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ISSUES BRIEF

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THE BEIJING 2008 OLYMPIC GAMES: CHINA IN THE LIMELIGHT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beijing's successful bid for the 2008 Olympic Games gives China a unique opportunity to signal its emergence as a leading player in the mainstream of international affairs. The Games will provide a unique opportunity to showcase to the international public, as well as to foreign governments and international business, China's technical and organisational capabilities, its cultural and social achievements, and its standing and potential as a global economic power and partner. The ongoing strong commitment to the Games by the national Government, and the rapid and efficient progress made to date by the Beijing Olympic organisers, are impressive; from a technical point of view, China's challenging Olympic project is on track. The Games will make some limited contribution to the extraordinary economic and technological development China is making, particularly in environmental protection. Similarly, the Games have the potential to make some incremental contribution to improving human rights in China. Their significance as a force for change in this area should not be overestimated, however, and the evidence is that the Olympic influence on China's human rights has so far been limited. Despite the good cooperation at the Olympic level that has developed between China and Taiwan in recent years, the hosting of the Games would not stand in the way of drastic action by China if Taiwan pursued independence beyond the limits of its tolerance. Australia's cooperative Olympic links with China, developed during Beijing's bid, add a valuable dimension to the strong and important relationship between the two countries.

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OVERVIEW

“The Olympic Games is a one-off event. The Chinese know that should they win the 2008 Bid, their society will be scrutinised by the world community for the next seven years. They want to showcase their new society.” Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew.¹

When the Olympic flame is extinguished at the Athens 2004 Games on 29 August, international attention will turn to Beijing and the Games of the XXIX Olympiad. This will bring China, and its rich and diverse culture, before the attention of the world’s public in an unprecedented way.

For China, the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games represent the icing on the cake of international recognition and acceptance. To win the right to host the Games, China and Beijing mounted a skilful bid in 1999-2001. This highlighted the strengths presented by China’s enormous population, especially its 400 million young people, its rapid economic growth and growing technological capacity, underpinned by policies of modernisation and openness, and the country’s enhanced sporting credentials. At the same time, the bid presented the major potential weakness of Beijing’s poor record in environmental protection as a strength (by including in the bid major programs and plans – existing and new – for environmental improvement) and handled the problems presented by China’s record in human rights and its difficult relationship with Taiwan pragmatically and non-controversially.

The Olympic limelight will give China a special opportunity to demonstrate to the world its technical

and organisational capabilities and its standing as a global economic power and partner, especially in conjunction with its new WTO membership. The Games will also provide an unprecedented platform for China to present to world public opinion a very positive image of Chinese sport and culture, through the ceremonies and the Torch Relay as well as the competition. The Government will also take advantage of the Games as a powerful vehicle for generating popular support and national pride within China.

The evidence since 2001 of strong national Government commitment and support to the Games, the resources being made available for developing the Olympic infrastructure, the calculated way Olympic preparations are being used to serve wider Chinese technological and economic goals, and the speed and efficiency with which the Olympic and Beijing municipal authorities are going about their work in cooperation with the International Olympic Committee, suggest that these opportunities will be successfully grasped.

The progress and application in meeting bid commitments is especially impressive when it is remembered that the international contractual obligations and operations inherent in putting on an Olympic Games – particularly the Host City Contract – are unprecedented in China, with Beijing effectively putting itself under intense international scrutiny by an external entity for the realisation of a major world project.

The Games should be seen primarily as a product rather than a driver of China’s policies of modernisation and openness. They will nevertheless make a contribution to increased economic activity and technological improvement, particularly in environmental protection, but the extent of this should not be exaggerated, as great changes are

¹ In an interview with Arnaud de Borchgrave of UPI, 11 May 2001:
<http://www.gov.sg/interviews/110501lky.htm>

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already under way in these areas. The Chinese leadership recognises that some incremental movement towards greater openness in human rights will necessarily flow from hosting the Games but this is also likely to be limited in scope. Improvements in human rights since the winning of the bid have so far been essentially formal and marginal.

The Olympic Games have in recent years provided a useful channel for cooperation – including financial cooperation and investment - between China and Taiwan, after Taiwan’s Olympic representatives publicly endorsed Beijing’s 2008 bid. China would, however, be prepared to sacrifice these links, and indeed the positive benefits of the Games themselves, in the event that Taiwan pursued independence beyond the limits of its tolerance.

The goodwill generated by Australian political and technical support for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games should reinforce the already strong and important relationship between Australia and China.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES

Despite the scandals they have endured and the cynicism they have engendered, the Olympic Games remain the most important and successful popular embodiment of internationalism yet devised.

Every four years, no matter what travails the International Olympic Committee (IOC) or the national organisers may have experienced in their preparations – the Athens Organising Committee’s frantic race against time to complete the venues is just the latest example – the performances of the world’s best athletes attract and fascinate people in all parts of the world. The universality of the Games lies at the heart of their appeal and their significance.

In the Olympics, if not the scriptures, the race more often than not does go to the swift and the battle to the strong, and that normally means the rich, powerful and best organised nations. But when the swift come from a desperately poor country like Ethiopia or the strong from one of the smallest like Tonga, the Olympic ideals of universality and inclusiveness are reaffirmed.² Some 200 countries will compete in Athens and, hopefully, the battling outsiders will win a share of the spoils.

In the mid-1980s, following the political boycotts of the 1976 Games in Montreal and particularly the 1980 Games in Moscow, the Olympic Movement found itself in a serious malaise. In the subsequent twenty years, however, a series of successful Games and the enormous growth of broadcasting and marketing rights revenue generated by them have made the IOC into a thriving international business. Whereas Los Angeles was the only serious contender for the 1984 Games, cities of the stature of New York, London, Paris, Moscow and Madrid are currently locked in an intense struggle for the 2012 Games.

The reach of television in particular has meant that the modern Olympic Games confer on the host city the intangible but prized benefit of concentrated global attention, going far beyond the sporting competition itself. A cumulative world TV audience of 25 billion, for example, is expected to tune in to the 2004 Games. This exposure gives a unique opportunity to Olympic nations and cities to showcase their attractions and their social and economic achievements to foreign governments, to the international business community and to the

² In the Sydney 2000 Games, for example, Ethiopian runners won Gold Medals in the men’s 5,000 and 10,000 metres and Marathon, and women’s 10,000 metres. In Atlanta 1996, a Tongan superheavyweight boxer won the Silver Medal.

