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**To Play or Not to Play: A Historic Overview of the Olympic Movement
in China From 1894 to 1984**

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in China From 1894 to 1984**

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Abstract

To Play or Not to Play: A Historic Overview of the Olympic Movement in China From 1894 to 1984

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This report looks at China's involvement in the Olympic Movement from 1894-1984, during which the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and China's desire to build a strong national state identity coincided with the revival of the modern Olympic Games. As Western sports were introduced to China at the turn of the 20th century, they were regarded as a way to cultivate military spirits among the Chinese citizens thus strengthening the entire nation. Despite a generally low level of athletic performance and great economic hardship amid foreign invasions during this time, the Nationalist government, Kuomintang, sent a one-man team to the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics for the first time. Although no medal was won that year, the political impact made by participation was felt domestically in China and overseas.

Subsequently, the opportunities to take part in the Olympic Games were regarded as a way to legitimize China as a national state. This became especially true after the

establishment of the PRC in 1949, after which the previously founded government Kuomintang moved to Taiwan, taking with it the national sports governing body, the CNAAF. As both governments in Beijing and Taipei claimed themselves to be the only legal government representing the entire country of China, another fight for the exclusive right to represent sports in China started in the IOC between the PRC and ROC delegations. IOC's apolitical position regarding the "two Chinas" issue complicated the matter and even forced the PRC to withdraw from the Olympic Movement in 1958.

With China's eventual return to the IOC in 1979, it boycotted the first available Olympic Games in 1980 in Moscow, at the lead of its new ally, the United States. Four years later, China sent a delegation of 215 athletes to the 1984 Los Angeles Games, marking a new era that sees China taking part in all the following Olympic Games. Reasons behind China's choice of Games between 1980 and 1984 are discussed. Furthermore, whether China participated in certain Olympic Games, it has demonstrated its desire to gain political advance through participation and non-participation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On a hot summer night on July 13th, 2001, hundreds of citizens in Beijing gathered outside of the China Millennium, in front of a projection screen, eagerly waiting for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to announce the host of the 2008 Olympic Games. When IOC President Juan Samaranch announced that the games of the 29th Olympics in 2008 would be held in Beijing, crowds outside of the Great Hall of the People, overflowed with joy, started to celebrate. Some of the celebrators, who found it hard to contain the excitement, even ignored the ban on firework in the city and proceeded to light up Chinese firecrackers in the streets of Beijing.

Fast forward to August 8th, 2008: during the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, a total of two hundred and four countries and geographic areas had their representative Olympic teams attend the Parade of Nations. Moreover, according to a CNN report, more than a hundred government and sovereign heads, including the U.S. President George W. Bush and Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, attended the opening ceremony (Drew & Chang, 2001). Competing with a home advantage, athletes from Team China received a total of forty-eight gold medals, twenty-two silver medals, and thirty bronze medals, ranking at second of total medals won in the 2008 Olympics (“Olympic History of China”, n.d.).

Furthermore, China’s presence at the international Olympic stage did not stop once the 2008 games were finished in Beijing. Instead, the Chinese national team continued to impress the world with elite athletes and medal counts in the following Olympic Games. During the 2012 London Summer Olympic Games, China won a total of thirty-eight gold medals, twenty-seven silver medals, and twenty-three bronze medals, ranking at second among all countries that participated. During the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Summer Olympic Games, China won twenty-six

gold medals, eighteen silver medals, and twenty-six bronze medals (“Olympic History of China”, n.d.). For the third time in a row, China was able to place itself at second among the country medal leaders, trailing only behind the United States.

For someone born in the 21st century, China’s recent success and dominance at the Olympics might seem like more of a norm rather than novelty. However, when looking back at the history of China’s involvement in the Olympic movement prior to the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, one should quickly realize that the picture looked entirely different just a bit more than four decades ago: not only that no athletes representing the People’s Republic of China (PRC) had won any Olympic medals prior to the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympics, but the PRC also found itself in midst of an ongoing battle with the IOC to acquire an exclusive representation of China over the Republic of China (ROC) until 1979. Moreover, Between the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1912 and the establishment of the PRC in 1949, China constantly fell victim of imperialism and foreign invasion. Therefore, sports were adopted by the Nationalist government as a way to empower the Chinese people and show the world that China would not back down from international powers.

