaigns were now grown up. Combined with the fact that there were a plethora of social media platforms available, the new wave of nationalism is influenced by the then-new concept of cybernationalism. As China's global influence and prestige were also on the rise, Chinese citizens could now express their pride for their country all over the internet. Considering the fact that it is easier than ever to spread opinions because of social media, mass mobilization was now possible. This could potentially either be a good or a bad thing for a government, depending on the context and possible scenario's. If the government can successfully manipulate the populace's shared national consciousness, and plant seeds of their own propagated discourse, they can establish mass mobilization against any perceived threats in order to undermine them. A good example of this are the anti-Japanese mass demonstration that took place in the spring of 2005. At that point in time, Sino-Japanese relations were at a low point, with representatives of both countries refusing to meet each other, numerous territorial breaches at sea, and Japan and the United States establishing a joint pact on security in the Far East.¹⁹⁹ Additionally, Japan intended to attain a permanent spot on the United Nations Security Council, which was perceived as a threat to China's own

¹⁹⁶ Zhouxiang Lu, *Chinese National Identity in the Age of Globalisation* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 163.

¹⁹⁷ Lu, *Chinese National Identity in the Age of Globalisation*, 163.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁹⁹ Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "The Many Facets of Chinese Nationalism," *China Perspectives* 59, no. 3 (2005): 13, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.2793>

position on the council. In April 2005, multiple protests broke out in various large Chinese cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai. Some of these protests, especially the ones in the aforementioned two cities, turned violent, with protesters destroying Japanese shops and even beating up Japanese people.²⁰⁰ Racist slogans aimed at the Japanese were scribbled in many places.²⁰¹ Although the government originally turned a blind eye to the protests, they eventually ordered the protesters to stop after two weeks.²⁰² Although these protests were a showcase of the government's ability to rile their citizens up and target unwanted people without directly getting their hands dirty themselves, it was also an example of how easily such protests can spiral out of control, and that it can be difficult to keep their own population in check.

On the other side, staunchly nationalist movements can also influence their own government, thus creating a bottom-up rather situation rather than a top-down one. It has been argued that China's foreign policy is somewhat influenced by domestic nationalism among the populace.²⁰³ To exemplify, China's stance in the Diaoyu-Senkaku Islands dispute with Japan has become increasingly hostile since 2013, with an increase of military actions and issued threats.²⁰⁴ This coincides with the rise of Chinese cybernationalism, as Chinese 'netizens' have called for a more hostile stance against Japan.²⁰⁵ This hostility is rooted in a common past characterized by both military and ideological conflicts, as well as mutual hatred. As Gries, Steiner and Wang state: "Chinese nationalism can no longer be described as a purely 'state' or 'official' top-down affair. Bottom-up popular pressures are increasingly threatening the party's nationalist legitimacy. As the party loses its hegemony over Chinese nationalist discourse, the hyphen that holds the Chinese party-nation together weakens, and Chinese foreign policy becomes increasingly hostage to the accidents of history that can arouse the ire of domestic nationalists. Let us hope that our luck holds, and that no Chinese dies soon at the hands of a Japanese—whether over the Diaoyu issue or otherwise. The peace and prosperity of twenty-first century East Asia depend upon it."²⁰⁶

²⁰⁰ Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "The Many Facets of Chinese Nationalism," *China Perspectives* 59, no. 3 (2005): 13, <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.2793>

²⁰¹ Cabestan, "The Many Facets of Chinese Nationalism," 14.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁰³ Zhouxiang Lu, *Chinese National Identity in the Age of Globalisation* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 169.

²⁰⁴ Lu, *Chinese National Identity in the Age of Globalisation*, 168.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 169.

3.2. The problem with Chinese unity

China is a large nation with a long and rich history. Unsurprisingly, there are also a large amount of ethnic groups living in China, with there being 55 ethnic minority groups that are officially recognized.²⁰⁷ By far the biggest ethnic group is the Han Chinese, which makes up over 90% over the entire population of China.²⁰⁸ Some of the largest and most (in)famous ethnic groups are the Hui, Mongolians, Tibetans, and Uyghurs.²⁰⁹ Although all ethnic groups can be characterized as unique, having their own culture and language, the latter two are some of the more ‘radically’ different ones. Although the Chinese government claims that China is officially an atheist state, the Tibetans and Uyghurs have their own distinct religions in respectively Tibetan Buddhism and Islam.²¹⁰ The fact that these groups are so different from the ‘mainstream’ Han ethnic group, often makes them the subject of negative domestic attention, for example in the forms of persecution and oppression. Compared to other ethnic minority groups, the Tibetans and Uyghurs receive a large amount of both domestic and international attention. To exemplify, the situation regarding the Uyghurs is a contemporary hot topic, as international media continue to report on the Uyghurs’ oppression, including stories about torture and forced sterilization.²¹¹ The Tibetans received a large amount of international media coverage during the year of the Beijing Summer Olympics, when the Tibetans spoke out against Chinese oppression and condemned the fact that the Olympics were to be held in a country that had no respect for human rights and freedom. For example, mass protests throughout the Tibetan Autonomous Region were held in March 2008, which included violent clashes between the protesters and governmental police forces.²¹²

Hong Kong and Taiwan are two other regions that threaten the notion of Chinese unity. Both regions have had different development paths from the Mainland, with Hong Kong having been under British governance until 1997, and Taiwan having declared itself as

²⁰⁷ Candice Song, “Chinese Ethnic Groups,” China Highlights, March 18, 2021, <https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/nationality/>.

²⁰⁸ Song, “Chinese Ethnic Groups,” <https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/nationality/>.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Thomas David Dubois, “Religion and the Chinese State: Three Crises and a Solution,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 64, no. 3 (2010): 345, doi:10.1080/10357711003736501

²¹¹ Sigal Samuel, “China’s Genocide against the Uyghurs, in 4 Disturbing Charts,” Vox, March 10, 2021, <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/22311356/china-uyghur-birthrate-sterilization-genocide>.

²¹² Jim Yardley, “Violence in Tibet as Monks Clash with the Police,” *The New York Times*, March 15, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/15/world/asia/15tibet.html>.

a separate country, and the only ‘legitimate China’, after the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949. Taiwan and Hong Kong are as of the present day still interlocked in a struggle for sovereignty, and for some separatist movements full independence, against the Mainland. Recent examples consist of the 2019 Hong Kong protests, in which many Hong Kongese protested against further Mainland interference, even at the cost of their own lives. Regarding Taiwan, cross-strait relations between the Mainland and Taiwan are still prone to abrupt positive and negative developments, especially as the United States, perhaps China’s biggest rival on the global stage, has been pursuing its own interests in the region.

In essence, the way the leaders of the People’s Republic of China view their country can be characterized as an imaginary, idealized version of China: They see a great and largely unified Chinese nation, which is being threatened by various separatist forces located in the country, such as groups advocating the independence of Tibet and Hong Kong, or the Uyghur community in Xinjiang.²¹³ The Taiwanese claim regarding the legitimacy of their own state also undermines Chinese unity, as the Mainland’s dream of a unified China is partly rooted in anti-separatist discourse and the denial of any form of independence and legitimacy for the Taiwanese.²¹⁴ After Taiwan split off from Mainland China in 1949, the Taiwanese had ample time to gradually develop a separate identity than that of the People’s Republic of China. This process increased in velocity after the national martial law was lifted in 1987, and the Taiwanese democratization process began.²¹⁵ In contrast to the Mainland, the Taiwanese identity interplayed with other local minor identities on the island of Taiwan, and to this day, contemporary Taiwanese society can be characterized as a society that recognizes its multiculturally diverse nature.²¹⁶ Despite their cultural differences, the various ethnic groups in Taiwan can still unite under the banner of a single collectivity that opposes the non-democratic ideals of their neighbor across the Taiwan Strait.²¹⁷ According to research, the population of Taiwan has been increasingly renouncing their Chinese identity in favor of a ‘new’ Taiwanese identity since 1992. To exemplify, back in 1992, 25.5 percent of the respondents of a survey aimed at gauging the identification of Taiwanese citizens declared that they identified themselves as Chinese, while 17.6% answered that they saw themselves as

²¹³ Lutgard Lams, “Forging Unity within Diversity: A Discourse-Theoretical Approach to Nation-Building Politics in the Chinese and Taiwanese Contexts,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 27, no. 1 (2021): 65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2021.1876346>.

²¹⁴ Lams, “Forging Unity,” 65.

²¹⁵ Da-Chi Liao, Boyu Chen, and Chi-chen Huang, “The Decline of ‘Chinese Identity’ in Taiwan?! — an Analysis of Survey Data from 1992 to 2012,” *East Asia* 30, no. 4 (2013): 275, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-013-9198-3>.

²¹⁶ Liao et al., “The Decline of ‘Chinese Identity’”, 275.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 275.

Taiwanese.²¹⁸ In 2011, the same survey was repeated once again. This time, the respondents that identified themselves as Chinese dropped drastically to a meager 4.1%, while the amount of people that answered that they saw themselves as Taiwanese rose to 54.2%.²¹⁹

Additionally, the amount of people that viewed themselves as both Taiwanese and Chinese did not change much between the years, fluctuating around 40%.²²⁰

Similarly to their fellow countrymen in Taiwan, the people of Hong Kong have also been gradually developing a separate identity since the end of the twentieth century. In 1997, Hong Kong was transferred back to China, after decades of being a British colony. However, the United Kingdom did apply some conditions before the transaction was to be made, as stipulated in the Sino-British Joint Declaration. Hong Kong was to retain a modicum of independence, as it had to be allowed to keep its own economical and legal systems, as well as their own currency. Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of China, and the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ principle served as the base framework for the relationship between China and Hong Kong. This degree of separation allowed the Hong Kongese to develop their own distinct culture and civic values. For example, studies show that democratic civic values are more prominent in Hong Kong than other parts of China, as (younger) Hong Kongese people strive for political rights such as freedom of expression to a higher degree.²²¹ Besides politics, Hong Kongese culture has become increasingly different from the mainstream culture in China as well, such as adopting Cantonese (mixed with English) as their main language, and rejecting the use of the simplified Chinese characters found in the Mainland’s writing system.²²² In fact, one could also say that the recent subsequent interventions and interference of the Mainland against developments in Hong Kong forms as solid proof of the fact that the people of Hong Kong continue to develop a separate identity, highlighted by fervent anti-authoritarianism and political activism, with the 2019 Hong Kong protests as a prime example.

²¹⁸ Da-Chi Liao, Boyu Chen, and Chi-chen Huang, “The Decline of ‘Chinese Identity’ in Taiwan?! — an Analysis of Survey Data from 1992 to 2012,” *East Asia* 30, no. 4 (2013): 275, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-013-9198-3>.

²¹⁹ Liao et al., “The Decline of Chinese Identity,” 275.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 275.

²²¹ Siu-lun Chow, King-wa Fu, and Yu-Leung Ng, “Development of the Hong Kong Identity Scale: Differentiation between Hong Kong ‘Locals’ and Mainland Chinese in Cultural and Civic Domains,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 29, no. 124 (2019): 571, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2019.1677365>.

²²² Chow et al, “Development of the Hong Kong Identity Scale,” 582.

3.3. Government strategies for a unified China

The Chinese Communist Party seeks to present the country it is governing as a powerful, respected and unified nation, in order to project a positive image to the outside world. Therefore, Sinicization is one of the most important domestic policies of the Chinese government. It has been a cornerstone of Chinese domestic policy since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Sinicization can be defined as the integration of ethnic minority groups and their differing cultures into the Han ethnic group minority and its dominant culture.²²³ During the process of Sinicization, the culture of ethnic minorities are slowly eroded, losing its unique values and traditions, and absorbed into the dominant Han culture, according to standards set by the government. A contemporary and quite extreme example of Sinicization has been taking place in the Autonomous Province of Xinjiang, where the Uyghurs live. The Uyghurs have a vastly different culture compared to that of the Han Chinese majority, including their own history, religion (Islam) and traditions. However, due to their uniqueness, the Chinese government has perceived the Uyghurs as a modern-day threat to national unity. In order to deal with this potential threat, the Chinese government has been making efforts to suppress and dismantle the unique culture of the Uyghurs. To exemplify, China has been destroying Mosques, and if not destroying them, redesigning them and replacing Islamic symbols with traditional Chinese ones.²²⁴ Additionally, Islamic-sounding names are banned, Islamic education is tightly monitored, and Qurans are being confiscated.²²⁵ Furthermore, besides spiritual oppression, international media have also been reporting on physical methods of oppression, such as torture and forced sterilization.

Sinicization policies have also been thoroughly implemented in Tibet. The still ongoing Sinicization of Tibet first started back in the 1950s, shortly after China regained control over Tibet, despite a brief period of independence as a result of the fall of the Qing Dynasty.²²⁶ Ever since, the Chinese government has been deliberately migrating Han Chinese citizens to live in Tibet, with the goal to not only facilitate economic growth in the region, but

²²³ Nathan Ruser et al., "Cultural Erasure: Tracing the Destruction of Uyghur and Islamic Spaces in Xinjiang," *APSI* (Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2020), <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/cultural-erasure>.

²²⁴ Chris Buckley and Austin Ramzy, "China Is Erasing Mosques and Precious Shrines in Xinjiang," *The New York Times*, September 25, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/25/world/asia/xinjiang-china-religious-site.html>.

²²⁵ Buckley and Ramzy, "China is Erasing Mosques", <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/25/world/asia/xinjiang-china-religious-site.html>.

²²⁶ Dhananjay Sahai, "CCP and Sinicization of Tibet," Tibet Policy Institute, March 16, 2021, <https://tibetpolicy.net/ccp-and-sinicization-of-tibet/>.

also stimulate the integration of the ethnic minorities living there.²²⁷ Similarly to the destruction of mosques in Xinjiang, China has also been destroying Buddhist monasteries in Tibet. Other examples of the oppression of Tibetan religion are the Chinese treatment of the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader and the ban on the celebration of religious festivals.²²⁸ Additionally, the Tibetan language is also under risk of being eroded, as Beijing has been repeatedly making attempts to promote the use of Mandarin language in Tibet. The Communist Party has been promoting bilingual education in Tibet, with the idea that it would result in greater stability and integration for the Tibetan people, along with better economic prospects.²²⁹ However, according to the Human Rights Watch, this governmental policy is not as benevolent as it seems, as they state that the government's policies have actually been eroding the Tibetan language skills of children and forcing them to adapt to Beijing's preferred views and political ideology, deliberately going against the traditions and values of their families and the entire Tibetan community.²³⁰ Overall, even though the government's Sinicization policy seems to be 'merely' aimed at socio-economic integration of minority ethnic groups, the methods undertaken for this purpose paint a much more sinister and less benevolent picture of this particular policy.

Since hosting a global mega event such as the Olympic Games will draw a lot of international attention towards the host country, China had to project a positive image towards the outside world. The Chinese state had to be perceived as a strong, unified, modern and ambitious nation. However, doing so would be an arduous affair, as China was plagued by a vast amount of socio-economic and environmental problems. To specify, the Chinese nation was affected by political corruption, large socio-economic inequalities, insurgency among ethnic minority groups, and widespread pollution issues.²³¹ If international governments and media outlets would ascertain such issues en masse, the global reputation and image of China would be damaged. Therefore, it was paramount for the Chinese government to attempt to cover up any issues that would taint their image. A potentially effective, albeit controversial (especially from a foreign viewpoint) way to do so, is to spread mass propaganda. Propaganda and thought work, in Mandarin referred to as '*xuanchuan yu sixiang gong*', has been an

²²⁷ Dhananjay Sahai, "CCP and Sinicization of Tibet," Tibet Policy Institute, March 16, 2021, <https://tibetpolicy.net/ccp-and-sinicization-of-tibet/>.

²²⁸ Sahai, "CCP and Sinicization of Tibet," <https://tibetpolicy.net/ccp-and-sinicization-of-tibet/>.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Anne-Marie Brady, "The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction," *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756420>.

integral part of the Communist Party's domestic policy for decades.²³² The propaganda and thought work system is arguably the most important and extensive of all bureaucratic systems controlled by the CCP, and has underwent numerous changes throughout the years, as it adapted to the developments of the Chinese economy and political system.²³³ For example, the system has recently incorporated the usage and/or manipulation of advertising, mass communication, social psychology and political public relations into their methodology.²³⁴ Whereas in the past Chinese propaganda was aimed at inciting revolution and radical social transformation, more recent propaganda is instead focused on boosting national social cohesion and unity, with the development of a 'harmonious society' being the endgame. Despite these changes, the ultimate purpose of the system has always remained the same: To keep the Chinese populace in check, bolster the legitimacy of the ruling Communist Party and keep their rule intact, and to discredit and eliminate anyone who opposes the state.