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world public at large. This is the prize China has won for itself in 2008.

BEIJING AND THE GAMES - A TALE OF TWO BIDS

1993 – Unexpected Failure

It is important to remember that, notwithstanding the enormous international interest generated by the selection of Olympic host cities, it is only a little over a hundred people – the members of the IOC - who actually vote and decide. While some of these are outstanding administrators and former (and these days current) athletes, overall they are a mixed bunch. But all votes count equally and the ballot is secret. It was to this unlikely court that Beijing put its case in 1993 and again in 2001.

The Candidature File for Beijing’s 2008 Olympic bid, submitted to the IOC in January 2001, ends with the simple statement that “it is our sincere belief that the time is right for Beijing to celebrate the Olympic Games.”³ Why was the time not right in September 1993, when Beijing was defeated by two votes by Sydney for the 2000 Games?

The field in 1993 was not particularly strong. Of the other competitors for 2000, Manchester and Istanbul were not outstanding. Berlin should have been a more formidable competitor but by 1993 the sympathetic impact of German reunification had largely subsided. Moreover, the new German capital was badly divided on the virtues of holding the Games, and ran an error-prone campaign, which could serve as the ultimate negative model for

Olympic candidate cities. So it came down to a race between Beijing and Sydney.

Many of the elements which characterised China eight years later were valid in 1993. The economy was being rapidly modernised and opened up, there was great international business interest in engaging with China,⁴ and China’s Olympic results were on an upward graph. Beijing’s Bid also had the advantage of behind-the-scenes support from Juan Antonio Samaranch. The IOC President had a particular interest in China, having brokered the groundbreaking agreement of 23 March 1981, whereby China and Taiwan, the latter under the Olympic title of “Chinese Taipei”, were both able to participate in the Games, the first time that the two entities were simultaneously members of the same international organisation (Samaranch, with some justification, regarded this as one of his greatest contributions as IOC President).⁵

But the Tiananmen massacre was still comparatively fresh in the popular memory and a significant diplomatic problem for China in some parts of the world, even four years after the event. This was no doubt a factor in Sydney’s victory. Probably equally important at the time, however, was the greater experience and familiarity of Australia’s senior

⁴The author recalls discussing the respective Olympic claims of Sydney and Berlin with a senior German banker in October 1992 and being told that a Beijing victory would be more useful for the world.

⁵ For an interesting Chinese account of the negotiations, see the paper presented at the 7th International Postgraduate Seminar on Olympic Studies, International Olympic Academy, May-June 1999, by Dong-Guang Pei, of Tsing Hua University, Beijing: “Solution of ‘PR of China and Taiwan’ issue in the modern Olympic history. The final phase: 1971-1984.”: http://www.geocities.com/olympic_seminar7/papers/pei.htm

³ BCF 2008, Conclusion, Vol. 3: <http://en.beijing-2008.org/14/80/article211618014.shtml>

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Olympic representatives with the Olympic Movement, in comparison with China's. This had been strengthened by knowledge gained during the unsuccessful bids made by Brisbane and Melbourne for the 1992 and 1996 Games respectively. With the support of the Federal and New South Wales Governments, and the Australian diplomatic service, they ran a clever, well targeted, sports-oriented campaign, taking full advantage of the then more permissive IOC rules to show Sydney off in the best possible light, and subliminally drawing favourable comparisons for themselves vis-à-vis China on human rights and multiculturalism.

2001– Victory at the Second Attempt

The defeat of September 1993 was painful for China, made the more bitter by the fact that they had been led to believe by the IOC leadership that Beijing was going to win. The Chinese authorities and their senior Olympic representatives showed restraint and discipline in not complaining about the decision (this was noticed by the IOC members, and stood Beijing in good stead four years later). Instead, they further strengthened their Olympic credentials by performing well at the Atlanta Games, winning 50 medals, 16 of them gold, and even better at Sydney, where China finished third on the medal count, behind the United States and Russia, with a total of 59 medals, 28 of them gold.⁶ By 1998, the

⁶ A blot on China's otherwise excellent sporting reputation was the widespread suspicion of doping, particularly in women's distance running and swimming. This had the potential to hurt the Beijing Bid, especially among the younger group of current and recent athletes who were added to the IOC in 2000. Between the Atlanta and Sydney Games, China's sporting authorities took strong action on their own initiative to get on top of the problem, which appears to have been brought about by a few maverick coaches rather than a national policy, so that, by the time the vote was taken the issue had been effectively neutralised. The energetic and engaging

Chinese Government had decided to submit a second candidature, this time for the 2008 Games.

From a technical sporting viewpoint, the second Beijing bid was excellent, reflecting the expertise of such officials as He Zhenliang, IOC Member for China, Yuan Weimin, Minister of Sport and President of the Chinese Olympic Committee (COC), Tu Mingde, Secretary General of the COC, and Lou Dapeng, Vice-President of the International Amateur Athletic Association, as well as the very close involvement of the Beijing Municipal Government, headed by Mayor Liu Qi. It outlined in impressive detail the plans for 28 Olympic sports in 37 venues (22 of them new), the Olympic Village, and the Paralympic Games, with the so-called "Olympic Green" as the strategic centrepiece of the Games, on the lines of Sydney's Homebush Bay.⁷

Strengths of the 2008 Bid

A good technical bid was an essential prerequisite for Beijing's success, but of course would not guarantee it. China would have to draw on other strengths. It had many, and they were essentially political:

1. It would be a big call for the IOC to reject China twice. The country's international influence was growing rapidly and, although an increasingly

multiple Olympic and World Table Tennis champion, Deng Yaping, member of the IOC Athletes' Commission, was influential in explaining China's position to her peers. By 2004, the international focus on doping has shifted to the United States (and Australia).

⁷ *BCF* Vol 2, p.9: "The Beijing Olympic Games will be centred in the Olympic Green, located on the north end of the central axis of the city. The Olympic Green occupies an area of 1,215 hectares andwill be the precinct for the Main Stadium, the Olympic Village, the Media Village, the International Broadcasting Centre and the Main Press Centre. Venues for 15 sports will be situated here, as well as....a forest park of 760 hectares."