In addition, it is worth noticing that despite China’s IOC membership recognition in 1979, the PRC did not attend the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympics, which were boycotted by a number of countries, including the US as the initiator, in protest of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (Smothers, 1996). Both China and the Soviet Union were forces in the communist world, with the Soviet Union in the most dominant position. It is interesting, to say the least, that China would be absent from its first available Summer Olympic Games after their hard-fought membership recognition by the IOC, which came after a long-lasting battle between the two. To make the matter even more fascinating, the PRC chose the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics,

boycotted by the Soviets and a number of other communist countries, to be its debut at the Summer Olympics. Therefore, one can reasonably say that there must have been some significant factors that had impacted China's decision to withdraw from the 1980 Moscow Olympics, which were hosted by the country whose political ideology aligned closely with that of China (relatively speaking when compared with that of the West) and to attend the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, whose host country was almost the political opposition of PRC.

The aim of this report is to examine some of the existing literature on the Olympic movement in China and provide a historic overview of the PRC's Olympic experience from the end of the Qing dynasty to 1979 when IOC reinstated the PRC's membership and granted it the sole representation of sports in China. With a better understanding of the historic context of China's Olympic movement, this report will attempt to summarize the factors that contributed to PRC's decision to boycott the 1980 Moscow Olympics and make its Summer Olympics debut at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

Chapter 2: Sports Saved China

In 1894, over disputes of territorial influence in Korea, the Qing Dynasty of China and the Empire of Japan engaged in the Sino-Japanese War (Kim, 2006). The war lasted about six months, which resulted in the Chinese defeated entirely by the Japanese. As an aftermath, the Qing Dynasty had no choice but to sign the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which subsequently gave away parts of territories throughout China (including the Liaodong Peninsula and Taiwan) and set up cities such as Chongqing and Hangzhou as treaty ports for the Japanese (Zhang & Li, 2007). Not only the defeat of the Sino-Japanese War came as a shock for those in China, but it also demonstrated the weaknesses in Qing China's technology, politics, and education, especially compared to those of Japan after the Meiji Restoration (Paine, 2002). According to Xu (2008), a scholar of the history of modern China, this war marked a turning point in the Chinese history, prompting the then Chinese elites and scholars to believe only by learning from the west, abandoning the current political system, and establishing a modern national state identity could the Chinese preserve their country.

Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, two of the most prominent reformists at the turn of the 20th century in China, believed that nationalism was what made Europe strong since the 16th century thus should be adopted by the Chinese in order to save the country (Demick, 2010). They further argued that in order to advocate nationalism, a new education system was needed. The new education system should emphasize the importance of physical education, which would help strengthen citizens' body and mind, thus empowering China as a nation. Moreover, Liang, similar to a lot of the reformists in this period, promoted a military spirit (Chen, 1989). According to Chen (1989), Liang believed that not only this martial spirit was responsible for Western colonizers' powers, but China had also lost this spirit a long time ago. It was also

during this period when the term “sick man” was coined by a leading scholar in China named Yan Fu and subsequently used by journalists abroad against Chinese citizens, due to their weak physique and lack of physical exercises (Xu, 2008). Many in China, despised and ashamed of the term, desired a change of the status quo. In the late 1890s, the anti-Manchu movement was initiated by nationalists in China in an attempt to overthrow the Qing Dynasty.

As a result, modern physical education and Western sports, such as gymnastics, were promoted throughout China. Sports societies and schools were established, hugely in an effort by the nationalists in China to recruit like-minded people to improve their physical and military skills (Lu & Fan, 2014). For instance, a gymnastics school in Shanghai was established in 1906. Named the China Gymnastic School and founded by a few students who had studied in Japan and returned, the school was a semi-military organization that taught students from physical education to military tactics, from swimming to using weapons (Zhong, 2007). Subsequently, the graduates from the China Gymnastic School went on to join the anti-Manchu campaigns in multiple cities in China and participated in the 1911 Revolution that eventually ended the Qing Dynasty (Lu & Fan, 2014).

Not only that the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War prompted the Chinese to search for a different direction and establish a new national identity, but this period also labeled the revitalization of the modern Olympic movement. Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the IOC and the modern Olympic movement, chose “Citius, Altius, Fortius (faster, higher, stronger) as the Olympic motto (“The Olympic Motto”, 2019). Moreover, Coubertin once famously said that “the most important thing in the Olympic games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well (“The Olympic Symbols”, 2009). Xu (2008) believes that

fascinated by the opportunity to take part in international sports events with other nations around the world as equals while being judged by the same rules, the Nationalists in China saw the revival of the modern Olympic movement as the missing piece of their puzzle to realize national revival.