Between 2006 and 2008, the Chinese government started an extensive propaganda campaign in preparation for the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics.²³⁵ However, rather than only a more 'classical' campaign of political indoctrination, the Olympic propaganda campaign can also be characterized as a 'distraction campaign'.²³⁶ The prospect of organizing an unforgettable and breathtaking edition of the Olympic Games, which would leave other nations in awe of China's ambitions and progress, as well as boost the country's economy, would have to mask other aforementioned pressing issues that were detrimental to Chinese society. In order to maintain the political status quo, the Chinese people needed to be optimistic and positive about not only the Olympics, but their country as a whole. The Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games, which was in charge of overseeing the preparations for the Beijing Olympics, was led by Liu Peng, who was formerly a deputy director in the Central Propaganda Department.²³⁷ The organizing committee had its own propaganda bureau and later on numerous equivalent bureaus on local and provincial levels were established, so that they could co-ordinate all aspects of Olympic propaganda on a nationwide level. During a meeting between a few of these committees, a very clear goal was emphasized on: "getting propaganda on the Olympics right will be good for China's

²³² Anne-Marie Brady, "The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction," *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756420>.

²³³ Anne-Marie Brady, "The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction," 2, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756420>.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

international and domestic environment; if Olympics propaganda has a clear direction then China's overall national strength will continually increase and the masses will give us wide support.”²³⁸

Slogans are often an important part of propaganda. Unsurprisingly, slogans were heavily featured in the Chinese domestic propaganda regarding the then-upcoming Olympics. Two of the most prominent slogans were “Welcome the Olympics, be civilized and follow the new trend”, which instructs the Chinese populace to be good hosts for foreign athletes and visitors, and “I participate, I contribute and I am happy”, which refers to the government’s efforts to establish and oversee the development of a Chinese civil society.²³⁹ To expand on that particular slogan, Beijing residents expressed their support by involving themselves in numerous bid-supporting activities and by participating in various processes related to promoting their city’s bid.²⁴⁰ To exemplify, two young residents traveled 16.000 kilometers across the country in their car, during which they made various stops along the way, using the opportunity to communicate Olympic knowledge and the significance of Beijing’s bid to people living across the nation.²⁴¹ People from various walks of life and regions in China submitted advice or proposals regarding the Chinese Olympic bid, or offered to volunteer during the Olympics.²⁴²

Examples of slogans aimed at the foreign crowd were “One world, one dream” and “New Beijing, new Olympics”.²⁴³ It should be noted that the slogans featured as examples do not contain any explicit political messages, as the government and the organizing committee preferred to not directly turn the hosting of the Olympics into a purely political affair towards the outside world.²⁴⁴ However, the Chinese authorities were still very harsh when it came to criticism, from both domestic and foreign sources: As they linked the Olympics to the notion of national patriotism, anyone who opposed the Olympics was branded as unpatriotic, or accused of being anti-China.²⁴⁵

²³⁸ Anne-Marie Brady, “The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 9, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756420>.

²³⁹ Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, “Official Report of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, V.1,” *LA84 Foundation Digital Library* (LA84 Foundation, 2010), <https://digital.la84.org/digital/collection/p17103coll8/id/44344/rec/95>.

²⁴⁰ Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, “Official Report,” <https://digital.la84.org/digital/collection/p17103coll8/id/44344/rec/95>.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ Anne-Marie Brady, “The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction,” 12, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756420>.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

One last important factor in spreading the government's propaganda was the domestic media. Propaganda officials came up with a complex media strategy, which was aimed at deflecting any anti-China discourse, and to boost both domestic as well as foreign public opinion.²⁴⁶ The News Department of the Central Propaganda Department instructed domestic media to promote the Beijing Olympics. To specify, they were implored to report on how hosting the Olympics would improve the relationship between China's international reputation and relationship with other countries, and boost the national economy.²⁴⁷ On the other hand, reporters were also warned to not publish any negative coverage that would harm their country's image, such as environmental issues, labor and construction issues and food safety issues.²⁴⁸ If domestic journalists decided to not heed these rules, they were at risk of detainment.²⁴⁹ Media companies were not allowed to hire journalists that did not meet the strict criteria set out by the propaganda officials and any sensitive topics and stories related to the Olympics needed to be approved by the organizing committee.²⁵⁰ The Committee to Protect Journalists notes in a report that the domestic press situation in 2006 could be characterized as a paradox: While the common populace could spread digital news quickly enough before the censors caught on to them, journalists and media outlets were strictly supervised by authorities, firing and jailing reporters as they saw fit.²⁵¹ Domestic reporters faced more threats than their foreign colleagues.²⁵² When it comes to foreign media coverage, citizens of Beijing were instructed to show utmost hospitality to foreign journalists.²⁵³ In order to make a good impression on foreign journalists and visitors, the Chinese government also launched campaigns to improve citizens' behavior to Western standards, including old habits like littering and spitting being prohibited.²⁵⁴ Lastly, even though the government could do little to stop negative coverage from being published, such as international media outlets condemning the situation regarding Tibet, it worked in their favor on a domestic level. To clarify, many Chinese citizens reacted negatively to these foreign news stories, accusing them

²⁴⁶ Anne-Marie Brady, "The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction," *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 13, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756420>.

²⁴⁷ Anne-Marie Brady, "The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction," 13, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756420>.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁴⁹ Committee to Protect Journalists, "Falling Short: As the 2008 Olympics Approach, China Falts on Press Freedom" (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2007), <https://cpj.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/11/china.pdf>.

²⁵⁰ Anne-Marie Brady, "The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction," 14.

²⁵¹ Committee to Protect Journalists, "Falling Short," <https://cpj.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/11/china.pdf>

²⁵² Anne-Marie Brady, "The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction," 14.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁵⁴ "China Invites the World to Olympics," *China Daily*, August 8, 2007, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/olympics/2007-08/08/content_6017952.htm.

of exaggerations and prejudice. In response, they showed their feelings of nationalism and support for their government through public rallies and the internet.²⁵⁵ This serves as a prime example of the effectiveness of the government's propaganda and thought work strategy, as well as that the Olympics could unite a large part of the Chinese people in favor of their government.

3.4. Conclusion

The notion of Chinese nationalism went through numerous changes throughout the twentieth century. It switched various times between being primarily focused on socialist patriotism and anti-Western to being more open towards foreign influences and characteristics. In the twenty-first century, the rise of digital communication and social media added a new technological dimension to Chinese nationalism, as it essentially (partially) evolved into a form of cybernationalism. Additionally, the changing relationship between the Chinese government and the Chinese citizens also influenced Chinese nationalism, as while nationalism is often used as a governing tool to promote national unity, the Chinese populace could put pressure on their government's decision-making through their fervent nationalist views. To continue on the issue of national unity, the Communist Party has been making serious efforts to boost domestic unity and nationalism. However, this has proven to be a largely difficult affair, considering the fact that China is by no means an ethnically homogenous nation. Some ethnic minority groups, such as the Tibetans and the Uyghurs, do not feel a serious connection to the rest of their country, as their cultures are vastly different. This has also made them a primary target for the Party's Sinification policy, which is aimed at assimilating ethnic minority groups and their culture into one, unified Chinese nation and culture. Hong Kong and Taiwan are both special regions that also complicate the government's efforts for unifying the country. Both regions gradually developed a different culture and political values over time compared to the Mainland, to the extent that the inhabitants of Taiwan and Hong Kong both increasingly identify themselves as Taiwanese or Hong Kongese, rather than Chinese. The fact that the Mainland's government often takes a hostile and aggressive stance against them also widens the rift between them. An effective

²⁵⁵ Anne-Marie Brady, "The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction," *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 15, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756420>.

way of boosting national unity and nationalism is to spread propaganda. It was beneficial for the Chinese government to do so on both an international and domestic level. As China was about to host the Olympic Summer Games, it was paramount to project a positive image of the nation to the outside world, as well as ensure unanimous co-operation among the populace. Through careful and clever use of propaganda, the government could also mask the socio-economic and environmental issues that were plaguing their nation. In order to accomplish this goal, multiple propaganda departments and institutes were set up, effective slogans were established and the domestic media were instructed to only report positive news about any events related to the Olympics and their country's overall development and progress. As exemplified by the general enthusiasm and actions undertaken by Chinese citizens in support for the bid, as well as the shared aversion among the Chinese populace against negative foreign press coverage, the Chinese government's rallying campaign and propaganda efforts were ultimately largely effective.

Chapter 4: Domestic responses to the 2008 Beijing Olympics

This chapter will elaborate on the third sub question of this thesis, namely *'How was the domestic reception to the Olympic Games?'* This chapter is characterized by a multitude of domestic perspectives on the prelude to and the aftermath of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. By analyzing these various perspectives, such as Chinese, Taiwanese and Tibetan public opinion, as well as the Chinese government's and press' thoughts and coverage, it can be determined whether the Beijing Olympics was considered as a success, as well as how united or divided the overall public opinion on the Olympics was among different ethnic groups and regions. Therefore, this chapter plays a crucial part towards eventually formulating an answer to the main research question of this thesis. Lastly, I make a distinction between 'Mainland China' and Taiwan/Tibet/Hong Kong in this chapter since there is a serious difference between overall Chinese and Taiwanese/Tibetan/Hong Kongese public opinion, as critical views are more prevalent regarding the latter. Additionally, I have chosen to include Taiwan and Hong Kong in this 'domestic' chapter rather than the next chapter about foreign perspectives, as despite the social, cultural and political differences between Taiwan/Hong Kong and the Mainland, they still undeniably share a common history and traditions. To that

extent, Hong Kong and Taiwan are more comparable to China than the United States or any European country for example.

4.1. Mainland Chinese opinions

Shortly after the announcement that Beijing was elected as the host city for the 2008 Summer Olympics, tens of thousands of people gathered together at Tiananmen Square in the Chinese capital.²⁵⁶ National flags were flown high, cars were honking loudly, and a vast amount of fireworks lighted up the sky.²⁵⁷ The night of 13 July 2001 was truly a special and historical night for the nation of China and its inhabitants. Chinese citizens were unified through their celebration of their country's latest achievement. Essentially, the sheer happiness and comradery displayed during this night would prove to be a prelude to the ever-positive attitude of many Chinese people regarding the Olympics, with Liu Qi, the mayor of Beijing claiming that "more than 90 percent of the Chinese people support Beijing's bid, because they believe it will help improve their quality of life."²⁵⁸ However, it is important to take into consideration that, as described in the previous chapter, the government actively promoted a Pro-Olympian narrative, as they repeatedly assured the populace that successfully hosting the Olympics would be beneficial to their nation. Through heavy use of the government's propaganda and thought work system, state officials urged citizens to show an enthusiastic and co-operative attitude towards the then-upcoming Olympics.²⁵⁹ Although analyzing the role of the government's influence with account to the Chinese people's opinions and feelings, including the data to feature in this chapter, is not the primary concern of this thesis, it is certainly a potential factor to keep in mind for further research and analysis.

According to surveys and interviews conducted by the Pew Research Group in 2008, right before the Olympics started, the general consensus is that there was widespread enthusiasm and support among the Chinese people. Ninety-six percent of the respondents replied that their country would be able to successfully host the 2008 Summer Olympics (see

²⁵⁶ "Beijing Wins the Bid for 2008 Olympic Games (07/15/01)," Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Zimbabwe, August 16, 2004, <http://www.chinaembassy.org.zw/eng/xwdt/t148502.htm>.

²⁵⁷ "Beijing Wins the Bid," <http://www.chinaembassy.org.zw/eng/xwdt/t148502.htm>

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Anne-Marie Brady, "The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction," *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756420>.

figure 2).²⁶⁰ Additionally, they were nearly unanimously convinced that successfully hosting the mega event would boost their nation's international image and prestige (see figure 3).²⁶¹ Furthermore, besides being positive about the impact of the Olympics for their country as a whole, a large amount of Chinese citizens stated that the Olympics were important for them on a personal level. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents stated that they hold this particular belief.²⁶² Interestingly, in contrast to the first two findings, there were more variables found in the answers to this question. To elaborate, inhabitants of Beijing, the host city, were more likely (ninety percent) to express the personal importance of the Olympics, when compared to respondents from other cities (see figure 4).²⁶³ When it comes to age, younger people (<30) attached a higher level of personal importance to the Olympics than older people (>50).²⁶⁴ Furthermore, people with a higher income found the Olympics to be more important compared to people with a low income.²⁶⁵

To expand on the overall positive attitude regarding the Olympics among the Chinese populace, seventy-five percent of the respondents expressed the opinion that their country will win the most gold medals at the Olympics, with fifteen percent believing that that particular honor will go to the United States instead (see figure 5).²⁶⁶ Curiously, Beijing residents seem to be more skeptical of their own athletes' capabilities compared to respondents from other cities, as forty-two percent of them predicted that the US would win the most gold medals.²⁶⁷ Lastly, the Pew Research team also asked to respondents whether there is too much attention being paid to the Olympics among the Chinese populace. This particular question was asked before during a separate survey held in 2006. When comparing the results of these two surveys, it can be concluded that, in the span of two years, an increasing amount of people (twenty-five percent → thirty-four percent) were convinced that there was too much attention being paid to the Olympics and that it eclipsed other important matters (see figure 6).²⁶⁸ Perhaps not coincidentally, the government's Olympic propaganda campaign was launched in

²⁶⁰ The Pew Global Attitudes Project, "The 2008 Pew Global Attitudes Survey in China," *Pew Research Center* (Pew Research Center, 2008): 23, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2008/07/2008-Pew-Global-Attitudes-Report-2-July-22-2pm.pdf>.

²⁶¹ The Pew Global Attitudes Project, "The 2008 Pew Global Attitudes Survey in China," 23.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

2006, and intensified until right before that start of the Games in August 2008.²⁶⁹

Additionally, the finding that respondents from Beijing, the host city where most of the propaganda was clustered, were more ‘fed up’ with the Olympics compared to inhabitants from other cities also lends some credit to this particular notion.²⁷⁰ Therefore, the government’s propaganda efforts has certainly been affecting public opinion to a certain degree, in both a positive and negative way.

According to a research survey held among Beijing residents, which was undertaken and published at the request of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bidding Committee, almost ninety-five percent of the respondents indicated that they supported Beijing’s Olympic bid.²⁷¹ The remaining five percent, which were either against the bid or did not care much about it, were either concerned about the enormous expenditures that come with hosting such a global mega event or that the feelings of the Chinese people would be greatly hurt if their country was yet again denied to organize the Olympics.²⁷² Others stated that they did not care much about the fact that the Olympics would be held in the Chinese capital, as they argued that other cities were also qualified hosts and deserved a chance to be in the international spotlight.²⁷³ The fact that only Beijing residents were the subject of the survey held by the Bidding Committee presents a skewed view of the overall public opinion in China regarding the Olympics. Inhabitants of Beijing are more likely to be stoked about the Olympics, as they can fully enjoy the socio-economic benefits of the Olympics being hosted in their city, in stark contrast to regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang, which did not have any involvement in the Olympics whatsoever.

However, according to the 2008 Project Poll, a survey initiated by the Ogilvy Group in China and Millward Brown ACSR, the Chinese divisions of two major global marketing and communications agencies, which polled Chinese respondents along the torch relay route, there

²⁶⁹ Anne-Marie Brady, “The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756420>.

²⁷⁰ The Pew Global Attitudes Project, “The 2008 Pew Global Attitudes Survey in China,” *Pew Research Center* (Pew Research Center, 2008): 24, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2008/07/2008-Pew-Global-Attitudes-Report-2-July-22-2pm.pdf>.

²⁷¹ Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, “Official Report of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, V.1,” *LA84 Foundation Digital Library* (LA84 Foundation, 2010), <https://digital.la84.org/digital/collection/p17103coll8/id/44344/rec/95>.

²⁷² Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, “Official Report,” <https://digital.la84.org/digital/collection/p17103coll8/id/44344/rec/95>.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

was still considerable enthusiasm for the Olympics outside of Beijing.²⁷⁴ The north Chinese cities of Liaoning and Hebei, and Fujian, Hunan, and Guangxi in the south of China expressed a high amount of excitement for the Olympics.²⁷⁵ People in Guangzhou were even more excited (eighty percent) than Beijing residents (seventy-nine percent).²⁷⁶ Miles Young, chairman of the Ogilvy Group, states that although they often see inhabitants of non-major Chinese cities feeling out of the ‘modern Chinese miracle’, “ironically the further you travel from Beijing and Shanghai, the more enthusiastic the public is, as for them the Olympics is a singular highlight; whereas for wealthier people in the big cities, they have many more things vying for their attention.”²⁷⁷ He adds that “We knew excitement levels were high, but this research confirms that Olympic euphoria is alive and well and rampant throughout China. While the Games will largely be held in Beijing, the Olympics is not all about Beijing, but rather the entire nation and the pride Chinese citizens have in hosting the Games.”²⁷⁸

Yong Zhou and John Ap published a survey focused on consequences of hosting the Olympics that would impact the Beijing residents’ daily lives in a negative manner, such as an increase in noise levels, crime levels, environmental damage and disruption of their tranquility and peace (see figure 7). The majority of the respondents dismissed these potential concerns, with ‘more noise’ having the highest agreement percentage (32,6%).²⁷⁹ However, other inconveniences, such as traffic congestion and overcrowding of local facilities received more affirmative responses.²⁸⁰ On an interesting related note, people who have had to experience direct negative consequences of hosting the Olympics also expressed their support for the Olympics. For example, landlords, tenants and especially migrants, whose homes have been demolished because of Beijing’s urban renovations in preparation for the Olympics.²⁸¹ Although they lament the direct impact of the Olympics on their lives, they concede that

²⁷⁴ Ogilvy China, “Survey of Chinese Attitudes and Opinions Finds Excitement High for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games with National Pride a Key Driver of China’s Euphoria - PR Newswire APAC,” PR Newswire, March 10, 2008,

https://en.prnasia.com/releases/global/Survey_of_Chinese_Attitudes_and_Opinions_Finds_Excitement_High_f_or_the_Beijing_2008_Olympic_Games_with_National_Pride_A_Key_Driver_of_China_s_Euphoria-8936.shtml.