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successful Olympic power, it represented a last frontier for the Olympic Movement (no Games has yet taken place in South America or Africa either, but no country there has China's imposing statistics). A Beijing Games would, therefore, effectively "spread" the Olympic ideals and brand into a major new region, containing a fifth of the world's population;

2. China's 400 million young people offered the IOC the opportunity to leave, through the Games, a significant sporting legacy in a major country on the ascendant in the world;

3. China had developing country status but of a very special kind – its rapid growth rates, engagement with the global economy,⁸ and hunger for technological advance made it an even more attractive economic partner than in 1993. To point up this strength, Beijing specifically made "Hi-tech Olympics" a theme of its Bid;

4. Beijing's bid promised very strong Government engagement in such key areas as security and budgetary support. This was particularly important to the IOC; Samaranch and his colleagues valued the extensive Government involvement in the Sydney 2000 Games and had been critical of the essentially private sector management of the 1996 Atlanta Games and some consequent organisational problems. For many IOC members and officials, the positive of this strong underpinning by the Chinese political leadership would have outweighed any negative concerns about Chinese human rights policies and practices;

⁸ Completion of the negotiations for WTO accession only occurred in September 2001, two months after the IOC vote on the 2008 Host City, but had been a foregone conclusion for months if not years before this.

5. The pretension to statesmanship, which awarding the Games to Beijing represented to the more ambitious IOC members: "bringing China into the mainstream" was even more attractive in 2001 than it had been in 1993.

The environment, an issue of increasing importance to the IOC, which should have been included among the negatives, was transformed over the course of the bid process into a key positive in Beijing's favour. Not surprisingly, in view of China's status as one of the worst polluters in the international community, Beijing was placed last in this category behind Paris, Toronto, Osaka and Istanbul, at the short-listing stage for 2008. Beijing cleverly turned this flaw into a strength, by pointing to the enormous investment the city was putting into environmental improvement (\$US12.2 billion between 1998 and 2007 for the city's Sustainable Development program alone) and emphasising that preparations for the 2008 Games would significantly reinforce these developments and act as an environmental flagship for the rest of China and for other developing countries. It made "Green Olympics" (along with "Hi-tech Olympics" and "People's Olympics") one of three subsidiary themes to its over-arching slogan, "New Beijing, Great Olympics".⁹

⁹ The then Mayor of Beijing and Chairman of the Bid Committee, the charismatic Liu Qi, was a particularly effective spokesman on this theme. A very good moment in the Beijing presentation to the IOC in Moscow in July 2001 was an impressively detailed and authoritative answer to a question from the floor given by the Bid's Hong Kong-based environmental consultant, Dr Sarah Liao Sa-tung, then Managing Director of CH2M Hill Hong Kong, now Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Public Works of the Special Administrative Region. She spoke for three minutes but gave the impression that she could have gone on for three days if required. Environmental aspects were a main focus of the Australian contribution to the Bid, coordinated under the aegis of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government.

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Weaknesses of the 2008 Bid

The bid was not without its weaknesses. These were also of a primarily political character:

1. Although the Tiananmen factor had significantly attenuated by 2001, China's human rights record continued to attract international criticism and concern. In addition to traditional problems in this area, such as Tibet, the Falun Gong had emerged as a new focus of anti-Chinese protest within China and internationally. (Indeed, an Australian Olympian, who competed in the 1960s and had become an adherent of the Falun Gong, wrote to the Beijing Bid Committee in April 2001, demanding the right to practise her beliefs in 2008, were Beijing to be awarded the Games). Some Beijing-based Western journalists also highlighted the issue of press freedom in China, and questioned whether Beijing as Olympic host city would provide the requisite working conditions for the international media. However, it should also be noted that many IOC members saw the potential election of Beijing as the 2008 host city as a chance to "force" China into significant improvements to human rights, on the grounds that the intense international scrutiny and other obligations under the Host City Contract would leave China with no choice but to make those improvements.

The approach taken to these issues during the bid process appeared to reflect a high-level political decision by the Chinese leadership that a successful 2008 Olympic Games would necessarily involve some adjustments towards more openness and a less uncompromising line in the handling of human rights. This is not to suggest that any far-reaching policy departure in a liberal direction was contemplated but rather pragmatic, incremental changes, reflecting the logical consequences of

China's general process of greater economic engagement and openness.

The Beijing Bid Committee's behaviour in the human rights area was highly pragmatic and low-key: they dealt carefully, but not over-defensively, with difficult issues as they came up (such as the arrest of a Western journalist during a Three Tenors concert in Tiananmen by heavy-handed police), did not attempt to proselytise or make propaganda on human rights, avoided provocative statements and hard-line responses to questions, and generally sought opportunities to change the dialogue to areas where their bid was strong. The Beijing bid undertook to take the Olympic Torch to all 56 ethnic groups in China, including specifically Tibet, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan. It also said without qualification that "there will be no restrictions on journalists in reporting on the Olympic Games". (The Chinese authorities will no doubt seek to encourage positive reporting on wider issues from the large body of foreign media who visit China for the Games, while seeking to prevent, as far as possible, controversial subjects from being aired. Handling of the press is likely to present a major challenge to the Olympic organisers and the Chinese Government as the Games get closer).

Political pressure on Beijing in the human rights area was to some extent alleviated by the fact that Taiwan offered public endorsement of the bid at a critical time in the process.¹⁰ This removed another

¹⁰ See the statements by Huang Ta-Chou, President of the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee, and Wu Ching-Kuo, IOC Chinese Taipei Member, reported in *Taiwan Headlines* of 8 May 2001: <http://www.taiwanheadlines.gov.tw/20010508/20010508s1.html>. This followed positive remarks made about the Bid by President Chen Shui-Bian a year earlier (*Taipei Headlines* of 22 June 2000): <http://www.taiwanheadlines.gov.tw/20000622/20000622p2.html>

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potential political difficulty and provided the IOC with some reinforcement for its concept of the Games as a force for peace and constructive understanding, along the lines of the two Korean teams marching together at the Sydney Games. Taiwan seems to have been motivated by the benefits of making a friendly political gesture, in the hope that it would tend to encourage China towards restrained international behaviour, and the extensive economic opportunities that the Beijing Games might offer to the Taiwanese business community. It was also noteworthy that China and Taiwan had shown a capacity for pragmatic solutions to potential political problems at the Sydney 2000 Games, when the Chinese side, after some reservations, agreed to the participation in the Olympic Arts Festival of the outstanding Taiwan modern dance ensemble, Cloud Gate.¹¹

2. In the run-up to the IOC decision, China's relations with the United States, already difficult, were strained further by the downing of a US intelligence plane over Hainan Island, following its fatal collision with a Chinese fighter, on 1 April 2001.¹² The Chinese were very worried about the

¹¹ The essence of the agreement was that the Dance Theatre should be described as coming from Chinese Taipei, with no reference to Taiwan (the Australian Embassy provided valuable assistance to the Sydney organisers by negotiating directly with the COC). There were some indications from Taiwan that the Chinese Taipei National Paralympic Committee proposed to invite President Chen Shui-bian's wife, Mme. Wu Shu-chen, who is disabled, to be their guest at the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games. This could have raised interesting political problems as to the appropriate protocol treatment that should have been accorded to her, but in the end she did not proceed with the visit.