Some modern, Western sports originated from early versions of traditional sports in ancient China. For example, Cuju, the earliest form of football (soccer), was played about two thousand years ago in China (“The History Of Football”, n.d.). Despite this relation between the traditional and Western forms of some sports, the former had little to do with the modern Olympic movement. According to Xu (2008), The organization responsible for popularizing Western sports in China, however, was not Coubertin, nor the IOC. Instead, it was the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) who came to China in 1895 and played the pivotal role of spreading Western sports and conducting physical education programs. The YMCA organized competitive sports, such as basketball, tennis, and track and field to urban China (Song, 1935). In 1910, the 1st National Games were held in Nanjing with the help of the YMCA. By the early 1920s, Western sports were popularized in many cities and forty YMCA locations were set up around China (Xu, 2008).

On the one hand, this period of Chinese history labeled a new era of sports in China with the help of foreigners. On the other hand, foreign invasions by Japan and Germany and treaties that benefitted invaders while harming domestic interest drastically fueled anti-imperialist and subsequently anti-Christian sentiments among those in China (Lu & Fan, 2014). According to Lu & Fan (2014), as the anti-Christian movement progressed in the 1920s that saw numerous foreign missionaries forced out of China, regaining control of the sport and education system became a major objective of the movement. As Shen Siliang, a professor in physical education

pointed out in one of his articles that “competitive sport must be put under the Chinese people’s control”, many officials and educators in China followed suit and started to exclude foreign influence from schools and sports events (Lu & Fan, 2014; Zhao, 1923). As a result, not only the number of Christian schools decreased dramatically during this time, but sports events in China such as the Northern China Athletic Meeting that were previously governed and staffed by foreigners were also now handed to Chinese citizens (Lu & Fan, 2014; Liang, 1987).

With the Qing dynasty’s demise and neighbor Japan as a major threat, the Chinese developed a sense of urgency that prompt the intellectuals and reformists to adopt a nationalist mindset and build a new country. Westerns sports were introduced to China during this time, which the nationalists believed could be served as a tool to strengthen Chinese peoples’ bodies and spirits, thus saving China. Although foreigners played a huge part in introducing Western sports to those in China, officials and educators were eager to remove foreign influence in China’s education and sports systems amid imperialist invasions. Coinciding with China’s desire to get strong through sports, the revival of the modern Olympic movement was seen as the perfect opportunity for China to become equals with the rest of the world.

Chapter 3: Winning at the Lost Olympics

With Western sports just introduced to those in China, the competition level was generally low in China and even Asian at this point. Therefore, partially in an effort to catch up with the rest of the world in the realm of sports competition and prepare for its potential Olympic participation in the future, the Far Eastern Athletic Association (FEAA) was established (Wang & Yu, 2015). Coubertin, excited about the prospect of sports movement in China, believed that the establishment of the FEAA and the Far East Champion Games was a sign that the influence of the IOC and the Olympic movement had reached Asia (Coubertin, 1997). In 1921, the China National Amateur Athletic Federation (CNAAF) was established. In 1922, the CNAAF was recognized by the IOC as the official Chinese Olympic committee (“Recognition of NOC for China”, n.d.).

As mentioned previously in the report, China’s sudden obsession with Western sports was largely inspired by the hope to establish a new China and the ideal of nationalism, which closely links the strength of a nation to that of the citizens and their military spirit. Xu (2008) argues that China was not unique in its pursuit of a stronger national identity using sports and physical education, but was instead following the trend set by international strengths like the U.S. and Japan, who implemented paramilitary physical education programs for its military and the general public during the 1910s.

The Olympic movement in China started to gain more interest from the Chinese public. In 1908, during a seminar sponsored by the YMCA, three questions were asked regarding China’s Olympic participation: when would China send its first team of athletes to the Olympics? When would China win its first Olympic medal? When would China be able to host and invite the world to its first Olympics (Fan, Mackey, and Cristensen, 2008)? These questions

not only fueled the interest in sports among the public but also indicated China's willingness to engage with the rest of the world (Xu, 2008). The interest and willingness were showcased, subsequently magnified, by a regional competition. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Chinese public got a glimpse of what an international sporting event could look like, thanks to the first-ever Far Eastern Championship Games (FECG) held in Manila, the Philippines in 1913. According to Fan (2011), the first FECG marked the first time Chinese athletes participated in an international competition. Despite Western influence brought by the YMCA and foreign coaches that were prevalent in sports in China at the time, Chinese athletes experienced what was like to represent and fight for the pride of their own country in front of a huge audience for the first time (Fan, 2011). As a result, the importance of intentional sports events to China's international status and reputation became quite clear to the Chinese public.