²⁷⁵ Ogilvy China, “Survey of Chinese Attitudes,”

https://en.prnasia.com/releases/global/Survey_of_Chinese_Attitudes_and_Opinions_Finds_Excitement_High_f_or_the_Beijing_2008_Olympic_Games_with_National_Pride_A_Key_Driver_of_China_s_Euphoria-8936.shtml.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Yong Zhou and John Ap, “Residents’ Perceptions towards the Impacts of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games,” *Journal of Travel Research* 48, no. 1 (2008): 82, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287508328792>.

²⁸⁰ Zhou & Ap, “Residents’ Perceptions,” 82.

²⁸¹ Hyun Bang Shin and Bingqin Li, “Whose Games? The Costs of Being ‘Olympic Citizens’ in Beijing,” *Environment and Urbanization* 25, no. 2 (2013): 571, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247813501139>.

hosting the Olympics is a state affair, which is ultimately for the good and development of the whole Chinese nation.²⁸²

Overall, taking the data of the surveys into account, it can be concluded that there was overall a very positive opinion on the Olympic Games among Chinese citizens, including people living outside of the host city. People were convinced that the Olympics Games would be a spectacular event, where their national sport heroes would win many medals for their country. Hosting the Olympics would not only boost the international prestige of their nation, but also result in beneficiary consequences for the long-term development of their nation on a socio-economical level.

On a governmental level, the reception to the Olympics has also been positive. Obviously, there has been a general attitude of optimism and determination before the Olympics took place, considering the preparations made by the government to ensure that the Beijing Olympics would be a spectacular and memorable event, that increases the international prestige of China and stimulates domestic economic development. According to Jiang Zemin, the then-president of China, Beijing's bid had the full support of the Chinese government and the entire nation. Other high-ranking members of the Chinese Communist Party, such as vice-president Hu Jintao, as well as other governmental authorities and ministries pledged their support for their nation's Olympic bid, and promised generous support in terms of material/financial resources and manpower. (Bid document) Numerous Chinese Communist Party officials have echoed the sentiment that the hosting of the Olympics was a success.²⁸³ In governmental discourse, the successful hosting of the Olympic Games is often linked to the development of China as a whole through the past few centuries.²⁸⁴ After facing decades of international humiliation and internal struggle, China has finally paved a path towards international success and prestige. For example, senior sport official Hua Li states that "in 2008, one year before the 60-year anniversary of the PRC, Beijing hosted the XXIX Olympiad, by which the Chinese nation fulfilled its century old wish. From a suffering and humiliated 'sick man of Asia', to a country that is... capable of hosting a 'truly exceptional' Olympics, to the number 1 in gold medals, China's tremendous

²⁸². Hyun Bang Shin and Bingqin Li, "Whose Games? The Costs of Being 'Olympic Citizens' in Beijing," *Environment and Urbanization* 25, no. 2 (2013): 572, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247813501139>.

²⁸³ Richard Xiaoqian Hu and Ian Henry, "The Development of the Olympic Narrative in Chinese Elite Sport Discourse from Its First Successful Olympic Bid to the Post-Beijing Games Era," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 33, no. 12 (2016): 1438, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2017.1284818>.

²⁸⁴ Hu & Henry, "The Development of the Olympic Narrative," 1438, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2017.1284818>.

change has surprised and convinced the world ... which show their respect and admiration, representing international appreciation for the magnificent 30-year reform.”²⁸⁵ Peng Liu, another sport minister says: “The successful Beijing Games and the outstanding results of Chinese elite sport are a true reflection of the PRC’s glorious procedure of striving to become prosperous and strong; is a showcase of the great achievement of the reform and opening-up of Chinese society and the modernization of China; is a successful practice of a mode of sport development with a Chinese character that is consistent with the Chinese context ... 2009 is the 60-year anniversary of the PRC, is a new beginning for Chinese elite sport; Chinese elite sport experienced its glory in the Beijing Games ... is facing the future, is working around the clock, tirelessly and continuously striving to transcend its former success.”²⁸⁶ In both quotes, emphasis is being put on the connection between the successful Beijing Olympics and the development of the nation of China as a whole. All in all, both the majority of the Chinese population and the Chinese government considers the 2008 Beijing Olympics as a smashing success.

4.2. Hong Kongese, Taiwanese, Uyghur and Tibetan perspectives and unrest

On 14 March, major protests broke out in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa. A group of monks that belonged to a small temple in Lhasa intended to hold a protest march against the detention of fellow monks during the past three days.²⁸⁷ However, as they were stopped by local police, other Tibetan citizens decided to join the monks’ plight, albeit in a more violent manner. Rioters started to overturn police vehicles and threw stones at officers.²⁸⁸ Chinese-owned shops were set on fire and passersby’s, that were assumed to be Chinese, were attacked (see figure 8).²⁸⁹ According to the Chinese government, numerous Chinese civilians and

²⁸⁵ Richard Xiaoqian Hu and Ian Henry, “The Development of the Olympic Narrative in Chinese Elite Sport Discourse from Its First Successful Olympic Bid to the Post-Beijing Games Era,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 33, no. 12 (2016): 1439, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2017.1284818>.

²⁸⁶ Hu & Henry, “The Development of the Olympic Narrative,” 1439.

²⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch, “‘I Saw It with My Own Eyes’ - Abuses by Chinese Security Forces in Tibet, 2008-2010,” *Human Rights Watch* (2010), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/07/21/i-saw-it-my-own-eyes/abuses-chinese-security-forces-tibet-2008-2010>.

²⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch, “‘I Saw It with My Own Eyes’”, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/07/21/i-saw-it-my-own-eyes/abuses-chinese-security-forces-tibet-2008-2010>.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

policemen died from beatings or burning to death in shops that were set ablaze.²⁹⁰ According to eyewitnesses, Chinese police forces reacted with lethal force, resulting in numerous protesters being shot to death.²⁹¹ In an interview held in April 2008, a month after the protests, Chai Xi, the Chinese ambassador to Malta, slammed the protests.²⁹² He accused the ‘Dalai Clique’ of deliberately undermining ethnic unity and instigating ethnic unrest.²⁹³ He also asserted that despite separatists’ efforts to establish a fully independent Tibet, has been and will always remain an unalienable part of China.²⁹⁴

The mass protests in Lhasa were a catalyst for further uprisings in other regions of Tibet, as well as the Chinese border province of Sichuan. During these protests, foreign journalists were ordered to leave the region.²⁹⁵ These series of protests later came to be known as the 2008 Tibetan Uprising, or the 2008 Tibetan Unrest. They also sparked numerous rallies in foreign countries, held by foreigners who sympathized with the Tibetans’ struggle for recognition and freedom.²⁹⁶ The then-upcoming Olympic Games is identified as one of the catalysts for the original protests, as according to the famous monk Golog Jigme, the Beijing Olympics were seen as an issue in Tibet as soon as 2001, shortly after the Games got awarded to Beijing.²⁹⁷ In 2006, underground writings started circulating, which contained plans for protests and slogans against the Olympic Games.²⁹⁸ A leaflet read: “*If Tibet [up until the Olympic Games] has not gained freedom, we have the responsibility to protest so that the Olympic Games do not take place in China. It is up to us, young Tibetans, not to let this opportunity pass us by. It is up to us Tibetans in Tibet to show the people of the world what*

²⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch, “‘I Saw It with My Own Eyes’” - Abuses by Chinese Security Forces in Tibet, 2008-2010,” *Human Rights Watch* (2010), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/07/21/i-saw-it-my-own-eyes/abuses-chinese-security-forces-tibet-2008-2010>

²⁹¹ Human Rights Watch, “‘I Saw It with My Own Eyes’”, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/07/21/i-saw-it-my-own-eyes/abuses-chinese-security-forces-tibet-2008-2010>.

²⁹² Chai Xi, Questions and Answers for Interview with Ambassador Chai Xi by the Maltese Media on Tibet Issue and Beijing Olympics, interview by various Maltese media, *Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Republic of Malta’s Website*, April 18, 2008, <http://mt.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/t427096.htm>.

²⁹³ Chai Xi, Question and Answers, <http://mt.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/t427096.htm>.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Kevin Latham, “Media, the Olympics and the Search for the ‘Real China,’” *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 29, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756421>.

²⁹⁶ Reuters Staff, “TIMELINE: Olympic Torch Protests around the World,” *Reuters*, April 28, 2008, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-olympics-torch-disruptions-idUSSP17070920080428>.

²⁹⁷ Golog Jigme, An interview with Golog Jigme, respected monk and “Information Hero” after his daring escape from Tibet, interview by International Campaign for Tibet, *International Campaign for Tibet’s Website*, July 29, 2014, <https://savetibet.org/an-interview-with-golog-jigme-respected-monk-and-information-hero-after-his-daring-escape-from-tibet/>.

²⁹⁸ Wangpo Tethong, “The 2008 Uprising and the Olympics,” *Tibetan Review*, June 21, 2018, <https://www.tibetanreview.net/the-2008-uprising-and-the-olympics/>.

the true situation in Tibet is".²⁹⁹ According to Golog Jigme, the Tibetan Uprising was a turning point in Tibet's struggle for freedom, as it made the younger generations of Tibetans more aware of the political situation in Tibet.³⁰⁰ People became motivated to make an attempt to change their situation and the protests provided a clear framework for the future direction of Tibet.³⁰¹

Together with the Tibetan filmmaker, Dhondup Wangchen, Golog Jigme interviewed 108 Tibetans about their views on Tibet's political and human rights situations, as well as the Beijing Olympics. The results of these interviews were bundled together in the documentary "Leaving Fear Behind". The documentary starts by stating that Dhondup Wangchen carried out a dangerous journey through the Eastern areas of Tibet, with his goal being to record the views of ordinary Tibetans on the 2008 Beijing Olympics.³⁰² His journey being called 'dangerous' already sets the tone for the rest of the documentary, referring to the fact that the Chinese authorities would not be very happy about his project, as stated in the documentary's secondary title – The Film China Doesn't Want You to See. The first interviewee remarks that the Olympic Games themselves should stand for freedom and peace.³⁰³ However, he, as a Tibetan civilian, does not know freedom and peace, and thus is not in favor of the Olympic Games being held in China.³⁰⁴ While many Chinese have been celebrating the fact that their nation has the honor of hosting the Olympics, Tibetans do not even possess the basic rights of freedom, independence and peace, and thus have absolutely no reason to celebrate.³⁰⁵ Another interviewee characterizes the Olympics as a peaceful event where all countries in the world can gather and participate.³⁰⁶ Nonetheless, he remarks that Tibetans are not allowed to attend the Games.³⁰⁷ He also states that thousands of Tibetans wish that the Dalai Lama would be able to attend the Olympics, as their spiritual leader essentially symbolizes the idea

²⁹⁹ Wangpo Tethong, "The 2008 Uprising and the Olympics," *Tibetan Review*, June 21, 2018, <https://www.tibetanreview.net/the-2008-uprising-and-the-olympics/>.

³⁰⁰ Golog Jigme, An interview with Golog Jigme, respected monk and "Information Hero" after his daring escape from Tibet, interview by International Campaign for Tibet, *International Campaign for Tibet's Website*, July 29, 2014, <https://savetibet.org/an-interview-with-golog-jigme-respected-monk-and-information-hero-after-his-daring-escape-from-tibet/>.

³⁰¹ Jigme, An interview with Golog Jigme, <https://savetibet.org/an-interview-with-golog-jigme-respected-monk-and-information-hero-after-his-daring-escape-from-tibet/>.

³⁰² Journeyman Pictures, "Leaving Fear behind - the Film China Doesn't Want You to See," Video Documentary, *YouTube*, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wi8U-asY1QI>.

³⁰³ Journeyman Pictures, "Leaving Fear behind," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wi8U-asY1QI>.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

of peace, and thus he would fit right in with a peaceful event such as the Olympics.³⁰⁸ The Dalai Lama himself stated that he personally supported Beijing hosting the Olympics, although he also expressed that Tibetans are allowed to protest against the Olympics and mistreatment by the Chinese authorities, on the condition that there would be no violence.³⁰⁹ One particular interviewee stated that he was against the Olympics, because they caused the prices to rise throughout all of China, including Tibet. Due to poverty being prevalent in Tibet, he and many other Tibetans did not have enough money to buy sufficient amounts of food.³¹⁰ A monk claims that the Tibetans would initially be happy about the Olympics, as China originally promised that it would improve freedom and democracy in the Autonomous Region of Tibet.³¹¹ However, he soon adds that this was not the case, and that the repression of the Tibetan people has only been increasing ever since: Tibetan people are forcibly being relocated, their cattle is not allowed to graze upon their land as it is bought up by Chinese companies, who are after fertile Tibetan land that is rich with natural resources.³¹² An organization dedicated to preserving Tibet's unique culture and language alive is also featured in the documentary, with the interview footage with the organization's founder being deliberately blurred as he fears for the safety of his own safety and that of his family. Due to Han Chinese settling in Tibet, Tibetans are already outnumbered in eastern regions and their language and culture are being threatened and slowly eroded.³¹³ At the end of the documentary, Dhondup Wangchen remarks that it was sometimes difficult to attain people's consent for an interview, as potential interviewees were unsure about their safety.³¹⁴ On the other hand, people who gave their consent told him that they would not regret being interviewed even in the face of possible persecutions as a consequence, claiming that they sincerely wished that the voice of the Tibetans regarding the Olympics and their oppression would be spread.³¹⁵

To summarize the contents of the documentary, many Tibetans are not keen on the Olympics taking place in Beijing, as they are still suffering under the Chinese government's

³⁰⁸ Journeyman Pictures, "Leaving Fear behind - the Film China Doesn't Want You to See," Video Documentary, *YouTube*, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wi8U-asY1QI>.

³⁰⁹ "Dalai Lama Opposes Boycott of Olympics," His Holiness The 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, April 13, 2008, <https://www.dalailama.com/news/2008/dalai-lama-opposes-boycott-of-olympics>.

³¹⁰ Journeyman Pictures, "Leaving Fear behind," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wi8U-asY1QI>.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² *Ibid.*

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

oppression. They also fervently wish for the Dalai Lama return. On an interesting note, the fact that precisely 108 Tibetans have been interviewed may have been deliberate, as 108 is a significant number in Tibetan Buddhism. According to the tenets of Tibetan Buddhism, there are 108 Earthly temptations and evils that Buddhists must withstand before achieving Nirvana.³¹⁶ Since earthly life is marked by suffering according to the principles of Buddhism, it can be likened to how Tibetans are suffering under Chinese rule.

Lastly, although the producer has claimed to not have made it a political documentary, the overall subject matter and themes are certainly inherently political in nature. Additionally, due to exclusively featuring Tibetan perspectives, it is easy for viewers to gravitate towards the Tibetan side of the issue and attain sympathy for the Tibetans and their plight, at the cost of their opinion regarding the Chinese government and their handling of the issues regarding Tibet. Shortly after the production of the film, Dhondup Wangchen was arrested and held prisoner for six years.³¹⁷

In the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the Chinese government massively increased security on a nationwide scale, as a preventive measure against possible disruptions during the Olympics.³¹⁸ China's Minister of Public Security stated that terrorism posed the greatest threat against a successful hosting of the Olympics.³¹⁹ When the government and state media referred to terrorists, they were usually referring to (radical) Uyghurs. A year-long security campaign was launched against the three evil forces of terrorism, separatism and religious extremism. This campaign resulted in significant restrictions of the political and culture rights of the Uyghurs. Traditional customs such as religious burials and pilgrimages were banned and any protests against the government's new policies were immediately disbanded.³²⁰

³¹⁶ Sally Keys, "Buddhism 108: Much More than the Number of Beads on a Mala - Buddha Weekly: Buddhist Practices, Mindfulness, Meditation," Buddha Weekly, accessed June 27, 2021, <https://buddhaweekly.com/buddhism-108-much-more-than-the-number-of-beads-on-a-mala/>.

³¹⁷ Golog Jigme, An interview with Golog Jigme, respected monk and "Information Hero" after his daring escape from Tibet, interview by International Campaign for Tibet, *International Campaign for Tibet's Website*, July 29, 2014, <https://savetibet.org/an-interview-with-golog-jigme-respected-monk-and-information-hero-after-his-daring-escape-from-tibet/>.