¹² See inter alia, *Time Asia* of 2 April 2001:

<http://www.time.com/time/asia/news/interview/0,9754,104692,00.html>

consequences of this for their bid (the Beijing Olympic authorities contemplated, for example, seeking the friendly intervention of George Bush Senior, a former Chief of the US Liaison Office in China, to persuade the US Administration to avoid polemics over the Games, but it is not clear to the author that the idea was ever implemented). In the event, despite anti-Beijing moves in the Congress, US criticism of China stopped short of official calls for the IOC to deny Beijing the 2008 Games. This probably reflected realism as much as good will; the US is an Olympic superpower in terms of sporting performance, broadcasting rights and sponsorship but its political influence is limited in the essentially Eurocentric IOC, and there is no guarantee that the US Administration could even sway the votes of the few American members, let alone achieve a wider impact. In the end, the US attitude proved to be a potential, rather than an actual, threat to the Beijing bid.

The Contest for the 2008 Games

Beijing faced stronger competition in 2001 than it had eight years earlier. Istanbul and Osaka were outsiders. Toronto, however, offered an imaginative, athlete-focused Bid on behalf of a country with a strong Olympic history, while Paris, birthplace of the founder of the Movement, Pierre de Coubertin, host of two Summer Games in 1900 and 1924, and home of one of the two official Olympic languages, represented the heart of the Olympic tradition. Olympic protocol forbids the competitor cities to indulge in polemics against each other. But Beijing's opponents took adequate opportunity to draw implicit comparisons on human rights, while both Paris and Toronto stressed the multicultural character of their cities far more than they would have done against a competitor other than Beijing.¹³

¹³ The description of France as "le pays des droits de l'homme" in the Paris 2008 Candidature File, for example, was a nice whiff of

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Beijing’s campaign, steered skilfully on a day-to-day basis by Beijing Vice-Mayor Liu Jingmin and Bid Committee Secretary General, Wang Wei, with Mayor Liu Qi as the principal public spokesman, was conscientious, methodical and pragmatic. In documentation and in direct presentations to the IOC, they highlighted the strong, “killer” arguments for their case:

- the sporting legacy that the Games would leave for China’s 1.25 billion and 400 million young people. As part of this, the Beijing Bid Committee and the Chinese Government were at pains to demonstrate that the Games had broad popular support. This is obviously true in and around Beijing and almost certainly extends further:¹⁴ the IOC’s independent polling, for example, actually found an even higher level of support for the Games in China than the figure claimed in the Candidature File (however, support for the Games in Shanghai is known to be less strong. As a compensatory gesture, the Chinese Government has offered very strong backing for Shanghai’s 2010 Expo);
- the improvement that the Games would bring to Beijing’s damaged environment and the

example this would set for the rest of China and the developing world generally;

- the reciprocal benefits the Chinese and world economies would derive from the Games and the reinforcement this would give to China’s policies of openness;
- the particular Chinese cultural impact that a Beijing Games would make internationally. The extent of this can be imagined from what the Chinese are promising for the Torch Relay, which is scheduled to take in, among other exotic places, the Silk Road, the Great Wall and the north face of Everest (known in China as Chomolangma).¹⁵ This will be a very hard act for future Host Cities to follow.

Beijing was conscientious to a fault in dealing with the IOC, including the highly influential Evaluation Commission, headed by Hein Verbruggen, President of the International Cycling Union,¹⁶ which inspected all five short-listed cities in February/March 2001 and reported back to the main body. On 21 February, President Jiang Zemin received the Commission in Zhongnanhai, to reinforce China’s official support for the Bid. Beyond such important political and protocol gestures, Evaluation

grapeshot aimed at Beijing. *PCF 2008*, Vol. 1, p. 23. For its part, Toronto merely claimed Canada to be one of the “world’s longest established parliamentary democracies, having practiced parliamentary democracy for more than two centuries” (*TCF 2008*, Vol.1, p.15), and said that “Canadians and visitors alike are free to explore every corner of Canada on their own terms.” (Vol. 3, p. 3) “Toronto is the most multicultural and multilingual city in the world.” *TCF 2008*, Vol.1, p.21.

¹⁴ The author and other Australians working for the Bid Committee had a number of encounters with ordinary Chinese, from different parts of China as well as Beijing, who were genuinely delighted to find foreigners supporting Beijing’s bid.

¹⁵ See the speech by Sun Weijia, Deputy Director of BOCOG Media and Communications Department, *BOCOG News*, 19 September 2003: <http://en.beijing-2008.org/57/55/article211615557.shtml>

¹⁶ The Evaluation Commission comprised some 20 individuals, including IOC Members, senior representatives of International Sports Federations and National Olympic Commissions, a representative of the International Paralympic Committee, and some experts. In 2001, there were three Australian members, Bob Elphinston, the Head of Sport for the Sydney Games, Robert McCullough of the International Paralympic Committee, and Simon Balderstone, a former senior manager at SOCOG, who dealt with environmental issues.

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Commission members have commented that Beijing was the best of the five candidate cities in giving quick, substantive answers to technical questions and in providing follow-up answers where initial responses lacked detail. This was important to the Lausanne-based IOC, a barely concealed concern of whose was that Beijing might prove a culturally and linguistically difficult partner to work with (Atlanta and Athens demonstrate, however, that linguistic familiarity and geographical proximity are no guarantees of an easy ride).