Four years before China competed in the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games, Song Ruhai, a physical education specialist, was sent to the 1928 Amsterdam Games as an observer (Morris, 1999). According to Morris (1999), Song played a significant role in igniting the Olympic movement in China by publishing a volume introducing modern Olympic history and cultures. The most significant contribution made by Song, Morris (1999) argues, was his explanation of the Olympiad spirit as "I can compete!" Moreover, as Chinese citizens suffered from imperialist invasion from Japan and the consequences of unequal treaties, China was in dire need of a "truly international triumph of almost any kind (Morris, 1999)".

In spite of the invitation from the IOC to participate in the 1896 Olympics in Athens, the Qing Dynasty showed little interest and rejected the invitation (Riordan, 2002). It was not until 1932 when China sent its delegation to the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics that labeled the first time China (as the Republic of China) participated in the Summer Olympic Games. However, unlike

the many other Chinese delegations that came after 1984, which comprised of hundreds of athletes competing for dozens of different sports, the “team” representing China in 1932 had only one athlete, Liu Changchun, the best printer in China. As a matter of fact, China did not initially intend to take part in the Olympics that year, as the Nationalist government Kuomintang could provide funding for neither the Chinese athletes nor officials (Xing & Zu, 2000). However, China’s eventual decision to take part in the 1932 Olympics was pressured by Japan’s intent to send a team of Chinese athletes representing the puppet state of Manzhouguo (Manchuria) in order to “gain legitimacy for their invasion of Chinese territory” (Lu & Fan, 2014).

Days after the ROC announced that it had no plans to send a team to the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, the Manzhouguo government announced that it would send Liu and his teammate representing the puppet state (“Seeks to Enter Olympics”, 1932). In a response to Manzhouguo’s announcement, Liu published a press statement to ridicule the idea that he would compete for the puppet state, assuring the public his loyalty to his nation and the absolute unwillingness to serve for the Japanese government (Liu, 1932). Soon after Liu’s statement, the university that Liu attended donated 8000 yuan for Liu to represent China in the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics (“The Story”, 1984).

Angered by Japan’s attempt to send Chinese athletes to represent the puppet state, China decided to enter the 1932 Olympics after all. Hao Gensheng, the Chairman of the CNAAF, explained to the Chinese public that the decision to send a one-man team to the 1932 Olympics, could 1) stop Japan from gaining legitimacy of its invasion of the Chinese land; 2) help China enter the new era by raising the national flag in the Olympics thus empowering future generations; 3) facilitate communications and cultural exchanges among China and the rest of the world; 4) offer opportunities for China to learn from the best athletes in the Olympics and

understand its own weaknesses of Chinese athletics; and 5) give Liu, who came from northeastern China (the area where the Japanese puppet state was established), a chance to tell the world about the crimes committed by Japan (Tang, 1999).

Although Liu performed poorly and did not even qualify for the following rounds of competition, China's presence at the Olympics was greeted with applaud by spectators (Morris, 2009). Liu, too, showed in his diary optimism and approval about his trip to Los Angeles despite the loss (Liu, 1932). Shen Siliang, the director of the Chinese delegation in the 1932 Olympics, expressed similar attitudes toward China's participation. Shen (1933) believed that although China sent a one-man team to the Olympics, the presence along, as well as the waving national flag showed vigorous spirits of China. Moreover, despite the fact that China was experiencing colonization, participation in the 1932 Olympics showed the world that China would not back down from any superpowers in the world (Shen, 1933).