³¹⁸ Sean R. Roberts, "The Biopolitics of China's 'War on Terror' and the Exclusion of the Uyghurs," *Critical Asian Studies* 50, no. 2 (2018): 240, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2018.1454111>.

³¹⁹ Zhu Zhe, "Terrorism 'Big Threat' to Olympics," *China Daily*, September 11, 2007, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/2008/2007-09/11/content_6095748.htm.

³²⁰ Human Rights Watch, "'We Are Afraid to Even Look for Them' - Enforced Disappearances in the Wake of Xinjiang's Protests," *Human Rights Watch* (2009), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/10/20/we-are-afraid-even-look-them/enforced-disappearances-wake-xinjiangs-protests>.

Right before the Olympic Games took place, at the beginning of August, two major terrorist attacks were conducted. On 4 August, two alleged Muslim jihadists drove a vehicle into a group of Chinese military personnel and then proceeded to kill the survivors as well. As the result of this attack, sixteen lives were claimed.³²¹ Six days later, Uyghur separatists bombed government buildings in Kuqa, killing themselves in the process.³²² These attacks served to further public anxiety among the Chinese population regarding the threat that Uyghurs posed to Chinese society.³²³ Later that year, the regional government announced a crackdown targeted at (alleged) separatists and terrorists, as well as their families. Over the course of 2008, nearly 1300 Uyghurs were detained for crimes against the security of the Chinese state.³²⁴ On 5 July 2009, large-scale ethnic clashes and riots broke out in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, eventually resulting in hundreds of deaths.³²⁵ These riots were preceded by increasing tensions between the Uyghurs and the Han Chinese living in the region, with the exclusionary and discriminatory policies that were put in practice by the government before the Olympics being identified as a long-term key factor.³²⁶ During the protests, there have been numerous cases of Uyghurs been taken away by the local authorities, with parents reporting that their children disappeared for weeks: “They asked for my son and said they would take him for an inquiry because many people from our neighborhood had participated in the protests. They said they would bring him back in a couple of days, but it’s been more than three weeks and I have no idea where he is and whether he is still alive. I went to the local police station twice—they did not say whether he was there or not, but said the inquiry was still ongoing.”³²⁷

Ever since the split between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of China in 1949 as a result of the Chinese civil war, cross-Taiwanese Strait relations have been strained. This sense of duality and enmity has also extended to the global sporting arena.

³²¹ Jonathan Watts, “Beijing Olympics: Eight Dead after Bombings in Western China Mars Opening Weekend of Olympic Games,” *The Guardian*, August 10, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/10/china.olympics20081>.

³²² Watts, “Beijing Olympics,” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/10/china.olympics20081>.

³²³ Sean R. Roberts, “The Biopolitics of China’s ‘War on Terror’ and the Exclusion of the Uyghurs,” *Critical Asian Studies* 50, no. 2 (2018): 242, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2018.1454111>.

³²⁴ Human Rights Watch, “‘We Are Afraid to Even Look for Them’ - Enforced Disappearances in the Wake of Xinjiang’s Protests,” *Human Rights Watch* (2009), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/10/20/we-are-afraid-even-look-them/enforced-disappearances-wake-xinjiangs-protests>.

³²⁵ Human Rights Watch, “‘We Are Afraid to Even Look for Them’”, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/10/20/we-are-afraid-even-look-them/enforced-disappearances-wake-xinjiangs-protests>.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

Since 1980, Taiwan has been competing in the Olympics under the name of ‘Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee’, including a special new flag and emblem.³²⁸ Although this compromise formally settled the issue of Chinese representation in the Olympics and marginally improved cross-Strait relations, many local Taiwanese were not fully satisfied.³²⁹ To them, the usage of Taiwan’s national title was not only a label to represent them in international sports, but also an internal political identity.³³⁰ By being renamed to Chinese Taipei, it became increasingly difficult for the Taiwanese to establish their national (sport) identity. Regarding the Beijing Olympics, the people of Taiwan had mixed feelings. There was certainly some enthusiasm for the Olympics, as in July 2001 more than a hundred civil organizations expressed their support for Beijing’s bid.³³¹ Additionally, in June 2001, a group of Taiwanese athletes demonstrated their support for the Chinese bid by participating in a long-distance run from Taipei to Beijing.³³² This event was reported to have “touched the heartstrings of all spectators who had been feeling a strong blood tie linking the Chinese people”.³³³ The former president of Taiwan, Chen Shuibian stated that “Taiwan is pleased to witness the steady progress, reforms and peaceful emergence of China. We also extend our best wishes to the other side of the Strait as it prepares for the 2008 Beijing Olympics; and we hope that it will be a successful event conducted in accordance with the Olympic spirits of peace and equality. Nevertheless, the international community should be wary of and yet hope for the emergence of China to be accompanied by a ‘peaceful awakening’ rather than a hegemony of belligerence and aggression.”³³⁴ Acts synonymous with that ‘hegemony of belligerence and aggression has negatively impacted the relationship between Taiwan and the Mainland throughout the years and the hosting of the Beijing Olympics was seen as a prime opportunity for China to rise to international stardom, essentially leaving Taiwan in the dust.’³³⁵ Originally, the Chinese

³²⁸ Yi-Ling Huang and Chen-Huei Wang, “Chinese Question in the Olympic Movement: From the Perspective of Taiwan,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 17 (2013): 2063, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2013.839987>.

³²⁹ Patrick W.C. Lau et al., “The Longitudinal Changes of National Identity in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan Before, during and after the 2008 Beijing Olympics Games,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 9 (2012): 1284, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2012.692248>.

³³⁰ Lau et al., “The Longitudinal Changes,” 1284.

³³¹ Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, “Official Report of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, V.1,” *LA84 Foundation Digital Library* (LA84 Foundation, 2010), <https://digital.la84.org/digital/collection/p17103coll8/id/44344/rec/95>.

³³² Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, “Official Report,” <https://digital.la84.org/digital/collection/p17103coll8/id/44344/rec/95>.

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ Junwei Yu and J. A. Mangan, “Dancing around the Elephant: The Beijing Olympics – Taiwanese Reflections and Reactions,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 25, no. 7 (2008): 844, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523360802009255>.

³³⁵ Yu & Mangan, “Dancing around the Elephant,” 844.

government considered the possibility of including Taiwan in the torch relay and even sharing some Olympic events with Taiwan, under the ‘One China Principle’.³³⁶ However, this ultimately did not come to be, especially since the tensions between China and Taiwan rose once again in the run-up to the Olympic Games, as Taiwan was appalled over their status regarding the torch relay. In the organizing committee’s torch relay route plans, Taiwan was included as a domestic leg, rather than an international one. Ultimately, the governments of China and Taiwan were unable to resolve the issue, resulting in Taiwan not being included in the Olympic torch relay.

Similarly to Taiwan, Hong Kong participated as a separate team during the Beijing Summer Olympics. Hong Kong was included in the torch relay route, and the Hong Kongese enthusiastically welcomed the people participating in the torch relay, as they cheered them on.³³⁷ Opinion polls conducted by the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers showed that nearly ninety-three percent of the people living in the Autonomous Region supported Beijing’s bid.³³⁸ In contrast to Taiwan, China undertook various efforts to involve Hong Kong with the Beijing Olympics. For example, numerous Hong Kongese public figures were a part of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bidding Committee.³³⁹ Interestingly, according to a survey conducted by the University of Hong Kong, there was a notable increase in the amount of Hong Kongese people that identified themselves as Chinese during the Olympics (see figure 10).³⁴⁰ This statistic correlates well with the general amount of enthusiasm for the Olympics found among Hong Kongese citizens, considering the historical and cultural ties between the Mainland and Hong Kong, and that hosting the Olympics is a prestigious affair for China, which connects all people with Chinese roots and cultural ties. According to then Hong Kongese Secretary for Home Affairs, Tsang Tak-Sing, Hong Kong deeply shared the Chinese pride of hosting the Olympics, and it was honored to co-host the 2008 Equestrian

³³⁶ “Beijing Calls for Taiwan to Support Olympic Bid (02/25/01),” Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva, April 22, 2004, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cegv/eng/zt/twwt/t88911.htm>.

³³⁷ Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, “Official Report of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, V.1,” *LA84 Foundation Digital Library* (LA84 Foundation, 2010), <https://digital.la84.org/digital/collection/p17103coll8/id/44344/rec/95>.

³³⁸ Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, “Official Report,” <https://digital.la84.org/digital/collection/p17103coll8/id/44344/rec/95>.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

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<https://web.archive.org/web/20120531180321/http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/eidentity/poll/datatables.html><https://web.archive.org/web/20120531180321/http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/eidentity/poll/datatables.html>

Games. It would be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Hong Kong, and he hoped that all fellow Hong Kongese would share the joy of the Olympic Games.³⁴¹

4.3. Domestic media coverage of the 2008 Beijing Olympics

Ever since it was announced that Beijing would host the 2008 Olympics, the Chinese media has continually producing positive coverage about the mega event. This has especially been gaining momentum since 2006, at the same time the government had intensified its Olympic propaganda efforts. To exemplify, Chinese journalists were instructed to only report positive news stories regarding the Olympics.³⁴² It was forbidden to write about any topics with a negative undertone, such as potential human rights or pollution issues.³⁴³ According to reports published by Amnesty International, critical journalists are charged with ‘anti-state activities’ and detained.³⁴⁴ In 2008, China was known as the ‘world’s largest jailer of journalists.’³⁴⁵

The goal was to present China as an ambitious, modern and progressive nation, that would not fail to host an unforgettable and spectacular edition of the Olympic Summer Games. The ‘real’ China must be shown, instead of the more negative portrayal of China that was shown by ‘biased’ Western media. This ideal became especially prevalent shortly after the riots in Tibet and the numerous protests against the international torch relay.

In the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the Chinese nation was increasingly subjected to negative foreign media coverage. This evoked a sense of national consciousness among groups of Chinese people, as they were displeased with how their country was being ‘slandered’ in news stories produced by international media outlets. For example, Li Xuan, a Chinese exchange student who was studying abroad in France in April 2008, called for Chinese people overseas to oppose (foreign) media injustice and declare support for the

³⁴¹ “Hong Kong - First Stop on Chinese Soil for Beijing 2008 Olympic Torch Relay (with Photos),” GovHK, January 30, 2008, <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200801/30/P200801300271.htm>.

³⁴² Anne-Marie Brady, “The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 13, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756420>.

³⁴³ Brady, “The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction,” 13.

³⁴⁴ Amnesty International, “Legacy of the Beijing Olympics - China’s Choice,” *Amnesty International*, October 8, 2007, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA17/043/2007/en/>.

³⁴⁵ Amnesty International, “Legacy of the Beijing Olympics,” <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA17/043/2007/en/>.

Beijing Olympics.³⁴⁶ Li's words were reported in detail by various Chinese media agencies, which helped to spread the discourse of foreign media being anti-China among many Chinese citizens, both domestic Chinese and Chinese people living abroad.³⁴⁷ As the beginning of the Beijing Olympics neared, particular measures were taken to deliver unprecedented coverage of the global sport event. CCTV, China's biggest broadcasting company, which is owned by the government, devoted seven main channels to near non-stop coverage of the Olympics.³⁴⁸ Nearly all of the channels' air time were dedicated to the Olympics, with the exception of three major news programs.³⁴⁹ Interestingly, CCTV's coverage of the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony was remarkably different compared to foreign broadcasts of the same event. There was no narrative commentary during the CCTV's broadcast and there were many close-up shots of the national and Olympic flags, the audience and both IOC and Chinese officials.³⁵⁰ Additionally, in contrast to foreign coverage of the opening ceremony, there were no commercial breaks included.³⁵¹ While the foreign broadcasts could be considered as more of a commercialized spectacle, hundreds of millions of Chinese got to see a more an almost more solemn, sacred and ritualistic version of the opening ceremony, which was less distracting and more focused on the greatness of the event itself and the meaning it held for China's development and future. Chinese media were glowing with praise in their coverage on the opening ceremony and its aftermath, whereby the 'real China frame' was once again prevalent. To exemplify, *The Global Times* wrote that "With more than 30,000 foreign journalists all reporting at the same time from Olympic China, the China that the world sees cannot possibly be false."³⁵² "The Beijing Olympics," it said, "are currently 'correcting' the distorting Western reports about China."³⁵³ That same article concluded: "With several hundred million people around the world watching Olympics transmissions and reports about present-day China, those that still want to say bad things about China will lose their credibility and even further re-emphasize how those old criticisms are meaningless."³⁵⁴

³⁴⁶ Kevin Latham, "Media, the Olympics and the Search for the 'Real China,'" *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 27, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756421>.

³⁴⁷ Latham, "Media, the Olympics," 27.

³⁴⁸ Cui, Xi. "Media Events Are Still Alive: The Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympics as a Media Ritual." *International Journal of Communication* 7 (2013): 1224.

³⁴⁹ Xi, "Media Events," 1224.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1224.

³⁵¹ Cui, Xi. "Media Events Are Still Alive: The Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympics as a Media Ritual." *International Journal of Communication* 7 (2013): 1224.

³⁵² Kevin Latham, "Media, the Olympics and the Search for the 'Real China,'" *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 32, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756421>.

³⁵³ Latham, "Media, the Olympics," 32.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

However, there is some nuance when it comes to Chinese press opinion regarding Western media. To exemplify, four Chinese journalists interviewed by the China Digital Times, whereby three of them wished to remain anonymous, state that there have been Western media outlets that were able to publish neutral reports about China.³⁵⁵ They acknowledge the difficulty of doing so, as news reports always have some kind of bias, especially when it comes to political and sensitive topics, such as the protests in Tibet and during the international torch relay.³⁵⁶ Nonetheless, they also state that some Western media outlets should be more careful when writing articles about topics, as some of their statements, such as that Tibet is an independent country, or provoking headlines as “Slap in the Face for China!” and “Free Tibet!” are bound to raise serious controversies in China.³⁵⁷ Another anonymous interviewee places emphasis on the fact that both Western and Chinese citizens have little understanding of the actual reality of daily life and politics in Tibet, whereby the Chinese people’s opinions are influenced by the education that they have received, which is characterized by patriotism and support for the government’s ideology.³⁵⁸ Additionally, due to the fact that Western readers possess very little knowledge about the relationship between China and Tibet and its historical context, the Western media outlets often simplify their stories to the extent that it does not fully cover the entire context behind the conflicts or both sides’ perspectives.³⁵⁹ The same journalist also points out that China lacks a civil society in comparison to the West, as in contrast to the West, most of Chinese media outlets are connected to the government.³⁶⁰ This also leads to misunderstandings in China regarding the West, as Chinese people fail to distinguish Western governments and civil societies.³⁶¹ For example, American media outlets have published numerous critical articles about China in the run-up to the Olympics, while the American government has refrained from criticizing their Chinese colleagues too much in order to not sour their relationship with them.³⁶² However, Chinese citizens tend to focus on the negative news

³⁵⁵ CDT Interview Series: Chinese Journalists Talk About the Olympics, Tibet, and Cross-Cultural Understanding (1), interview by Meredith Godwin, *China Digital Times*, July 7, 2008, <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2008/07/interview-with-a-chinese-journalist/>.

³⁵⁶ CDT Interview Series, <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2008/07/interview-with-a-chinese-journalist/>.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ CDT Interview Series: Chinese Journalists Talk About the Olympics, Tibet, and Cross-Cultural Understanding (2), interview by Rhyen Coombs, *China Digital Times*, July 15, 2008, <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2008/07/cdt-interview-series-chinese-journalists-talk-about-the-olympics-tibet-and-cross-cultural-understanding-2/>.

³⁵⁹ CDT Interview Series, <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2008/07/cdt-interview-series-chinese-journalists-talk-about-the-olympics-tibet-and-cross-cultural-understanding-2/>

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² *Ibid.*

articles, and thus think that they are representative for what every American thinks.³⁶³

The Chinese reporter from the third interview argues that Chinese reactions to negative foreign news stories has been too excessive, as they are not looking to understand more about Western or Tibetan perspectives, but are rather more keen on confirming their previously-held beliefs, as in that Western media are deliberately trying to discredit their country.³⁶⁴ The journalist himself is personally very fond of the New York Times' coverage on the Tibetan riots, as they have interviewed both Han Chinese and Tibetans, in order to present a more complete story marked by different perspectives.³⁶⁵ However, Chinese attention was rather focused on CNN, specifically CNN commentator Jack Cafferty, who characterized the Chinese government and citizens as 'thugs.'³⁶⁶

The last interview is held with Jianqiang Liu, a senior investigative reporter for the 'Southern Weekend'. Similarly to his anonymous colleagues, he stresses that Western coverage of the Tibetan protests have been quite unbiased and accurate, although they should be more careful when it comes to using terms such as 'independence' related to Tibet.³⁶⁷ He also condemns young Chinese nationalists for blindly following what the government says about Tibet and the Dalai Lama, and advises them to do more critical thinking for themselves.³⁶⁸ Although he is understanding of his fellow countrymen's anger towards 'biased' Western media outlets, Liu remarks that they should be more nuanced and think about *why* their reports are false, rather than quickly condemn them as a whole.³⁶⁹

While the Olympics were underway, China Daily, a newspaper owned by the Propaganda Department of the Communist Party, provided extensive coverage of the Olympics, publishing numerous articles on their website on a daily basis. Besides reporting

³⁶³ CDT Interview Series: Chinese Journalists Talk About the Olympics, Tibet, and Cross-Cultural Understanding (2), interview by Rhyen Coombs, *China Digital Times*, July 15, 2008, <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2008/07/cdt-interview-series-chinese-journalists-talk-about-the-olympics-tibet-and-cross-cultural-understanding-2/>.