Beijing gave convincing promise of working closely with the IOC if it became the Olympic host city; for example, the Bid Committee took advantage of technical advice from the Evaluation Commission to escape from the potentially politically embarrassing undertaking to stage the Beach Volleyball competition in Tiananmen, into which Dr Ruben Acosta, the ambitious President of the International Volleyball Federation, had pushed it. Beijing also made a public virtue of the international assistance it had secured for its bid, to show that it was willing to organise the Games in a consultative, cooperative manner.¹⁷

Beijing's assiduous work was rewarded when the IOC Evaluation Commission reported in May 2001 that Beijing, Toronto and Paris offered "excellent bids" but made the telling judgment that a Beijing

Games would "leave a unique legacy to China and to sport."¹⁸

This sent Beijing's delegation, led by Vice-Premier Li Lanqing, to Moscow for the decisive IOC meeting in July 2001 in pole position. An error-free presentation should guarantee success. This was put together after intensive preparation and with video components made by the outstanding film-makers, Bud Greenspan, the legendary American Olympic documentarist, and Zhang Yimou, the internationally known Chinese director (maker, among other films, of *Raise the Red Lantern*). The measure of Beijing's success can be gauged from the extent of its victory, achieving the necessary majority on the second vote, with 56 votes to Toronto's 22 and Paris's 18. The competitors also acknowledged the effectiveness of Beijing's presentation. John Bitove, the head of the Toronto bid, commented: "When I saw their final presentation I got worried. They had a compelling argument, the world's biggest country should have the Games....their presentation pushed all the right buttons."¹⁹

THE ROAD TO 2008

Political Underpinning, Technical Progress, Commercial Engagement

Since the bid was won, the technical progress made by Beijing and the other 2008 Olympic cities (sailing

¹⁷ "Beijing recognises the need to consult widely and obtain technical advice from within the Olympic Movement, as has already been done with experts from Sydney, Atlanta and Barcelona in the preparation of this File. Consultation and dialogue will guide our work." BCF Vol. 3, p. 131. The bulk of the Australian contribution, for example, was coordinated on behalf of the ACT Government by Peter Phillips, a former diplomat in Beijing and experienced business consultant on China, who was able to secure the services for Beijing of some of Sydney's leading Olympic experts, including Sandy Hollway, the SOCOG Chief Executive.

¹⁸ Report of the IOC Evaluation Commission for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad in 2008, p.95.

¹⁹ "Why IOC Picks Beijing," *Xinhuanet*, Moscow, 14 July 2001: <http://genevamiissionontoun.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/premade/13643/wins.htm>. In the same interview, Bitove came close to nutshelling the principal Beijing message when he said that "when you tell the IOC that you're going to bring the Olympic Flame down the Silk Road to a billion Chinese, you're making a very powerful statement."

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will take place in Qingdao, while Olympic soccer will be played in Tianjin, Shanghai, Shenyang and Qinhuangdao)²⁰ has justified the confidence placed by the IOC in the strength of China's official commitment to the Games. The Beijing Olympic Games Organising Committee (BOCOG) was officially formed on 13 December 2001, five months after the winning of the bid. China's Olympic and sporting administrators and the Beijing Municipal Government are well represented among its leadership, as was the case with the Bid Committee. Indeed, many of its leading members transferred directly from the Bid Committee to the Organising Committee. This strong element of continuity suits both the IOC and Beijing; at the urging of the IOC, Liu Qi continued as President of BOCOG even after he was promoted to Party Secretary of Beijing in October 2002 and to membership of the Politburo of the Party and ceased to be Mayor (the present Mayor, Wang Qishan, has also been appointed to a senior position in BOCOG). Liu Jingmin, Yuan Weimin and Wang Wei also continue to occupy key posts in the Olympic project.

The Chinese leadership's commitment to the success of the Games continues to be strongly emphasised, and was, for example, reaffirmed at the highest level by President Hu Jintao when he called on IOC President Rogge in Lausanne in June 2003 during an enlarged dialogue meeting of the Group of Eight. Hu said that "the Chinese Government would do its utmost to support every work of BOCOG as usual and would further co-operate with the IOC.... with the full support of the Chinese Government,

BOCOG was implementing every preparatory work as scheduled."²¹

BOCOG has made rapid and efficient progress in developing the venues and infrastructure for the Games, particularly in comparison with the delays and problems which have occurred in Athens. Close observers of the Beijing Olympic scene hold some private concerns: for example, that speed in development of the venues may be being given priority over optimal environmental rehabilitation of some of the Olympic sites and, more surprisingly perhaps, that BOCOG and the Chinese Government have not yet satisfactorily defined the interface of their cooperation. Nevertheless, the IOC's Coordination Commission for the 2008 Games, the IOC's institution for ongoing oversight of and assistance to BOCOG, has consistently reported itself very happy with Beijing's work and there are no grounds for looking for hidden messages behind their words. For example, its chairman, Hein Verbruggen again, (in another example of the virtues seen in continuity), said in Beijing in February 2004: "The reports we have listened to are complete and detailed. We are honoured to declare that in the past two years, Beijing has been preparing for the 2008 Olympic Games in full accordance with their bidding promise to the IOC."²² For its part, BOCOG continues to consult very closely with the IOC and to draw pragmatically on international sources of Olympic and other relevant expertise.

Beijing's Olympic organisers have worked hard to ensure that the Games will bring the practical benefits for Beijing and China that were foreseen in the bid process. For example, in cooperation with

²⁰ The choice of Shenyang and Qinhuangdao as Olympic cities will assist the Hu Jintao/Wen Jiabao leadership's program to restore and reinvigorate the economy of China's Northeast.

²¹ 'Top 10 Bocog News in 2003' 30 December 2003: <http://en.beijing-2008.org/67/69/article211616967.shtml>
²² BOCOG News, 24 February 2004: <http://en.beijing-2008.org/53/74/article211617453.shtml>

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the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology and the Chinese Olympic Technology Committee, BOCOG has involved itself in a number of hi-tech projects, including the management of an “Intelligent Transport System” for Beijing, the development and marketing of electronic vehicles, the use of ecologically sound energy sources, the creation of an online multilingual information system, and the study and development of new technology to reduce sandstorms in Beijing.²³

The Beijing Games, like the Chinese economy as a whole, continue to attract major commercial interest from Western concerns, with the most recent significant announcements coming from General Electric on 25 May 2004 that it would become a world-wide (TOP) Olympic sponsor and offer specific financial support for the Chinese Olympic Committee, and from Volkswagen on 10 June of its agreement to be BOCOG’s automobile partner.

As a sign of China’s global economic status and its technological capacity, the Chinese computer firm, Lenovo, announced in March 2004 that it would become the first Chinese TOP sponsor, joining the IOC’s worldwide marketing program as the exclusive provider for computer equipment, technological support and funds to the 2006 Turin Olympic Winter Games as well as the 2008 Summer Games. No Australian company achieved this worldwide sponsorship status in 2000. China’s economic surge has yet to give birth to any famous international brands, of the kind that have emerged in Korea and, particularly, Japan; the Beijing Olympic Games may provide the stimulus for this to happen.