Impressed with the impact made by the Chinese delegation in 1932, Chiang Kai-shek, Chairman of the Chinese Nationalist Party, Kuomintang, became aware of the significance of the Olympics as a "political forum" (Kanin, 1978). It was reported that the Kuomintang government believed that through participation in the Olympic movement, not only China's international reputation and status would be improved, but sports could also cultivate modern citizens and a strong nation (Xu, 2008). As a result, the Kuomintang government sent a much larger delegation with sixty-nine athletes to the 1936 Berlin Olympics (Zhao, 1948). This time around, Kuomintang learned from its mistake (letting the Japanese puppet state get ahead of its Olympic preparation) from four years ago, took the participation way more seriously, and took a series of initiatives to get the Chinese delegation ready for Berlin. The Kuomintang government raised

funding for the national team, recruited a German coach, and established training camps for the sixty-nine athletes (Zhao, 1948; Riordan, 2002).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, any international victory for China at this stage was extremely desirable. Especially given that those in China had already had a glimpse of what an Olympic participation could mean for the Chinese people in 1932, it is natural for one to assume that the aim in the 1936 Olympics for China would be to earn an Olympic medal. However, even though winning a medal was a reasonable priority for China, it is worth noticing that it refused to send its best available athlete. Li Shiming, a middle-distance runner, was not allowed to join the Olympic team, despite meeting one of the qualifying standards and recorded the best 800 meters time during training camps (Morris, 1999). Morris (1999) explained that the reason why Li was left out the Chinese Olympic team was that Li had previously represented his hometown in the Manzhouguo National Games held by the puppet regime in northeastern China, thus committing the crime of betraying the Han Chinese people. It is evident from this example that despite the importance of winning medals, China prioritized national pride and integrity so much that one of the best runners in China who previously associated himself with the puppet regime by partaking in Manzhouguo National Games was disqualified to represent China on the Olympic stage.

Eventually, not only the Kuomintang government sent a delegation of a hundred and seven (sixty-nine of which were athletes) people to Berlin, but it also sent a group of forty-two members to Berlin and other European cities to study sports in Europe. Among the group members were educators, government/military officials, and sports organizers, who spent over a month traveling to seven countries including Germany, Italy, and Denmark (Zheng & Zhao, 1992). However, although a much larger group of athletes was sent to the 1936 Berlin Olympics, the Chinese delegation did not win a single medal. Morris (1999) argues that the poor

performance had to do with the voyage to Germany that left most of the Chinese delegation seasick and unable to train effectively. The domestic opinions of China's participation were mixed with disappointment and hopeful excitement: while some criticized the poor performance of the Chinese athletes, especially the loss to Japan in basketball, others believed that being able to participate in international sports and being part of the Olympic movement granted China the international recognition that the Chinese desperately needed, in order to inspire Chinese patriotic spirit, and enhance China's international status (Morris, 2004).

After the 1936 Berlin Olympics, China became consumed by the 2nd Sino-Japanese War, and subsequently the Chinese Civil War. As a result, the government did not pay much attention to the Olympics until 1948. In 1948, in the midst of the Civil War, China managed to send a delegation, including seven athletes, to the London Olympics. It was reported that because of the Civil War, the delegation had little preparation. Therefore, not only no medal was won by the Chinese athletes, but the delegation also ran out of money to buy the return tickets back to China. It was not until the Chinese living in London raised money for the Chinese delegation when the Chinese athletes were able to get home (Dong, 1980).

Rejecting the Japanese government's request for him to represent Manzhouguo in the 1932 Olympic Games, Liu Changchun became nationally celebrated and inspired more Chinese people to have their own Olympic dream after Song Ruhai did so by explaining the ideal of Olympiad simply to Chinese citizens. It was also evident that in an effort to perverse national pride and integrity, athletes who had participated in sporting events held by the Manzhouguo puppet state were not given permission to join the Chinese Olympic team. Even though the athletes from China could not win a single medal at the Olympics during this time, China was quick to understand the significance of participation in such events, where countries compete

under the same standards and rules. Despite the fact that some were disappointed by the performance of the Chinese athletes, the Kuomintang's decision to take part in the Olympics had far-reaching significance both domestically and overseas: China's Olympic participation not only inspired patriotism and brought hope to the Chinese people, but it also showed the world China's resistance of foreign invasion.