³⁶⁴ CDT Interview Series: Chinese Journalists Talk About the Olympics, Tibet, and Cross-Cultural Understanding (3), interview by Jenny Chu, *China Digital Times*, July 27, 2008, <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2008/07/cdt-interview-series-chinese-journalists-talk-about-the-olympics-tibet-and-cross-cultural-understanding-3/>.

³⁶⁵ CDT Interview Series, <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2008/07/cdt-interview-series-chinese-journalists-talk-about-the-olympics-tibet-and-cross-cultural-understanding-3/>.

³⁶⁶ Alexi Mostrous, "CNN Apologises to China over 'Thugs and Goons' Comment by Jack Cafferty," *The Sunday Times*, April 16, 2008, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/cnn-apologises-to-china-over-thugs-and-goons-comment-by-jack-cafferty-gb95xn6v068>.

³⁶⁷ Jianqiang Liu, CDT Interview Series: Chinese Journalists Talk About the Olympics, Tibet, and Cross-Cultural Understanding (4), interview by Kiran Goldman, *China Digital Times*, July 31, 2008, <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2008/07/cdt-interview-series-chinese-journalists-talk-about-the-olympics-tibet-and-cross-cultural-understanding-4/>.

³⁶⁸ Liu, CDT Interview Series, <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2008/07/cdt-interview-series-chinese-journalists-talk-about-the-olympics-tibet-and-cross-cultural-understanding-4/>.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

results of various competitions held during the Olympics, there are also many articles available about how the Beijing Olympics were a massive success, containing quotes from the IOC and various foreign leaders. Quite a few articles contain a host of keywords and superlatives, praising China and the Beijing Olympics in a grand and idealistic narrative: “Both in and out of the arena, every face brims with happiness and friendliness and everyone is being overwhelmed by the joyful and auspicious atmosphere surrounding them. Peaceful co-existence and harmonious integration are mankind's ever-lasting dream, and the Beijing Olympic Games have offered mankind an experience that transcends the present and looks into the future.”³⁷⁰

The Beijing Olympics were also thoroughly covered in the Hong Kongese media landscape. Due to the Chinese government's investments in television coverage for the Olympics, Hong Kongese citizens were able to enjoy 24/7 live broadcasts of the Olympics, where they could cheer for both foreign, Chinese, and Hong Kongese athletes.³⁷¹ In short, the amount of Olympic media coverage in Hong Kong was unprecedented in Hong Kongese media history.³⁷² Various Hong Kongese newspapers also provided a broad range of reports on the Beijing Olympics. Interestingly, the ways in which the coverage was provided to be different among Hong Kongese newspapers, based on their political affinity. To elaborate, newspapers in Hong Kong can be split in left-wing newspapers that favor China, and right-wing newspapers that lean towards a more independent Hong Kong. The former often referred to China as ‘the motherland’ in their coverage of the Olympics, which evokes feelings of Chinese nationalism and pride among their readers, especially as athletes from the motherland were very successful.³⁷³ On the other hand, right-wing newspapers were devoid of that particular term and were overall more neutral and detached in their news reports about the Beijing Olympics.³⁷⁴ Additionally, two Pro-China newspapers, Ta Kung Pao and Wen Wei Po, produced 226 reports about Chinese Olympic champions, while two pro-independence

³⁷⁰ Xinhua News Agency, “Beijing Olympics, a Real Experience of Human Dreams,” China Daily, August 24, 2008, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/olympics/2008-08/24/content_6966558.htm.

³⁷¹ Patrick W.C. Lau et al., “The Longitudinal Changes of National Identity in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan Before, during and after the 2008 Beijing Olympics Games,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 9 (2012): 1289, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2012.692248>.

³⁷² Lau et al., “The Longitudinal Changes,” 1289.

³⁷³ Qiaolei Jiang, “Celebrity Athletes, Soft Power and National Identity: Hong Kong Newspaper Coverage of the Olympic Champions of Beijing 2008 and London 2012,” *Mass Communication and Society* 16, no. 6 (2013): 892, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2013.789528>.

³⁷⁴ Jiang, “Celebrity Athletes,” 892.

newspapers, Ming Pao Daily and Apple Daily, published a 'mere' 64 reports about medal-winning Chinese athletes (see figures 11 and 12).³⁷⁵

4.4 Conclusion

As soon as it was announced that Beijing was chosen to host the 2008 Summer Olympics, a large part of the Chinese population was buzzing with excitement and pride. These feelings of national pride and enthusiasm did not wane over the years, as according to numerous surveys, the majority of the Chinese population were very positive about the Olympics, especially the residents of Beijing. They believed that hosting the Summer Olympics was essentially an irrefutable major testament to the growth and development their nation has went through. Not only would it increase China's international prestige, but it would also further boost the (economic) development of the nation. Although, the government's propaganda campaigns certainly had an influence on public opinion regarding the Olympics, government officials themselves were also very optimistic about the Olympics. Government officials held the belief that hosting the Olympics would have beneficial consequences for the socio-economic development of the nation, a view which they spread to the common populace. Hong Kong shared the Mainland's enthusiasm for the Olympics, even to the point that many Hong Kongese identified themselves as Chinese during the time of the Olympics, although in many cases, their 'newly-found' Chinese identity eroded away after the end of the Olympics. A similar trend was prevalent in Taiwan, yet on a smaller scale, as the Taiwanese people overall held a mixed opinion on the Olympics. This can be attributed to the fact that Taiwan and China share a rocky history and relationship together, which also extends to the global sport arena, considering the fact that Taiwan has to compete under the name of Chinese Taipei. Taiwan was not even included in the torch relay route due to a disagreement. In some parts of China, such as Tibet and Xinjiang, people were anything but enthusiastic about the Olympics. In fact, the ethnic minorities living in both autonomous regions took it as an opportunity to make their grievances known to a global audience, intending to raise attention for their oppression and suffering under Chinese rule. Due to the violent nature of some of their actions, such as the 14 March protests and the various terror attacks carried out

³⁷⁵ Qiaolei Jiang, "Celebrity Athletes, Soft Power and National Identity: Hong Kong Newspaper Coverage of the Olympic Champions of Beijing 2008 and London 2012," *Mass Communication and Society* 16, no. 6 (2013): 894-95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2013.789528>.

by extremist Uyghurs, they were considered as a serious threat in the run-up to the Olympics. When it comes to media coverage, the Chinese media wrote and broadcasted a plethora of positive coverage about the Beijing Olympics, especially since many large Chinese media platforms are owned by the government. The government made large investments, so that live broadcasts and coverage were available to virtually every Chinese citizen, including the people of Hong Kong. Besides raising nationwide enthusiasm among the population for the Olympics, it was also important to project a positive image of the 'real' China to a global audience, which was done in response to critical foreign media outlets. In contrast to Chinese media, Hong Kongese newspapers were more divisive in their tone and coverage regarding the Beijing Olympics. Pro-China newspapers seemed to be more generous in their praises of Chinese athletes, comparable to state-owned media from the Mainland. On the other hand, pro-Hong Kong newspapers were more reserved and paid less attention to star athletes from the Mainland.

Chapter 5: Foreign responses to the 2008 Beijing Olympics

This chapter will elaborate on the fourth and final sub question of this thesis, namely *'How was the foreign reception to the Olympic Games?'* This chapter is essentially a counterpart to the previous chapter, as the focus will now be on foreign perspectives, rather than domestic opinions. Similarly to the previous chapter, foreign public opinion, as well as the viewpoints taken by foreign governments and media outlets will play a central role. Additionally, the statements and publications made by human rights organizations will also be highlighted. Domestic opinions can be shaped by foreign ones, especially since negative publicity via human rights organizations and foreign press can cause backlash and defensiveness among the populace of the victimized country in question. In return, it can evoke a sense of national consciousness, thus boosting nationalism and national unity.

5.1. Responses from foreign governments and the IOC

From the moment that it was announced that Beijing would host the 2008 Olympic Summer Games, foreign reception has been mixed. The then-American president, George Bush stated that although he believes that the Olympics should be regarded as an international sporting event and thus should not be politicized too much, China should still take the opportunity to showcase itself as a modern and progressive nation.³⁷⁶ European reactions were also divisive. For example, the German Interior Minister, Otto Schilly, argued that hosting the Olympics would actually be beneficial for China, in the sense that it could improve the lacking democratic values in the country.³⁷⁷ Francois Loncle, the head of the French parliament's foreign affairs committee, was much more critical of the IOC's decision to award the 2008 Summer Olympics to China: "The decision by the IOC goes towards justifying a repressive political system that each 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."³⁷⁸

From 2007 on, the international pressure on China begin to increase considerably. The main catalyst for the increased international scrutiny was China's relationship with the Sudanese government. In Sudan, there have been numerous ethnic tensions to this day, with the Darfur Genocide being the lowest point. The Darfur Genocide entails the systematic mass killing of ethnic Darfuri people by Islamic militant groups affiliated with the government in Khartoum.³⁷⁹ China has been accused of deliberately supplying weapons to the Sudanese government, and thus by proxy the groups that are mainly responsible for the genocide.³⁸⁰ Additionally, China has been accused of undermining efforts by the United Nations to deploy troops and commence peacekeeping operations, as they would interfere with China's own relationships and interests in Sudan.³⁸¹ Although the Chinese government eventually

³⁷⁶ Staff and wire reports, "Mixed Reaction to Beijing 2008 Win," CNN, July 14, 2001, <https://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/14/beijing.olympics/index.html>.

³⁷⁷ Staff and wire reports, "Mixed Reaction to Beijing 2008 Win," <https://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/14/beijing.olympics/index.html>

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Hans Bonde, "Sport, the Olympics and Politics: European Responses to Beijing 2008," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 26, no. 10 (2009): 1562, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523360903057567>.

³⁸⁰ Eric Reeves, "On Darfur, China and the 2008 Olympic Games," Sudan Tribune, February 10, 2007, <https://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article20210>.

³⁸¹ Reeves, "On Darfur," <https://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article20210>.

complied and sent their own peacekeeping troops, the country's international image was already severely tarnished. The Beijing Olympics came to be referred to as the 'Genocide Olympics in various international circles.³⁸² Famous celebrities, such as Mia Farrow and Steven Spielberg, respectively called for a boycott of the Beijing Olympics and withdrew from their supportive artistic role, as they criticized the Chinese government's handling of the situation in Darfur and urged them to do more to stop the crimes against humanity that were taking place in the African nation.³⁸³

Soon after, various international political leaders spoke out against China and the upcoming Olympic Games. Two European heads of state, namely the Polish Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, and the Czech President, Vaclav Klaus, announced that they would boycott the Beijing Olympics.³⁸⁴ Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany, stated that she would not attend the Olympic opening ceremony.³⁸⁵ Chinese human rights violations, and by extension the then-upcoming Beijing Olympics, were also a pressing issue on the American political agenda. Many American lawmakers expressed their concerns about not only the situation in Sudan, Xinjiang and Tibet, but also other domestic cases of human rights violations.³⁸⁶ This has led to numerous court hearings, as well as the publication of an official government report made by the Federal Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.³⁸⁷ In the wake of the problematic events in both Sudan and Tibet, the notions of excitement and goodwill towards the Olympics also eroded, with massive anti-China/Olympics and pro-Tibet demonstrations taking place in numerous countries, with the largest demonstrations taking place in England (see figure 13), India and Japan.³⁸⁸ Numerous smaller demonstrations continued to be held until the very end of the Beijing Olympics. Even though former President Bush stated back in 2001 that the Olympics should be free from politics, the Beijing Olympics can be considered as perhaps the most heavily politicized sport event in recent history.

³⁸² Nicholas Kristof, "Opinion | China's Genocide Olympics," *The New York Times*, January 24, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/24/opinion/24kristof.html>.

³⁸³ F. Hong and L. Zhouxiang, "The Politicisation of the Beijing Olympics," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 1 (2012): 157, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2012.634990>.

³⁸⁴ Hong & Zhouxiang, "The Politicisation of the Beijing Olympics," 172.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.

³⁸⁶ U.S. Government Printing Office, "the IMPACT of the 2008 OLYMPIC GAMES on HUMAN RIGHTS and the RULE of LAW in CHINA," govinfo, February 27, 2008, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-110hhrg41150/html/CHRG-110hhrg41150.htm>.

³⁸⁷ Federal Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, "2008 Human Rights Report: China (Includes, Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)," *U.S. Department of State*, February 25, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eap/119037.htm>.

³⁸⁸ F. Hong and L. Zhouxiang, "The Politicisation of the Beijing Olympics," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 1 (2012): 158, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2012.634990>.

On 13 July 2001, the International Olympic Committee announced that Beijing was elected as the host city for the 2008 Summer Olympics. The then-president of the IOC, Juan Antonio Samaranch, stated that the awarding of the games could open a new era for China.³⁸⁹ Other members were also optimistic about the future Summer Olympics, with Henry Kissinger, an auxiliary IOC-member proclaiming that the awarding of the 2008 Summer Olympics would be a very important step in the development of China's relation with the rest of the world.³⁹⁰ François Carrard, the executive director of the IOC parried the many criticisms related to China's human rights violations, stating that instead of immediately rejecting China's bid, it would be better to give China the opportunity to develop and improve itself.³⁹¹ Although the IOC often continued to receive criticism for its decision to award the Games to China, and members raised concerns over issues such as pollution and human rights, they still were sure that Beijing would host a spectacular and well-organized edition of the Summer Olympics.

Ultimately, the IOC was extremely satisfied with the 29th edition of the Olympic Summer Games. An official evaluation report that was published in the aftermath of the Games, was essentially glowing with praise. In the opening section of the report, Jacques Rogge, the president of the IOC, lauded China and Beijing as fantastic well-deserving hosts, as they used to opportunity of hosting the Olympic Games to show their outstanding organizing capabilities, openness and rich culture to the world.³⁹² By hosting the Games, China surely opened up to the world and became more integrated into the global community, leading to a better mutual understanding between China and the rest of the world. The report further states that "There can be no doubt that the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games were a resounding success. From an organizational point of view, the delivery of infrastructure, venues, operations and services for the Games was exceptional, and is testimony to the Chinese people's love of sport, as well as their hard work and passion for Olympism."³⁹³

³⁸⁹ Jere Longman, "OLYMPICS; Beijing Wins Bid for 2008 Olympic Games," *The New York Times*, July 14, 2001, sec. Sports, <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/07/14/sports/olympics-beijing-wins-bid-for-2008-olympic-games.html>.

³⁹⁰ Longman, "OLYMPICS," <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/07/14/sports/olympics-beijing-wins-bid-for-2008-olympic-games.html>.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² IOC Coordination Commission, "Final Report of the IOC Coordination Commission," *Olympics* (International Olympic Committee, 2010): 5, <https://www.olympic.org/documents/games-beijing-2008-olympic-games>.

³⁹³ IOC Coordination Commission, "Final Report," 16, <https://www.olympic.org/documents/games-beijing-2008-olympic-games>.

The report also mentions some challenges that the host nation and city had to face in the run-up to organizing the Olympics. To exemplify, there were some problems with the ticketing program, the stadia and the lack of festive atmosphere and attendance during the Olympic Games.³⁹⁴ There were often issues related to the process of acquiring tickets, even though there often were empty seats due to a lack of Chinese interest for foreign athletes.³⁹⁵ The report also briefly touches upon some of the most notorious controversies and grievances, such as the criticisms regarding the international torch relay route and China's human rights violations. However, these subjects are essentially glossed over and handwaved in the report, stating that although the IOC was saddened by the unrest and tarnished reputation of the Olympic brand, they still stressed that the torch relay still brought local and national communities together ahead of the Games.³⁹⁶ Additionally, they argued that the Games elevated international dialogue on the subject of human rights among governments, pressure groups and Non-Governmental Organizations.³⁹⁷ It was also emphasized that besides the 'incidents' surrounding the Games, the Olympic brand emerged stronger than ever from the aftermath.³⁹⁸

5.2 Activist groups and their concerns

It can be concluded from the previous sub-chapter that foreign government leaders and the International Olympic Committee found it difficult to seriously criticize China and its history of violating human rights. A few prominent politicians and state leaders boycotted the Games or announced that they would not be present at the opening ceremony, while the IOC was more concerned about issues pertaining to the organization of the Olympics, such as ticketing and attendance. However, when one considers their perspective and interests, it is understandable that they did not take extreme measures against China. To clarify, considering China's ever-rising power and status at that point in time, it would have arguably been more beneficial for various states to keep their relationship with China amicable, as to not void the

³⁹⁴ IOC Coordination Commission, "Final Report of the IOC Coordination Commission," *Olympics* (International Olympic Committee, 2010): 17, <https://www.olympic.org/documents/games-beijing-2008-olympic-games>.