²³ Speech to the 7th China Beijing International Hi-tech Expo by Wang Wei, BOCOG Secretary General, 25 May, 2004: <http://en.beijing-2008.org/81/94/article211619481.shtml>

The greatest concern the IOC has had at a technical level with Beijing since the awarding of the bid was the SARS outbreak of early 2003 and the initially secretive handling of it by the Chinese and Beijing authorities. This cost Meng Xuenong, Liu Qi’s successor as Beijing Mayor, his job and is understood to have come close to damaging the BOCOG Chairman’s own career prospects. But, with the Games already awarded to Beijing, the IOC had little option but to add its private voice to those urging China to deal with the issue expeditiously and transparently, while publicly offering support and good wishes. (The SARS outbreak graphically illustrates the role that luck and timing play in the Olympic Games as in other big events: had it occurred in March 1999 or 2000 rather than 2003, it would have seriously damaged Beijing’s and Toronto’s bids and probably handed the 2008 Games to Paris.)²⁴

It is noteworthy that the Beijing organisers recognise that, even for China, the Olympic Games represent a large, complex, and risky challenge. They are approaching it with modesty and a lack of complacency. And the very strong indications are that, whatever may happen to the Chinese economy over the forthcoming period,²⁵ the combination of strong central Government underpinning, intense local and overseas commercial involvement, and committed, well organised work by BOCOG and the Beijing Municipal Government, drawing where necessary on international expertise, should ensure that the Olympic project is not derailed.

²⁴ Equally, had the Palestinian intifada begun a few weeks before it did, rather than in late September 2000, three days before the Closing Ceremony of the Sydney Games, it would have cast a large security shadow and damaged the warm atmosphere of the 2000 Games.

²⁵ See for example Andy Xie’s predictions of a hard landing in MSCE March-May 2004.

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Potential Political Problems

With four years to go to the 2008 Games, the technical aspects of Beijing's Olympic project are in excellent shape. If problems are to impinge, they are most likely to come from the political issues which complicated the bid.

a) Human Rights

An explicit element in the IOC's decision to award the 2008 Games to Beijing, particularly after the vote, was that it would have an ameliorating influence on human rights in China. For example, the then IOC Director General, Francois Carrard, said on 13 July, "we are totally aware at the IOC there is one issue at the table, and that is human rights... Human rights is a very serious issue in the entire world. ... it is not up to the IOC to interfere in this issue. But we are taking the bet that seven years from now, we sincerely and dearly hope we will see many changes in China."²⁶

How good is this bet?

It should be acknowledged that official policies are leading to improving living standards for many millions of China's urban population. This is a major achievement, which the Government sees as an important aspect of human rights. The 2008 Olympic Games are a part of the process of increased openness and modernisation driving this improvement and, as such, are likely to make some incremental contribution to improving human rights in China. But their significance as a force for change should not be overestimated and the evidence is that their influence has so far been limited.

²⁶ ESPN *Olympic Reports* 14 July 2001: <http://espn.go.com/oly/news/2001/0713/1225704.html>.

A sticking point in the human rights equation in China is that the Government has still made no statement of regret for the Tiananmen incidents of June 1989. Indeed, in May this year, in the run-up to the fifteenth anniversary of the massacre, it was made clear that such a gesture is out of the question in current circumstances.²⁷ Without some compromise by the Chinese Government to its critics over Tiananmen, the human rights situation in China is unlikely to improve in any fundamental way. In this connection, there are reports that Zhao Ziyang, whose career was destroyed because of his unwillingness to use violence against the Tiananmen protesters, is in very bad health and may be near death. Some positive re-evaluation of Zhao in official obituaries may be the nearest we will get to reconciliation before 2008, at least while personalities like Jiang Zemin and Li Peng are still around.

It must be said that the evidence to date suggests that any improvements in other areas of human rights, since Beijing won the Olympic bid, have been marginal. The State Department's Human Rights report on China for 2003, for example, presents a fairly bleak picture noting, inter alia, no concessions on free speech, no opportunity for the legitimate expression of dissent, frequent official interference in the judicial process, and a particularly repressive line against China's Muslim minority and the Uighur people especially (the "war on terror" provides a convenient banner for this).

The National People's Congress in March 2004 took a decision to adopt an amendment to the Chinese Constitution, which adds the words "the state recognises and protects human rights." This could

²⁷ See reports in HRIC for May and June 2004 on the rejection of representations of the Tiananmen mothers.

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not have occurred without careful consideration at the highest level of leadership, and has been hailed within China as “a milestone for the development of China's human rights” by the China Foundation for Human Rights.²⁸ Predictably, international observers like Amnesty International have been much more reserved, welcoming the announcement but cautioning that this step must be backed up by legal and institutional reforms if the amendment is to have any practical effect in protecting human rights²⁹ This public but largely symbolic step fits the framework of pragmatic, incremental change in this area, referred to above. It will give Chinese authorities a formal platform from which to defend their policies internationally, including in the Olympic context, but do nothing, for example, to inhibit them from continuing to hit hard adherents of the Falun Gong movement, who are seen as a threat to the system. The State Department notes that there were very few manifestations of Falun Gong protest in Tiananmen in 2003 and indeed that sustained repression had effectively put an end to this by the end of 2001.

After the Athens Games are over, the switching of the Olympic focus to Beijing will give renewed opportunities for the Falun Gong, or other individuals and groups opposed to the system, to engage in embarrassing demonstrations against the Chinese Government, particularly in the three months from the arrival of the Torch Relay in China to the Opening Ceremony itself on 8 August 2008,

²⁸ Statement to *China.org.cn* of 16 March 2004 by Yang Zhengquan, standing vice president of the China Foundation for Human Rights Development and vice president of the China Society for Human Rights Studies:

<http://www1.china.org.cn/english/2004/Mar/90440.htm>

²⁹ Amnesty International Press Release of 15 March 2004:

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA170112004?open&of=ENG-CHN>

when there will be many representatives of the international media present. This will require a difficult balance of firm hand and fine political judgment in fashioning a policy at the top, with considerable scope for over-reaction by the security forces at street level; there is the capacity in China for extraordinary sophistication and extraordinary crudeness.

b) Tibet and Xinjiang

The passage of the Torch Relay through Tibet (and also the Muslim minority territories) will also help to put China's human rights policies under the spotlight. The human rights situation in Tibetan areas of China remains poor, but some improvements have taken place in the past two years. High level visits to China, including Tibet and Tibetan areas outside the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), by senior representatives of the Dalai Lama took place in 2002 and again in 2003. As the State Department notes, these visits included talks with Chinese officials and were the first formal contacts between the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Government since 1993. Additionally, the Chinese authorities have provided reporters and foreign officials with somewhat greater access to the TAR.