Chapter 4: A Fight for Legitimacy

The year 1949 labeled a turning point for Chinese history. The Chiang Kai-shek led Kuomintang lost the Chinese Civil War to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) led by Mao Zedong. Consequently, Mao established the PRC in Beijing, while Chiang had to flee from mainland China and move the ROC government to Taiwan. Established under the Nationalist regime, the CNAAF, also recognized by the IOC as the Chinese Olympic Committee (COC), moved with Chiang to Taiwan with its majority of the members (Lu & Fan, 2014). The CCP, newly coming to power, focused mainly on consolidating its ruling over China. In October 1950, China sent an army to fight the United States in the Korean War. Moreover, it was reported that the PRC did not even have any immediate contacts with the IOC following its establishment (Huang & Wang, 2013). Therefore, the PRC seemed to have paid little attention to the upcoming 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki.

In the post-World War II era, the Soviet Union withdrew from its previous position of not taking part in the corrupt capitalist sports events, in order to showcase its self-professed superiority of the Russian political system and society (O'Mahony, 2006). Hoping to balance the international politics by strengthening the communist side of the world and cultivating allies, the Soviet Union brought the 1952 Helsinki Olympics to the PRC's attention. In 1951, the PRC was invited by Finland to participate in the 1952 Games. It was reported that the PRC did not take the invitation seriously until further intervention from the Soviet (Fan & Xiong, 2002). At that time Helsinki was under the heavy political influence of the Soviet Union (Xu, 2008). In order to persuade the PRC to participate in Helsinki, the Soviet Union ambassador in Beijing made promises to the PRC that not only would it help with PRC's participation, but it would also aid in Taiwan's exclusion from the IOC (Huang & Wang, 2013). It was the second half of the promise

made by the Soviet ambassador that reflected a central issue, which pretty much thematized China's involvement in the Olympic movement from the 1950s to 1979: the "two-China" question.

From 1949 to 1979, the PRC in Beijing and the ROC in Taipei believed that there was only one China, while both regimes resisted strongly against the inclusion of the other in the IOC. Both Beijing and Taipei claimed to be the only legitimate government of China, while the other was just a "rebel" government that did not deserve a spot in the international Olympic family. According to Xu (2008), both parties viewed membership in the Olympic movement as a means to achieve their political legitimacy thus engaging in a long-lasting fight to claim sole membership to represent China.

While the PRC initially showed little interest in the 1952 Games, it also adopted an official policy to learn from the Soviet during this time (Li, 2002). According to Xu (2008), the Soviet ambassador in Beijing made an urgent request to Feng Wenbin, the secretary of the Chinese Communist Youth League (acting sports commission for the PRC then), to find out Beijing's attitude towards the 1952 Helsinki Games and whether the PRC would send a delegation to Helsinki to participate. Furthermore, the Russian ambassador even suggested to Feng that the Soviet government was willing to train China athletes to help them compete in the Olympics (Xu, 2008). The PRC then quickly accepted its communist big brother, Soviet Union's invitation, and sent a telegram to the IOC to oppose Taiwan's representation of China in the Olympic Games and request that the PRC should instead attend the 1952 Helsinki Games in July (Xu, 2008). The president of the IOC, Sigfrid Edström, initially discouraged the PRC from participating, citing political chaos in China and the fact that the PRC's Olympic committee had yet to be recognized ("République Populaire de Chine", n.d.). However, despite Edström's

dissuasion, Beijing was determined to send its athletes to Helsinki. As Beijing's athletes waited for an invitation in Leningrad, the IOC was forced to make a quick decision and eventually voted to approve the participation of both Beijing and Taiwan (Xu, 2008). It is worth noting that only two options were put to vote during the IOC Helsinki session: to allow both Beijing and Taiwan to participate or to allow neither to participate ("Minutes of the 47th IOC", 1952). The vote inevitably produced a result that was undesirable for neither the PRC nor the ROC. Eventually, the PRC delegation arrived at Helsinki the day before the closing ceremony and only one of its swimmers participated in a qualifying round of the competition. On the other hand, the ROC delegation did not attend the 1952 Olympics in protest of PRC delegation's presence.

In spite of the successful entry into the 1952 Olympics, Xu (2008) believes that the PRC made two crucial mistakes. Firstly, Beijing's forceful intervention using politics was uninviting for the IOC. Secondly, by directly communicating with the IOC, instead of having Dong Shouyi, the only IOC member in the PRC, the PRC gave up the opportunity to claim legitimate membership in the IOC family. Like previously underscored by the Soviet government and its ambassador, the importance of taking part in the Olympics was quickly felt by Beijing. Motivated by the yearning for international recognition of legitimacy, especially given Taiwan's recognition by and diplomatic relations with the Western countries, the PRC believed that participating in the Olympics and having its national flag displayed among that of other countries was already a victory (Lu & Fan, 2014).