³⁹⁵ IOC Coordination Commission, "Final Report," 17, <https://www.olympic.org/documents/games-beijing-2008-olympic-games>.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

possibility of future friendship and trading opportunities. Additionally, if the IOC were to take more serious actions against China, it would also lead to serious controversies and an angered China. It could have damaged the image of the IOC as well, as it would then become painstakingly clear that awarding the Olympics to the Chinese nation was a mistake in hindsight. IOC-member Hein Verbruggen stated his opinion on this issue in an interview: “[I]t would have escalated within minutes. It would have been them against us, because on certain issues they could not give in. It would have escalated and it would have been a war. And where do we go with a war? Where do we go? You have two parties there who absolutely need each other to bring this to a good end. And that was the whole maneuvering. That was the total trust. Both parties are vulnerable. They needed the Games. It was prestige: ‘We will show the world and our people’. We [the IOC] need the games because it’s the only thing we have.”³⁹⁹

When it comes to possible criticism of China and the Beijing Olympics, human rights organizations are also important actors that need to be recognized. As they do not have any real ties to a nation and function more as an independent watchdog, they are more free to direct serious criticism at any countries and actions they deem as unjust. Therefore, it is not surprising that various human organizations have been very critical of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics. According to a risk assessment report published by the IOC in 2007, 28 Non-Governmental Organizations (mainly human rights organizations), such as Free Tibet, Amnesty International and Reporters without Borders, were looking to use the then-upcoming Beijing Olympics to highlight political issues.⁴⁰⁰ Ultimately, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch were considered as the most influential and active ones.⁴⁰¹ The latter arguably set the trend of linking human rights to the Olympics by actively campaigning in 1993 against China’s failed bid for the 2000 Summer Olympics. Although their campaign increased the awareness of human rights related to the Olympics, it eventually failed in hindsight as China still was awarded the 2008 Summer Olympics.⁴⁰² Even before the city of Beijing was chosen to host the 2008 Summer Olympics, the International Federation for Human Rights condemned the IOC’s decision to award the honors of hosting the Olympics to

³⁹⁹ Susan Brownell, “Human Rights and the Beijing Olympics: Imagined Global Community and the Transnational Public Sphere1,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 63, no. 2 (2012): 323, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2012.01411.x>.

⁴⁰⁰ Brownell, “Human Rights and the Beijing Olympics,” 307.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 307.

⁴⁰² Barbara Keys, “Harnessing Human Rights to the Olympic Games: Human Rights Watch and the 1993 ‘Stop Beijing’ Campaign,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 53, no. 2 (2016): 417, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009416667791>.

China. They argued that their decision is contrary to the IOC's own Olympic Charter, pointing out that the third Fundamental Principle of that Charter, "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" is at odds with China's repeated human rights violations.⁴⁰³ In an open letter to the IOC, the FIDH claimed that the Committee has the responsibility to obtain serious guarantees and commitments from the Chinese authorities with regards to the issue of human rights and that a monitoring system should be implemented to ensure that these commitments would be kept.⁴⁰⁴

Amnesty International's Secretariat published eight 'Olympic Countdown' reports on China between 2005 and 2008, with smaller offices also publishing their own reports and questioning the national Olympic Committees in the countries they were based in.⁴⁰⁵ Additionally, a press kit titled *Legacy of the Olympics – China's Choice* was published. In this document, numerous human rights violations and related examples are discussed and elaborated upon. To exemplify, the existence of the death penalty in the Chinese judicial system, the lack of media freedom, cases of torture and forced evictions in preparation for the Olympics are all extensively touched upon.⁴⁰⁶ According to an anonymous Chinese legal scholar, around eight thousand people get executed each year.⁴⁰⁷ Various non-violent crimes, such as tax evasion and organizing prostitution can also lead to capital punishment.⁴⁰⁸ China has been branded as the world's leading jailor of journalists by numerous human rights organizations, as both national and foreign journalists face severe intimidation, harassment, reporting restriction and the possibility of ending up behind bars.⁴⁰⁹ Many international websites are censored, as are certain search terms, such as 'Tibet', Amnesty International', and 'human rights'. Human rights activists and Chinese people who have controversial religious beliefs are at an increased risk of being placed in re-education labor camps and

⁴⁰³ "2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, Capital of Human Rights Violations: The IOC Ethics Commission Must Investigate," International Federation for Human Rights, July 13, 2001, <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/china/2008-Olympic-Games-in-Beijing/2008-Olympic-Games-in-Beijing>.

⁴⁰⁴ "2008 Olympic Games in Beijing," <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/china/2008-Olympic-Games-in-Beijing/2008-Olympic-Games-in-Beijing>.

⁴⁰⁵ Susan Brownell, "Human Rights and the Beijing Olympics: Imagined Global Community and the Transnational Public Sphere1," *The British Journal of Sociology* 63, no. 2 (2012): 308, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2012.01411.x>.

⁴⁰⁶ Amnesty International, "Legacy of the Beijing Olympics - China's Choice," *Amnesty International*, October 8, 2007, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA17/043/2007/en/>.

⁴⁰⁷ Amnesty International, "Legacy of the Beijing Olympics," <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA17/043/2007/en/>.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

becoming a victim of torture under custody.⁴¹⁰ Forced sleep deprivation, electric shocks and physical beatings are listed as possible torture methods.⁴¹¹ Housing rights activist Ye Guozhu was sentenced to four years in prison for participating in a demonstration against forced evictions in Beijing.⁴¹² He has reportedly been assaulted with electro-shock batons while being in prison, as well as having been the victim of ‘disciplinary actions’ as punishment for trying to appeal to his sentence.⁴¹³ Although he was planned to be released on 26 July 2008, his freedom was delayed in order to not disturb preparations for the Olympics.⁴¹⁴ Ye Guozhu is only one of the many domestic cases of individuals being harshly persecuted by the Chinese government for their beliefs and actions in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics.

In articles published after the Beijing Olympics had concluded, both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch agree that the IOC and China have absolutely failed to live up to its promise of respectively monitoring and improving the human rights situation in China.⁴¹⁵ The violent crackdown on the demonstrations in Tibet, as well as the widespread detainment and deportations of Chinese activists are noted as two of the many irrefutable reasons for this failure.⁴¹⁶ Human Rights Watch emphasizes the fact that the official IOC evaluation report considered the Beijing Olympics as a considerable success, without any mention of human rights and press freedom violations related to the Olympics.⁴¹⁷ It is often said that history repeats itself. This saying is also relevant for China and the Olympics, as more than 180 human rights organizations have called for a boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympics, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, which is set to be held in Beijing.⁴¹⁸ Once again, the situations in Xinjiang, Tibet, Taiwan and Hong Kong have been listed as justifications for this boycott. Compared to the 2008 Olympics, the repression of the Uyghurs are now seen as the most prominent case of human rights violations, considering the

⁴¹⁰ Amnesty International, “Legacy of the Beijing Olympics - China’s Choice,” *Amnesty International*, October 8, 2007, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA17/043/2007/en/>.

⁴¹¹ Amnesty International, “Legacy of the Beijing Olympics,” <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA17/043/2007/en/>.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁵ “China: Would-Be Olympics Protester Ji Sizun Jailed,” Human Rights Watch, January 16, 2009, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/01/16/china-would-be-olympics-protester-ji-sizun-jailed>.

⁴¹⁶ “China: Would-Be Olympics Protester Ji Sizun Jailed,” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/01/16/china-would-be-olympics-protester-ji-sizun-jailed>.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁸ Helen Davidson, “Beijing 2022: 180 Human Rights Groups Call for Winter Olympics Boycott,” *The Guardian*, February 4, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/04/beijing-2022-180-human-rights-groups-call-for-winter-olympics-boycott>.

vast amount of attention by foreign governments, international media and human rights organizations. To that extent, Xinjiang has essentially become the new Tibet.

5.3. International media coverage of the 2008 Beijing Olympics

According to the Chinese government, boosting their country's international image and prestige was one of the many beneficial consequences that came with hosting a successful Summer Olympics. By hosting an unforgettable and spectacular Olympic Games, the rest of the world would be impressed with China's organizing skills and overall progress, earning the Chinese nation newly-found respect on a large scale. The media can be considered as major actors that play an important role when it comes to shaping a country's (international) image. Foreign media are especially important to that particular process, as their news stories influence the opinions of people all over the globe. While the Chinese government can exert a significant control amount over domestic media outlets and thus influence the Chinese public opinion in their favor, it is nigh impossible to do the same for foreign media companies. If international media outlets publish a large amount of negative news articles about a certain country, that country's international reputation will certainly be tarnished. After all, the public opinion of people living in other countries are influenced by their own domestic, as well as large international, media corporations. Even if China were to host a successful Olympics, any controversies and negative news stories would still be detrimental to their international reputation.

When one takes the many controversies and issues surrounding the Chinese government's policies and actions in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics into account, it should be of no surprise that foreign media outlets had many harsh and critical words about the country and their Olympics. The international media covered many issues related to the Olympics, such as various stories on forced evictions, political crackdowns in Tibet and Beijing, corruption and environmental pollution.⁴¹⁹ This also led to clashes between foreign journalists and their Chinese colleagues: While Chinese journalists accused their international colleagues of being biased and failing to show the 'real China', foreign journalists responded in turn that China was projecting an idealized and fake version of the country in preparation

⁴¹⁹ Anne-Marie Brady, "The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction," *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756420>.

for the Olympics, and that it was their goal to uncover the ‘real China’.⁴²⁰ If anything, the Chinese media, under great influence by their government, were the biased ones, and it was the international media’s duty to debunk state propaganda. However, it was difficult for them to do so, as the Chinese government had taken numerous measures and imposed various restrictions on foreign journalists. For example, shortly after the Tibetan Uprising broke out on 14 March 2008, foreign reports were forced to leave Tibet, as the region became off-limits for international press.⁴²¹ However, the tragedy of the Sichuan earthquake on 12 May 2008 marked a brief turning point regarding the international media’s coverage of China and the Olympics. Their news stories became less negative and more sympathetic in tone, as they praised the efficiency of the relief effort for the victims of the earthquake.⁴²² Yet, as the Olympics began nearing ever closer, the negative attitude in the foreign media landscape began to return. A week before the Games would begin, it was discovered that China increased digital censorship, making it impossible for foreign journalists to access certain websites or make use of certain search terms.⁴²³ This was yet another measure undertaken by the Chinese government to undermine the press’ freedom of reporting, in which they broke their official Olympic pledge that they promised to provide unrestricted internet access.⁴²⁴

Although the opening ceremony was originally praised by international media, their opinion started to turn sour as soon as it was discovered that various parts of the ceremony were not as authentic as they appeared to be. To elaborate, the fireworks shown during the ceremony were computer generated and a young singer that performed at the Olympics turned out to be lip-synching another girl’s voice.⁴²⁵ The girl who originally sang the song was removed shortly before the opening ceremony took place, because her voice did apparently not meet the standards set out by the organizers and she was considered to be ‘not cute enough’ (see figure 14).⁴²⁶ All of this fueled a widespread international media debate about how the Chinese authorities were overly concerned about their country’s image, and how

⁴²⁰ Kevin Latham, “Media, the Olympics and the Search for the ‘Real China,’” *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 29, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756421>.

⁴²¹ Latham, “Media, the Olympics,” 29.

⁴²² Yihjye Hwang, “Olympiad, a Place of Linguistic Struggle – the Discursive Constitution of ‘Human Rights’ in the 2008 Beijing Olympics,” *Sport in Society* 13, no. 5 (2010): 865, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430431003651099>.

⁴²³ David Batty, “Media Face Web Censorship at Beijing Olympics,” *the Guardian*, July 30, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/30/china.olympicgames2008>.

⁴²⁴ Batty, “Media Face Web Censorship,” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/30/china.olympicgames2008>.

⁴²⁵ Kevin Latham, “Media, the Olympics and the Search for the ‘Real China,’” *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 31, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756421>.

⁴²⁶ Jo Ling Kent, “Faking Their Way to a Perfect Olympics,” *ABC News*, August 13, 2008, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/China/story?id=5565191&page=1>.

deep the ‘Olympic fakery’ would run.⁴²⁷ The (once again) increasingly negative tendencies towards China and the Olympics led to yet another clash between international and Chinese media outlets, as the latter accused the former of not understanding their country and deliberately reporting falsehoods in order to tarnish their nation’s image.⁴²⁸

As the Olympics were underway, international media coverage focused more on the actual events and results during the Olympic competitions, which led to a diminishing of stories about more controversial subjects, such as the human rights situation or forced evictions in the Chinese capital. According to a research project by Pew Research, which analyzed various Russian, British and American media outlets, Chinese preparations and (associated) human rights issues formed 31% of the storylines related to the Olympic Games during the first week (see figure 15).⁴²⁹ However, after this first week, these storylines began dropping off, as the Olympics as a whole gained less media coverage in favor of other world news, such as the American Presidential Elections or the war between Georgia and Russia (see figure 16).⁴³⁰ The report also concludes that the Chinese and Russian press were more interested in a continued politicization of the Beijing Olympics in their news stories, with Chinese and Russian news outlets emphasizing how the Olympics would contribute to globalization and a mutual understanding and friendship on a global scale, with particular focus on China’s role therein.⁴³¹ On the other hand, Western media seemed to be more interested in reporting on competition results and star athletes.⁴³²

As discussed at the end of the previous sub-chapter, the recent portrayals of the Chinese state in foreign media stories have been anything but positive. News stories about the Uyghurs’ oppression dominate are a recurring popular subject among international media outlets, creating a similar situation to the international media landscape in 2008 pre-Olympics. Numerous large media corporations have also published articles containing calls for a boycott of the upcoming 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. As matters currently stand, it seems to be

⁴²⁷ Kevin Latham, “Media, the Olympics and the Search for the ‘Real China,’” *The China Quarterly*, no. 197 (2009): 31-32, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27756421>.

⁴²⁸ Latham, “Media, the Olympics,” 32.

⁴²⁹ Project for Excellence in Journalism, “The Media’s Olympics: How the News Media Have Covered the Games in Beijing,” *Pew Research Center* (Pew Research Center, 2008): 8, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/legacy/Olympics-REPORT-PDF.pdf>.

⁴³⁰ Project for Excellence in Journalism, “The Media’s Olympics,” 11, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/legacy/Olympics-REPORT-PDF.pdf>.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 18.

unlikely that the international media's wary and negative disposition towards China is about to change anytime soon.

5.4. Impacts on Chinese soft power

On paper, the Beijing Olympics would have been a prime opportunity for China to increase its soft power. Soft power can be defined as the power to co-opt others in acting on your preferences, essentially 'seducing' them.⁴³³ This is in contrast to hard power, which is more characterized by military power and political aggressiveness. One of the 'currencies' of soft power is to have an attractive culture, which other countries can understand and possibly identify with or be impressed by.⁴³⁴ However, as Chinese government officials as well as the official Olympic bid has stated, there was a major lack of foreign understanding of the Chinese culture.⁴³⁵ By hosting the Olympics, a global event where almost all nations of the world gather to compete under the Olympic spirit, they could establish a cross-cultural exchange on a large scale. The world could see how much China has opened up and developed on a social and economic level and that they were able to host a successful and unforgettable edition of the Olympic Games. Therefore, boosting China's soft power was one of the main reasons for hosting the Olympics.

Jonathan Grix, a renowned author on the subject of soft power, established a link between soft power and global mega events: By successfully hosting such an event, the host country can show that they are essentially a 'guardian' or 'champion' of the Olympic spirit and attractive, desirable universal sport values.⁴³⁶ By doing so, other nations become impressed by the host country's ability to champion these values and their capacity to organize such a massive event.⁴³⁷ The positive reception to the Olympics by both the International Olympic Committee and foreign governments regarding China's hosting of the

⁴³³ Paul Michael Brannagan and Richard Giulianotti, "Soft Power and Soft Disempowerment: Qatar, Global Sport and Football's 2022 World Cup Finals," *Leisure Studies* 34, no. 6 (2014): 704, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2014.964291>.

⁴³⁴ Brannagan & Giulianotti, "Soft Power and Soft Disempowerment," 704.

⁴³⁵ Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, "Official Report of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, V.1," *LA84 Foundation Digital Library* (LA84 Foundation, 2010), <https://digital.la84.org/digital/collection/p17103coll8/id/44344/rec/95>.

⁴³⁶ Jonathan Grix and Donna Lee, "Soft Power, Sports Mega-Events and Emerging States: The Lure of the Politics of Attraction," *Global Society* 27, no. 4 (2013): 527, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2013.827632>.

⁴³⁷ Grix & Lee, "Soft Power, Sports-Mega Events and Emerging States," 527.