Despite these improvements, repression inside Tibet continues, while the Chinese Government maintains its polemics against the Dalai Lama's international contacts. He, however, continues to speak optimistically about the prospects for Tibetans inside China and about relations with the Chinese Government. In the best case, it seems possible that Tibet's role in the 2008 Olympic Games, which will take place with considerable international publicity, may provide some basis for a further marginal improvement in the human rights situation of Tibetans in China. Whether this turns out to be the

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case or not, it does not seem to be in the interests of either the Dalai Lama and his adherents or of the Chinese Government to permit the situation in Tibet to cast a shadow over the Games.

The promise to take the Torch down the Silk Road and to each of China's ethnic minorities also has the potential to draw international attention to the less salient but difficult human rights situation of Xinjiang's Muslim population, particularly the Uighurs, the largest ethnic group in the region. Here also, there are problems associated with ethnic, religious and cultural identity, underdevelopment, and major immigration by Han Chinese. Unlike Tibet, however, there is no clear external political structure to defend the interests of the inhabitants of the area and disseminate information on their situation, while the threat of separatist terrorism is a further distinguishing fact.³⁰

In the Olympic context, some token gestures to local ethnicity can be expected – for example, the official press release announcing the launch of the Beijing 2008 Olympic emblem made the point that the facsimile presented to the IOC was “carved out of a whole piece of precious jade from Northwest China's Xinjiang”.³¹ The Chinese authorities are likely, however, to act ruthlessly to avoid the

possibility of political embarrassment while the Olympic Torch progresses through this section of the Silk Road.

Having awarded the Games to Beijing, in a bidding process in which human rights played an important role, the IOC will take a continuing interest in the issue. To serious IOC leaders, like Rogge, this will reflect more than lip service and the “pretension to statesmanship” referred to above. They have put the Olympic image in the hands of China and will not wish to see it tarnished. As the authority to which BOCOG is answerable, they will have some limited room for influence but it should not be overstated. The IOC will have the capacity to speak behind the scenes on human rights and will have the option of exerting public pressure on China as a last resort. This, however, is likely to be used, with great reluctance, if at all. The IOC's highest priorities are technical – they will be primarily interested in China's performance in delivering the Games. And it is hardly to be expected that this international body will be more rigorous in holding China to account on human rights than the majority of China's Western trading partners.

c) Taiwan

A crisis between China and Taiwan, provoked by moves by the Taiwanese authorities towards independence, represents the most serious potential threat to the Olympic Games in 2008. As discussed above, it suited both Beijing and Taipei during the Bid process to cooperate at an Olympic level. Olympic cooperation between the two sides has continued in the three years since Beijing's victory; indicated by the presence of Wu Ching-Kuo, of Chinese Taipei, as one of 15 IOC members on the Coordination Commission for the 2008 Games. This appointment would only have been made by IOC President Jacques Rogge with China's

³⁰ Amnesty International has published an extensive report on the human rights situation of the Uighurs in July 2004, see <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA170212004>, while Louisa Lim's BBC report of 19 December 2003 gives a good picture of their social plight: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3330803.stm> The Council of Foreign Relations 2004 paper, “Terrorism: Questions and Answers”, provides useful information on the East Turkestan Independence Movement and its possible role in international terrorism and its links with al-Qaeda: <http://cfrterrorism.org/groups/etim.html>

³¹ BOCOG Press Release of 3 August 2003: http://www.beijing-2008.org/olympic_new/english/news/20030804_01.html

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approval.³² It is clear, however, that this practical Olympic relationship with Taiwan is a lower priority for China in comparison with its fundamental opposition to Taiwanese independence, and what it sees as the dangerous stance of President Chen Shui-Bian. Indeed, less than a month after Beijing had won the right to host the 2008 Games, the then Chinese Minister of Defence, Chi Haotian, used the occasion of the 74th anniversary of the PLA on 1 August 2001 to repeat the long-standing threat to use force against Taiwan if it sought independence.³³

After Chen broached the idea of combining a referendum on Taiwanese sovereignty with the March 2004 Presidential election, this threat has intensified to include a specific expression of willingness by China to pay an Olympic price for military action against Taiwan. For example, in December 2003, Major General Peng Guangqian, of the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences, listed boycotts of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, along with decreasing foreign investment, worsening foreign relations, economic recession, and "necessary" casualties of the PLA, as "bearable prices" for preventing Taiwanese independence.³⁴ When Chinese representatives speak in these terms, they should be taken at their word: the hosting of

the 2008 Games will not stand in the way of drastic action by China if it sees what it regards as its fundamental right of sovereignty over Taiwan threatened.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to make a judgment on the likely development of relations across the Taiwan Strait between now and 2008. But it is worth noting that this is an issue in which all countries, particularly those in the Asia Pacific region, have a vital interest. Given what is at stake, it is fortunate that, in comparison with the isolation in which it found itself a little over a generation ago, China now enjoys an unprecedentedly favourable diplomatic position, globally and regionally. Because of its great economic growth, it is seen as a major force for prosperity in East and Southeast Asia; it is acknowledged to have an essential diplomatic role to play in the North Korean nuclear issue; it has substantially dissipated suspicions of its behaviour in ASEAN; as well, China is an important partner to Russia, is courted by the major Western Europeans, and, since 11 September 2001, in one of the few positive results of those tragic events, has developed a stable relationship with the United States, Taiwan's principal backer.³⁵

In a major speech in Singapore on 4 June this year, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong set out the China/Taiwan issue in very striking terms:

³² The IOC members from Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand are also on the Commission. Chinese members are not eligible.

³³ *Taiwan Headlines*, 2 August 2001:

<http://www.taiwanheadlines.gov.tw/20010802/20010802p6.html>

³⁴ *People's Daily* of 3 December 2003. In June 2004, Major General Peng participated in a week-long series of prime-time interviews on the Hong Kong based, pro-China Phoenix Television Network, on issues related to possible military conflicts between mainland China and Taiwan and America's role. The interviews targetted audiences in Taiwan, as well as Hong Kong and China. They were timed to air the PLA's views and analysis one month after Chen's inauguration, with the aim of influencing Taiwanese public opinion on the independence issue.