2008 Summer Olympics signifies that China has been able to impress major international actors and thus increase their soft power in that regard. However, there is another particular currency of soft power, regarding which it is less clear whether it is related to an increase of Chinese soft power, namely (attractive) political values and policies. When organizing a mega event, including in the run-up to it, the host country receives a large amount of attention from governments, common people and media outlets across the globe. The host country can especially be under tight scrutiny if it already has a questionable international reputation. This was the case for China, with its history of human rights violations. As soon as it was announced that China would host the Olympics, politicians and human rights organizations called for boycotts.⁴³⁸

In order to draw a parallel to another similar case, the Beijing 2008 Olympics is similar to the Qatar 2022 World Cup to a certain extent. Similarly to the Beijing Olympics, human rights violations are a common criticism used against Qatar in public opinion and international media, with Qatar being criticized for their treatment of migrant workers and a lack of LGBT+ rights.⁴³⁹ With both nations organizing a global mega event with the motive to increase their prestige and influence, they also run the risk of tarnishing their reputation and attaining soft disempowerment instead. However, there is a considerable difference in both nations' ability to generate soft power, as well as the extent of their ambitions. Although Qatar also wants to show the world that they are capable of organizing a global sport event, they are more keen to outdo their regional rivals, namely the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The enmity between these countries is not only political in nature, but also extends to the sport arena, as there is an ongoing rivalry between the three countries both on and off the pitch.⁴⁴⁰ They have been making major investments in European football in order to increase their prestige and influence, with them sponsoring major football teams, or even buying them, with Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain as prominent examples.

On the other hand, China's ambitions are more global in scale, as the country was determined to show how its reforms and opening up has resulted in great social and economic

⁴³⁸ Staff and wire reports, "Mixed Reaction to Beijing 2008 Win," CNN, July 14, 2001, <https://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/14/beijing.olympics/index.html>.

⁴³⁹ "Qatar: Significant Labor and Kafala Reforms," Human Rights Watch, September 24, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/24/qatar-significant-labor-and-kafala-reforms>.

⁴⁴⁰ Declan Walsh, "Persian Gulf Standoff Starts to Thaw on the Soccer Field," *The New York Times*, December 19, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/19/world/middleeast/qatar-saudi-arabia-soccer-al-hilal.html>.

development.⁴⁴¹ China also has a unique historical context: As it has been humiliated by great Western powers and colonized by Japan in the past, as well as been scorned and excluded from the global system numerous times during the Cold War (although self-isolation and anti-Western sentiments in China contributed also played a role), the country was now ready to present itself through the world as a reformed, modern and ambitious nation. Additionally, even before the Beijing Olympics took place, China already had a larger international presence than Qatar, as Chinese cultural elements, such as food, calligraphy and traditional healing practices are widespread and well-known on a global scale, thereby increasing China's soft power through the export of (attractive) cultural elements and traditions. Although both countries saw hosting their global mega event as a prestige project, for China it was also a continuation of the country's desire to export elements of their culture and values to the rest of the world.

Regarding the notion of soft disempowerment, levels of soft disempowerment often tend to be higher before the global event takes place, while increases in soft power tend to be realized during and after the event.⁴⁴² This observation holds true for the Beijing Olympics, as international criticism directed at China peaked at certain events in the run-up to the Olympics, such as China's alleged role related to the ethnic cleansings in Darfur and their handling of the Tibetan protests in March 2008. The Opening Ceremony, which marked the beginning of the Beijing Olympics, impressed international visitors and media outlets, albeit with some reservations when it was discovered that elements of the show were faked. Since then, there have not been any major controversies during the itself, and after the event ended, China's hosting of the Olympics was highly praised.

Joseph Nye, who originally coined the term 'soft power', argues that China's soft power in the West has been traditionally undercut by unattractive political values, such as widespread corruption and a lack of democracy and human rights.⁴⁴³ He notes that the Beijing Olympics indeed had a positive impact on soft power, although that the event's potential for generating soft power was not fully realized.⁴⁴⁴ To exemplify, China did not follow up on its

⁴⁴¹ Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, "Official Report of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, V.1," *LA84 Foundation Digital Library* (LA84 Foundation, 2010), <https://digital.la84.org/digital/collection/p17103coll8/id/44344/rec/95>.

⁴⁴² Richard Giulianotti, "The Beijing 2008 Olympics: Examining the Interrelations of China, Globalization, and Soft Power," *European Review* 23, no. 2 (May 1, 2015): 286–96, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798714000684>.

⁴⁴³ Joseph Nye, "Soft Power and Beijing Olympics," Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs (Harvard Kennedy School, August 24, 2008), <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/soft-power-and-beijing-olympics>.

⁴⁴⁴ Nye, "Soft Power and Beijing Olympics," <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/soft-power-and-beijing-olympics>.

promises to allow peaceful demonstrations and unrestricted internet access.⁴⁴⁵ Nye concludes by stating that although the Olympics were a success, it takes more for China to overcome its self-imposed limits on its own soft power.⁴⁴⁶ Additionally, although China has been increasing its international influence and power since the Olympics, it remains to be seen whether the country can fully realize its potential for generating soft power, especially considering the country has been under international scrutiny for their treatment of the Uyghurs, which seriously impacts China's ability to generate soft power with the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

5.5. Conclusion

In contrast to the domestic reception towards the Beijing 2008 Olympics, foreign opinions are more apprehensive and negative in comparison. Although foreign politicians and human rights organizations already expressed their discontent about the International Olympic Committee's decision to award the Olympics to China the day after the die was cast, the year 2007 marked the beginning of an ever raging storm of criticism addressed at China, and to a lesser extent also at the IOC. China's alleged role in civil conflicts and killings in Sudan drew the ire of numerous foreign actors, with various celebrities and political leaders calling for a boycott of the Beijing Olympics. The Tibetan Uprising in March 2008 was yet another series of events that tarnished China's reputation on an international level. Many politicians, human rights organizations condemned China's treatment of the Tibetans. Foreign media outlets and human rights organizations published negative articles about China's history of violating human rights. People all around the world organized protests against China and advocated freedom and independence for Tibet, including causing disturbances during the Olympic torch relay route. The negative foreign media coverage led to clashes between the foreign media and Chinese press and nationalists, with both parties accusing each other of deliberately reporting falsehoods and trying to cover up the real China. Although the Sichuan earthquake provided a temporary reprieve from the continuous stream of negative media attention, it

⁴⁴⁵ Joseph Nye, "Soft Power and Beijing Olympics," Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs (Harvard Kennedy School, August 24, 2008), <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/soft-power-and-beijing-olympics>.

⁴⁴⁶ Nye, "Soft Power and Beijing Olympics," <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/soft-power-and-beijing-olympics>.

returned in full force during the last week before the beginning of the Beijing Olympics. China reneged on its promise to provide unfiltered internet access. The opening ceremony raised controversies as well, once it was discovered that parts of the ceremony were faked. When it comes to China's soft power, the Olympics certainly had a positive impact. Hosting the Olympics enabled cross-cultural exchange on a large scale, whereby China could make other nations more aware of Chinese traditions and culture, as well as present itself as an ambitious nation that underwent great social and economic development. However, the Olympics' potential for generating soft power was not fully realized, since international actors also became more aware of less attractive Chinese political values, such as a lack of media freedom and human rights.

As Beijing will host the 2022 Winter Olympics, China is once again the subject of foreign criticism. Human rights organizations and media outlets point towards the fact that China has still not improved its human rights situation, with its oppression of the Uyghurs as a prime example that is still dominating recent media headlines. It is safe to say that the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics was one of the most controversial and politicized sport events of all time and that the events and controversies related to it has certainly affected and shaped foreign opinions on the People's Republic of China.

Chapter 6: Final conclusions

The ultimate end goal of this master thesis is to answer the following research question: *To which extent did the hosting of the Beijing Summer Olympics strengthen or weaken Chinese nationalism and unity?* Taking the research analyses featured in this thesis into account, it can be concluded that the hosting of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics indeed had a largely positive impact on Chinese nationalism and unity. Chinese citizens were genuinely excited for the then-upcoming Olympics, as they stated that they felt proud that their country could organize such a major global sport event, and that it was undisputable proof of the economic development and progress their nation underwent for the past few decades. Additionally, they were confident that their country would host a memorable and successful Olympics; it would be an event that they could favorably look back upon and be proud of. The common theory that organizing sport events could bolster national pride and

unity held true in this particular case, as the Chinese people also ended up feeling proud and united because of their country's major successes and medal wins during the event.

These feelings of national pride even extended to the Autonomous Regions of Hong Kong and Taiwan, despite the numerous past quarrels between these regions and the Mainland. When the Beijing Olympics took place, an increased amount of people living in Hong Kong and Taiwan identified themselves as Chinese, rather than respectively Hong Kongese or Taiwanese, with an especially significant increase being apparent in Hong Kong. This can be explained by the fact that, despite the development of a separate culture and growing desire for independence in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the people of Taiwan and Hong Kong still have a shared history and share some cultural elements with the inhabitants of the Mainland. Due to this prevalent connection, it is easier for them to be proud of China's successes during the Olympics, as it feels as a victory for all Chinese people and those who possess strong ties to the Mainland.

On the other hand, the Tibetans and the Uyghurs, who arguably possess more of a shared consciousness of independence and animosity towards the government, held a much less positive opinion regarding the Olympics. In their case, they felt more alienated from the rest of China, as the repressive actions taken against the Tibetans and the Uyghurs in the run-up to the Olympics only served to deepen their resentment. The Olympics were also a prime opportunity to make their grievances known towards the rest of the world, considering the major amount of foreign media attention focused on China. This was exemplified by the Tibetan Uprising and a surge of protests and terror attacks carried out by Uyghur separatists. However, as the Tibetan and Uyghur ethnic minority groups together form a small part of the Chinese population compared to the Han Chinese majority found throughout all of China, including Taiwan and Hong Kong, it can be concluded that overall the domestic consensus regarding the Beijing Olympics was largely positive. Overall, despite national identity being a complex concept with different definitions and ways of measuring it, especially in a ethno-culturally diverse and split nation such as China, the Beijing Olympics provided a boost to the notion of Chinese nationalism. In that sense, the government's campaign to boost national pride and unity among Chinese citizens can be considered as successful as the Olympics themselves.

As the Olympics were regarded as a success in both domestic and foreign circles, the 2008 Beijing Olympics not only had a positive impact on the notions of Chinese unity and nationalism, but also positively affected China's soft power. Foreign governments and media

outlets were impressed with how China organized the Olympics and ultimately gained a better understanding of China itself as a country and its cultural values and traditions. As attaining better cross-cultural understandings were a major challenge and goal related to the Beijing Olympics, it can be concluded that the Olympics were also a success in that regard. However, it should also be noted that there are some caveats to this, as China underwent soft disempowerment during controversial events such as the Tibetan protests in the run-up to the Olympics. Nonetheless, despite the fact that China's international image became tarnished before the Olympics, the country was able to repair its reputation by hosting a successful edition of the Olympic Games, and ultimately leaving a more sweet rather than bitter taste in the mouth of foreign governments. Yet, it should also be noted that as China was a rising major power during that time, attaining an increasing amount of global power and influence with the successful Olympics as a milestone, pursuing amicable relationships with China would be more viable in the long term than relentlessly criticizing them and burning bridges.

Ultimately, with this thesis I have attempted to contribute to the academic debate on the importance of the 2008 Beijing Olympics for China, with a primary focus on Chinese national identity and unity, as it is a complex issue that is not fully highlighted and explored in other academic works related to the Olympics, which focus more exclusively on soft power and human rights for example. Although these particular aspects are certainly important when it comes to analyzing the Beijing Olympics and should not be neglected, as I have also frequently featured these in my thesis, I felt there was more room to focus on national identity and unity. Additionally, although there is extensive research on the development of Chinese unity and nationalism since the twentieth century, there has not been a specific focus on how these notions were impacted by the Beijing Olympics. On a related note, I have also tried to elaborate more on and confirm the notion that organizing global mega events would not only be beneficial to the host nation's soft power, but also contribute to a sense of national identity and unity.

Regarding the limits of my research, the fact that I cannot understand Mandarin meant that the amount of sources I could access and use is limited compared to those who can comprehend China's national language. Therefore, I have exclusively used sources in the English language, as well as directly translated sources. However, it should be noted that quotes of Chinese government officials and leaders have been directly translated to English by the authors of the sources they originally appeared in, which comes at the risk of translation errors or any nuances that might have been lost in translations. My reliance on the

aforementioned type of sources also might have led to an information disparity and bias, in the sense that most of the sources used in this thesis are written by Western authors and journalists. Due to the author's Dutch background and daily exposure to exclusively Western media and values, some of that bias might have seeped into this thesis. It is important to note that the surveys and interviews used in this thesis, which serve as the backbone of numerous arguments and analyses, all contain a limited sample size, and thus do not fully represent the opinion of every Chinese, Taiwanese, Tibetan or Hong Kongese individual.

When it comes to further research, it would be certainly interesting to keep following the developments with regard to the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, especially since international pressure on China has been increasing. Regardless of whether China were to succumb to international pressure or will still proceed to host the 2022 Winter Olympics, comparing the 2008 Beijing Olympics to the 2022 Beijing Olympics and documenting both parallels and differences would make for a compelling research topic. This would also invite for further research and documentation of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, for example in the form of a retrospective study. Nonetheless, the 2008 Beijing Olympics were not only an important and historical event for China, but also an event of global significance. Even thirteen years later, the Beijing Olympics continue to be a relevant and controversial subject.

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Visual Appendix

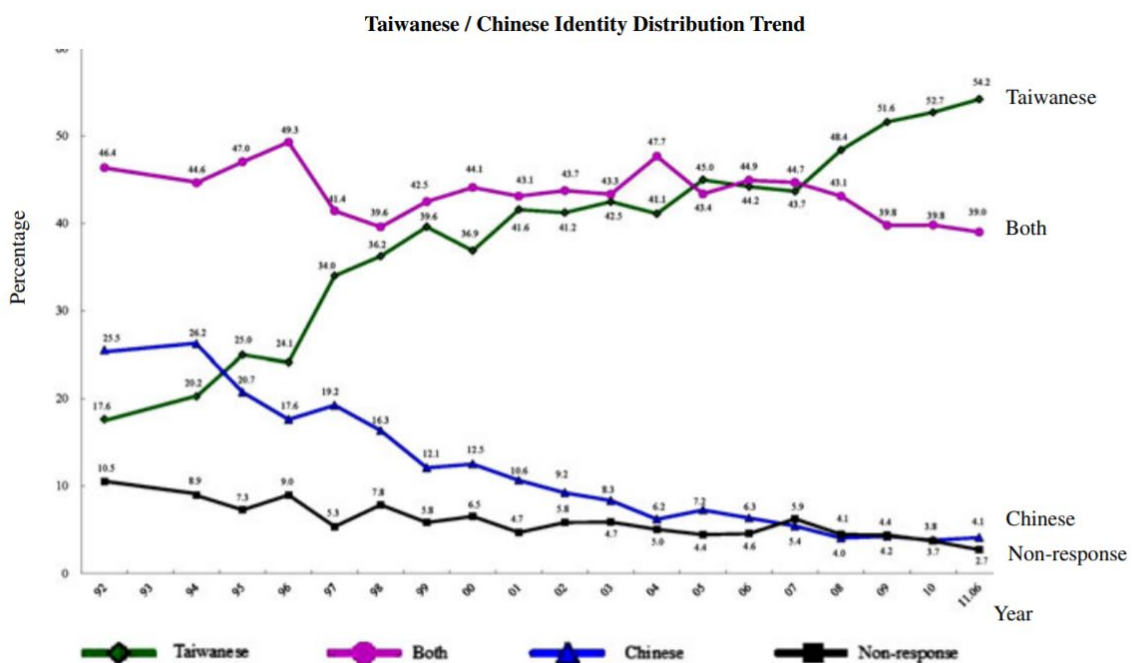


Figure 1: Election Study Center, National Cheng-Chi University, Taiwan, *Taiwanese/Chinese Identity Distribution Trend*, 2013, Springer Link, 2013, <https://link-springer.com.eur.idm.oclc.org/article/10.1007/s12140-013-9198-3/figures/1>.

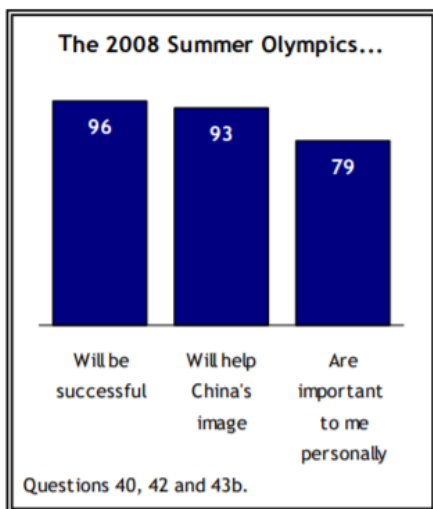


Figure 2: Pew Research, *The 2008 Summer Olympics...*, 2008, Pew Research Center, 2008, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2008/07/2008-Pew-Global-Attitudes-Report-2-July-22-2pm.pdf>.

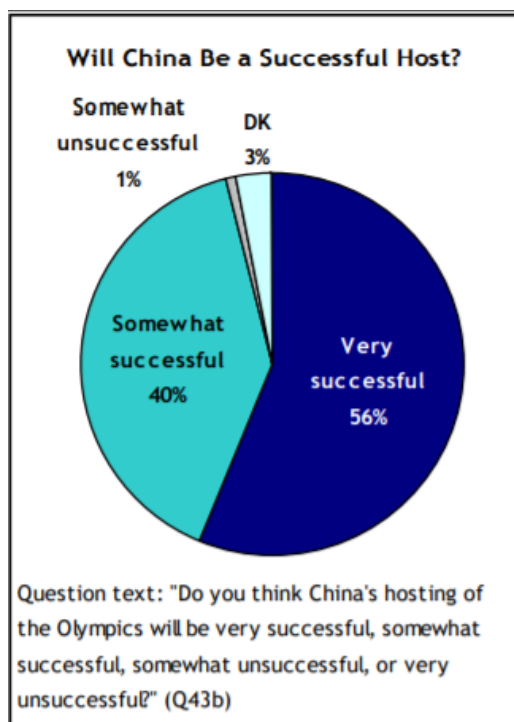


Figure 3: Pew Research, *Will China Be a Successful Host?*, 2008, Pew Research Center, 2008, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2008/07/2008-Pew-Global-Attitudes-Report-2-July-22-2pm.pdf>.

How Important Are the Olympics to You?			
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Beijing</u>	<u>Outside Beijing</u>
	%	%	%
Important	79	90	79
Not important	17	10	18
Don't know	3	1	3

Question text: "How important are the Olympics to you personally—very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?" (Q40)

Figure 4: Pew Research, *How Important Are the Olympics to You?*, 2008, *Pew Research Center*, 2008, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2008/07/2008-Pew-Global-Attitudes-Report-2-July-22-2pm.pdf>.

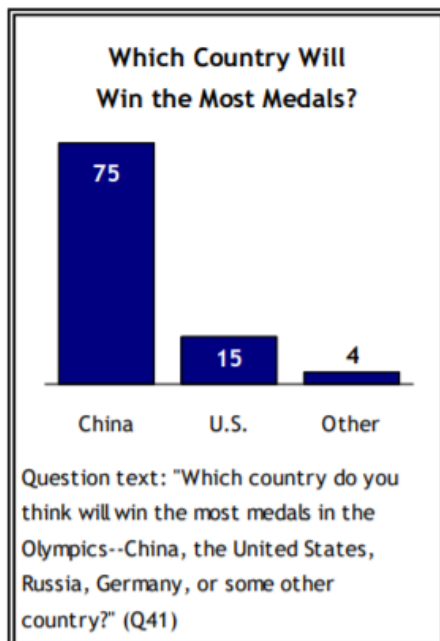


Figure 5: Pew Research, *Which Country Will Win the Most Medals?*, 2008, *Pew Research Center*, 2008, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2008/07/2008-Pew-Global-Attitudes-Report-2-July-22-2pm.pdf>.

Attention to the Olympics		
	2006	2008
	%	%
Too much	25	34
Not enough	21	18
Right amount	43	44
Don't know	11	5

Question text: "Overall, do you think we are paying too much attention to the Olympics, not enough attention, or just the right amount of attention?" (Q43)

Figure 6: Pew Research, *Attention to the Olympics, 2008*, Pew Research Center, 2008, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2008/07/2008-Pew-Global-Attitudes-Report-2-July-22-2pm.pdf>.

Table 1
Perceptions towards the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games (*n* = 1,165)

	Frequencies (%)			Mean	Standard Deviation
	Disagree ^a	Neutral	Agree ^b		
General perceptions					
I support the 2008 Olympics	3.0	0.8	96.0	6.5	0.98
Beijing should apply another mega event like the Olympics	4.0	1.8	92.5	6.3	1.16
Overall the positive impacts outweigh its negative ones	4.2	7.8	92.1	6.2	1.13
The Games are too commercialized	22.7	4.1	54.9	4.7	1.56
The Games are too politicized	32.1	16.2	46.3	4.3	1.65
Impacts					
Enhance Beijing's international identity through world media exposure.	2.4	2.4	95.5	6.3	0.99
Increase business opportunities	1.3	3.4	96.3	6.3	0.89
Improved city appearance	2.7	1.5	95.6	6.2	1.02
Give Beijing a chance to show what it is capable of doing	4.4	5.3	92.4	6.1	1.14
Increase the pride of local residents	4.5	3.9	93.2	6.1	1.16
Promote Beijing as a tourism destination	3.5	3.6	93.3	6.1	1.08
Provide locals opportunity to attend an international event	4.9	8.7	93.9	6.1	1.14
Understand different people and cultures	3.9	5.7	93.2	6.1	1.10
Increase employment opportunities	4.3	5.2	91.7	6.0	1.15
Bring the community closer	5.4	1.4	89.3	5.9	1.25
Meet new people	4.6	4.1	91.1	5.9	1.17
Higher levels of local service	4.4	2.1	91.2	5.9	1.11
Improved public facilities	4.8	7.5	90.6	5.9	1.15
Improved road condition in Beijing	7.3	1.0	88.4	5.8	1.28
Higher price levels in Beijing	25.7	2.8	64.0	4.8	1.68
Overcrowding of the use of local facilities during the Games	32.4	2.1	57.8	4.5	1.62
Inconvenience for locals due to increased traffic congestion	42.0	3.9	51.2	4.3	1.74
More noise	61.1	15.5	32.6	3.5	1.76
Damage the natural environment	69.0	2.6	24.5	3.1	1.71
Disrupt residents' peace and tranquility	72.6	0.8	22.9	3.0	1.73
Higher levels of crime in Beijing	68.5	2.8	22.2	2.9	1.77

a. "Disagree" includes 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *somewhat disagree*.

b. "Agree" includes 5 = *somewhat agree*, 6 = *agree*, 7 = *strongly agree*.

Figure 7: Yong Zhou and John Ap, *Perceptions towards the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games*, 2009, *SAGE Journals*, 2009, <https://journals-sagepub-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/0047287508328792>.



Figure 8: *In Lhasa during the Recent Riots, a Tourist Who Requested Anonymity Took This Photo of Chinese Goods Being Burned.*, 2008, *The New York Times*, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/24/world/asia/24tibet.html>.

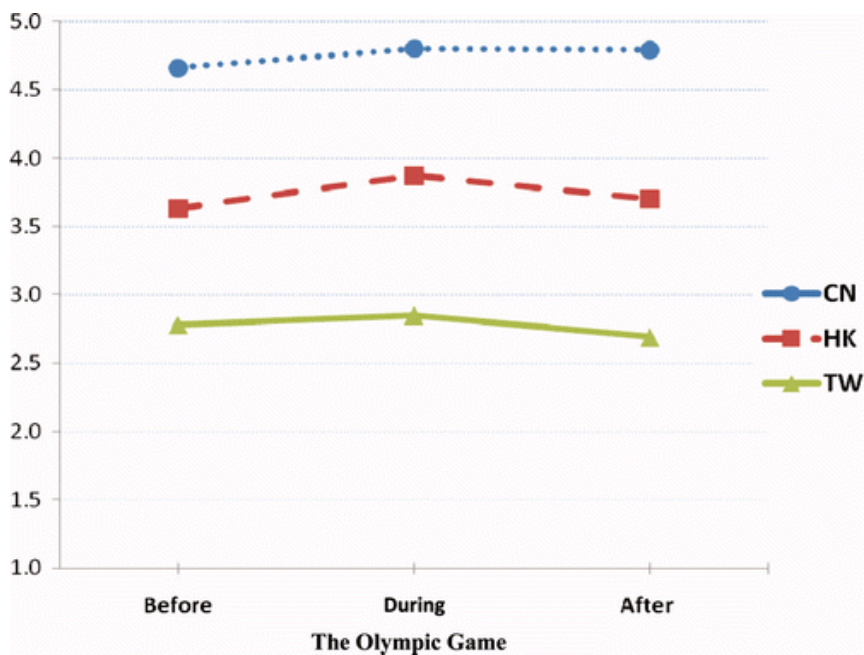


Figure 9: Lau et al., *National Identity by Time and Residential Places*, 2012, *Taylor & Francis Group*, 2012, https://www-tandfonline-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/na101/home/literatum/publisher/tandf/journals/content/fhsp20/2012/fhsp20.v029.i09/09523367.2012.692248/production/images/large/fhsp_a_692248_o_f0001g.jpg.

調查日期 Date of survey	樣本人數 Total Sample	次樣本人數 Sub-sample	香港人 Hong Kong Citizen	中國的香港人 Chinese Hong Kong Citizen	香港的中國人 Hong Kong Chinese Citizen	中國人 Chinese Citizen	其他(請列明) Other	難講/唔知道 DK/HS	合計 Total
12-20/12/2011	1016	541	37.7%	25.3%	17.8%	16.6%	0.6%	2.1%	100.0%
21-22/6/2011	520	520	43.8%	21.3%	10.3%	23.5%	0.4%	0.6%	100.0%
13-16/12/2010	1013	1013	35.5%	27.6%	13.8%	21.1%	0.4%	1.5%	100.0%
9-13/6/2010	1004	1004	25.3%	31.3%	14.8%	27.8%	0.4%	0.5%	100.0%
8-11/12/2009	1007	1007	37.6%	23.9%	13.1%	24.2%	0.2%	1.0%	100.0%
8-13/6/2009	1002	1002	24.7%	32.0%	13.3%	29.3%	0.2%	0.4%	100.0%
9-12/12/2008	1016	1016	21.8%	29.6%	13.0%	34.4%	0.5%	0.7%	100.0%
11-13/6/2008	1012	1012	18.1%	29.2%	13.3%	38.6%	0.1%	0.7%	100.0%
11-14/12/2007*	1011	1011	23.5%	31.5%	16.0%	27.2%	0.7%	1.1%	100.0%
8-12/6/2007	1016	1016	23.4%	31.8%	16.7%	26.4%	0.3%	1.4%	100.0%
6-12/12/2006*	1011	1011	22.4%	24.3%	20.1%	31.8%	0.6%	0.7%	100.0%
13-15/6/2006*	1018	1018	24.8%	25.1%	14.9%	34.6%	0.3%	0.3%	100.0%
9-14/12/2005	1017	1017	24.8%	26.5%	16.9%	30.7%	0.0%	1.1%	100.0%
6-8/6/2005	1029	1029	24.0%	21.2%	14.7%	36.4%	0.5%	3.3%	100.0%
6-9/12/2004	1007	1007	25.9%	23.1%	16.2%	31.6%	0.4%	2.8%	100.0%
7-11/6/2004	1027	1027	28.0%	21.2%	14.3%	33.0%	0.4%	3.1%	100.0%
10-14/12/2003	1059	1059	24.9%	23.4%	15.6%	32.5%	0.3%	3.3%	100.0%
13-18/6/2003	1043	1043	36.7%	19.2%	11.9%	29.0%	0.7%	2.5%	100.0%
1-4/3/2003	1035	1035	28.5%	22.3%	15.0%	32.3%	0.3%	1.6%	100.0%

Figure 10: Public Opinion Programme, The University of Hong Kong, *You Would Identify Yourself as a Hong Kong Citizen/Chinese Citizen/Hong Kong Chinese Citizen/Chinese Hong Kong Citizen*, 2011, *The University of Hong Kong*, 2011, originally retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20120531180321/http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/eidentity/poll/datatables.html>.

TABLE 1
Number of Reports on Olympic Champions

<i>Newspaper</i>	<i>No. of reports</i>	
	<i>Beijing 2008</i>	<i>London 2012</i>
<i>TKP</i>	126	75
<i>WWP</i>	111	64
<i>MP</i>	39	18
<i>Apple</i>	35	17

Note. TKP = Ta Kung Pao; WWP = Wen Wei Po; MP = Ming Pao Daily; Apple = Apple Daily.

Figure 11: Qiaolei Jiang, *Number of Reports on Olympic Champions*, 2013, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2013.789528>.

TABLE 2
Foreign Champions in the Reports

<i>Newspaper</i>	<i>Reports of foreign champions (% of the total reports)</i>	
	<i>Beijing 2008</i>	<i>London 2012</i>
<i>TKP</i>	8 (6.3%)	4 (5.3%)
<i>WWP</i>	3 (2.7%)	4 (6.3%)
<i>MP</i>	6 (15.4%)	5 (27.8%)
<i>Apple</i>	4 (11.4%)	8 (47.1%)

Note. TKP = Ta Kung Pao; WWP = Wen Wei Po; MP = Ming Pao Daily; Apple = Apple Daily.

Figure 12: Qiaolei Jiang, *Foreign Champions in the Reports*, 2013, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2013.789528>.



Figure 13: Alessia Pierdomenico, *Pro-Tibet Demonstrators Take Part in an Anti-China Protest Outside Downing Street in London April 6, 2008. Thousands of Anti-China Protesters Draped in Tibetan Flags Disrupted the Olympic Torch Relay through London on Sunday, Billed as a Journey of Harmony and Peace.*, 2008, Reuters, 2008, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-olympics-torch-china-idUSPEK6593920080407>.



Figure 14: AFP, *Lin Miaoke, Left, Is Shown during the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games on Friday. An Official Ordered Her to Lip-Synch “Ode to the Motherland” Because Seven-Year-Old Singer Yang Peiyi, Right, Wasn’t Deemed Cute Enough.*, 2008, NBC News, 2008, <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna26182056>.

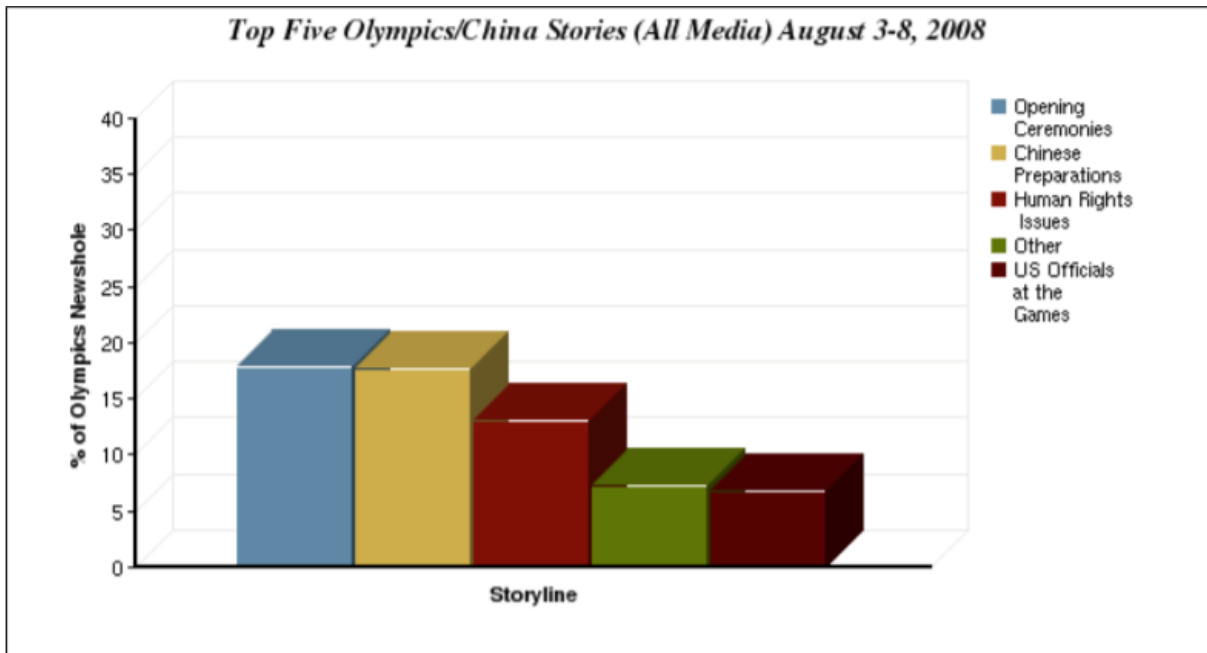


Figure 15: Pew Research, *Top Five Olympics/China Stories (All Media) August 3-8, 2008*, 2008, Pew Research Center, 2008, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/legacy/Olympics-REPORT-PDF.pdf>.

Top Stories of the Week (All Media) August 10 – 17, 2008: First Week of Games	
Top Big Stories in Media Overall	Percent of Overall Newshole
Georgia/Russia conflict (added 8/11)	25.0%
Presidential Campaign	21.0%
Olympics - 2008 in Beijing*	13.9%
John Edwards Affair	3.9%
U.S. Economy	3.1%
Shooting at Arkansas Democratic Party HQ	1.5%
Caylee Anthony, Missing Two-year Old	1.5%
Energy	1.5%
Gas/Oil prices	1.4%
Pakistan	1.4%
Russia	1.2%
Immigration	1.0%
Clark Rockefeller, Kidnapping Charges	0.9%
China*	0.9%

Figure 16: Pew Research, *Top Stories of the Week (All Media) August 10-17, 2008*, 2008, Pew Research Center, 2008, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/legacy/Olympics-REPORT-PDF.pdf>.