³⁵ Elizabeth Economy, the Director of Asian Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, has argued recently that election pressures in the US, including the soaring trade deficit of \$120 billion, are likely to heat up debate over China policy. She argues persuasively for the Bush Administration to stay the course of engagement. *Foreign Affairs* May/June 2004: <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20040501faessay83309/elizabeth-economy/don-t-break-the-engagement.html>

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Independence for Taiwan is a non-starter. No Asian, and I believe, no European government, would recognise Taiwan's independence. To do so would earn China's permanent enmity. And China is the economic story of this century. No Chinese leadership can lose Taiwan and still survive. If Taiwan pushes beyond a certain red line, the Chinese leaders must respond or be rejected by their people. The result will be war and a permanent rise in Chinese nationalism and hostility.

Goh went on to say that "the US has no reasons to open another front with China over Taiwan, given its strategic priorities in Iraq, the Middle East and the global fight against terrorism."³⁶

These considerations suggest that there will be a broad international consensus in favour of restraint on the political issues between China and Taiwan in the run-up to the Beijing Olympic Games, and that, so long as this holds, the Games may provide a useful channel of cooperation between China and its "renegade province". The China-Taiwan relationship is by no means predictable, however, and even the Olympic channel is not clear of potential reefs; the negotiations on the passage of the Torch Relay through Taiwan, for example, seem likely to prove an extremely complex and challenging exercise in sporting diplomacy.³⁷

³⁶ Keynote address to the Third International Institute of Strategic Studies Asia Security Conference, Singapore Government Press Release of 4 June 2003:

<http://app.sprinter.gov.sg/data/pr/2004060402.htm>

³⁷ In the immediate aftermath of Beijing's success, Cheng Chih-fu, vice chairman of the RoC's National Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, set the scene for this when he said that as long as "the principles of equality and mutual benefits, as well as national dignity were upheld, [Taiwan] would be willing to accept [Beijing's offer]," to let the torch pass through Taiwan (*Taiwan Headlines*, 16

CONCLUSION

Significance of the Beijing Games for China and the Asian Region

Since the introduction of the Deng Xiaoping reforms, China has gone a very long way down the path of openness to the world and international enmeshment. The 2008 Olympic Games will add a major popular element to this process. Once the Athens Games are over and the focus shifts sharply to Beijing, the city's Olympic preparations and, overwhelmingly, the event itself, will bring China, and its rich and diverse culture, before the attention of the world's public in an unprecedented way.

Other countries have hosted the Olympic Games with a view to drawing international attention to their domestic progress and their global credentials. These include China's major East Asian neighbours: the Tokyo Games in 1964 were important in underlining Japan's post-war status as a member of the world community and major trading nation; Seoul 1988 successfully marked the ROK's emergence as a global trader, a regional power, and an incipient democracy (as well as discomfiting the DPRK). The Soviet Government saw the Moscow 1980 Games as marking the USSR's status as a co-equal superpower with the United States (in fact, hindsight tells us that the invasion of Afghanistan, which led to the partial boycott of those Games, had

July 2001):

<http://www.taiwanheadlines.gov.tw/20010716/20010716p2.html>

It will be interesting to see, for example, how Taiwan reacts to demands that Taiwanese national flags should be banned during this event, as they are during Olympic Games.

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already set in motion the forces of dissolution of the Soviet empire).³⁸

For the Chinese Communist Party and Government, the Beijing 2008 Games will represent the most visible public recognition of China's emergence as a leading player in the mainstream of international affairs. For China's leaders, and for many millions of Chinese people in and outside China, the Games will be a symbolic and very satisfying culmination of China's historical struggle for recognition as a first-class power.

The leadership will also see the Games and the pride taken in them by ordinary Chinese as a valuable instrument for enhancing its own popularity. The large-scale public celebration in Beijing on 13 July 2001, to mark the city's Olympic victory, presided over by President Jiang Zemin and involving a number of other senior political leaders including Premier Zhu Rongji and then Vice-President Hu Jintao, was officially organised but was also a powerful expression of genuine spontaneous enthusiasm. During the bid process, an impressive number of community initiatives were launched in support of the bid. These will no doubt continue and expand as the Games approach and, have the potential, for example, in areas such as the environment, to bring lasting benefits. (The authorities will want to ensure that such initiatives are consonant with official goals and do not develop too much of a life of their own).

For China's Asian neighbours, the 2008 Games will reinforce the standing China has achieved as a consequence of its role as the dynamo of economic growth in the region. Taking place a little over a

decade since the Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s, the Games will serve to remind the region of how far it has recovered from those difficult days and the extent to which China has led this recovery. By August 2008, all "three" of the ASEAN plus Three countries will have hosted an Olympic Summer Games. For each of them, the Games will be seen as landmark events, none more so than for Beijing, whose steep and rapid climb towards prosperity and international influence is likely to be sustained into the future, having already travelled a great distance.

Significance for Australia

Beijing's Games offer further opportunities for Australia to build on its close and increasingly important relationship with China. Both sides quickly put the bruises of the tight struggle for the 2000 Games behind them and, in the event, no country was more supportive of Beijing's 2008 bid than Australia. The Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, and the then Leader of the Opposition, Kim Beazley, publicly came out for Beijing in the week before the vote in Moscow. At the Olympic level, John Coates, the President of the Australian Olympic Committee, publicly supported Beijing, and there is reason to believe that the three Australian IOC members then eligible to vote, Susie O'Neill, Phil Coles and Kevan Gosper, cast their (secret) ballots the same way, while Sandy Hollway was the most senior of a number of former SOCOG staff, who worked openly for Beijing's victory, under the umbrella of the Canberra-Beijing sister city relationship.

This support, combined with Australia's Olympic expertise as a recent and successful host country, has provided a good basis for Australian governments and companies to make a concentrated effort to pursue commercial opportunities associated with the Games. This effort is paying off. Australian

³⁸ By contrast, Barcelona 1992 and Atlanta 1996, with differing degrees of success, drew attention to the regional importance of those cities within their respective countries.

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companies are already providing a wide range of services to the Beijing Organising Committee and there are very good prospects that this Olympic cooperation will expand in the four years left to the Opening Ceremony in August 2008.

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