Although the PRC was invited by the IOC to participate in the 1952 Olympics, Beijing's IOC membership was not yet officially recognized. Therefore, after the Helsinki Games, Beijing moved quickly to pressure the IOC to recognize its All-China Athletic Federation as the Chinese Olympic Committee. In a telegram sent to the IOC chancellor, Otto Mayer, Rong Gaotang, the

vice president of the All-China Athletic Federation claimed that not only the All-China Athletic Federation was the result of the reorganized China National Amateur Athletic Federation, which had already been recognized as a member of the IOC, but it was also the only legal amateur sports organization in the PRC that controlled all sports in China. Rong further expressed his displeasure towards IOC's invitation to Taiwan in 1952, stating that "such decision ... completely runs counter to the spirit and character of the International Olympic Games", and Taiwan should be expelled from all Olympics related organizations in order to maintain IOC's principle ("Rong Gaotang to Otto Mayer", n.d.).

The issue of PRC's membership subsequently became a heated topic during the following IOC meetings. In an attempt to "balance the American force in the sphere of sport", IOC members from the Soviet and Eastern Bloc insisted that All-China Athletic Federation should be the only recognized member representing China (Huang & Wang, 2013, p. 2053). Eventually, during the IOC session in Athens in 1954, with twenty-three votes for and twenty-one against, the IOC approved All-China Athletic Federation as the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of PRC ("49th IOC Session", 1954). As a result, both Beijing and Taiwan had their NOCs and could participate in the following Olympics Games representing "China". The IOC's decision to recognize both NOCs further infuriated both sides. Hoh Gunsun, the president of the Taipei NOC, claimed that the ROC was the only legal representative of China and would not reach an agreement with the Communists in PRC in regard to Olympic participation (Hoh, 1985). On the other hand, adopting an anti "two Chinas" stance, Beijing also believed that it should be the only NOC in China. Members of the Beijing NOC repetitively asked the IOC to end Taiwan's membership, claiming that only the PRC represents Chinese people ("Bulletin", 1955).

The NOC in Beijing had every intention to participate in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. However, it seems like historians and scholars alike have yet to reach a consensus as to what exactly transpired that eventually kept the PRC from taking part in the 1956 Games. Xu (2008) believes that Beijing's plan was to arrive in Melbourne earlier than Taipei did so when the ROC delegation showed up it would refuse to participate with the delegation from Beijing. But when the PRC delegation arrived, it turned out that the ROC delegation had already situated in the Olympic Village with its national flag flying. Beijing, therefore, withdrew from the 1956 Games in protest of ROC delegation's presence. Huang and Wang (2013), on the other hand, believe that Beijing did not even send a delegation to Melbourne because the PRC's "red flag" was replaced with the Taiwanese flag in the Olympic Village and Beijing's protest turned out to be fruitless. Despite the difference in the exact scenarios behind Beijing's withdrawal from the 1956 Games, one thing is clear: both NOCs from Beijing and Taipei sought for exclusive representation over China and both were willing to boycott the Olympic Games in order to discredit the opposing regime and show their resolution to obtain legitimacy through international sports.

Although the PRC and the ROC had a lot of differences in their political ideologies, they had one thing in common: both regimes at the time believed that there was only one China and both claimed to represent China's sports exclusively. It was precisely this belief that led to the claim that, since there were two NOCs in China, the IOC had violated the Olympic Charter, which mandates that each national territory can be only represented by one NOC ("Olympic Charter", 2019). However, founded on the idea of being independent of the government, the IOC has a strong stance against "talking politics". IOC's apolitical position was especially evident during the battle between the PRC and ROC to validate itself while getting rid of the other from

the IOC family. Scholars even argue that given the complexity of the China issue, IOC was avoiding discussion about such matters (Brownell, 2007; Lu & Fan, 2014; Xu, 2008). Moreover, citing its policy against “talking politics”, IOC was actively silencing conversations involving the China issue during the IOC sessions (Brownell, 2007; Xu, 2008). As one will see in the following paragraphs, after repetitively failing to claim sole representation of China, Beijing grew increasingly frustrated with the IOC, which led to PRC’s eventual withdrawal from the Olympic movement.

With PRC’s establishment as a communist country, the Soviet Union found itself the perfect ally and subsequently pushed Beijing to participate in the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, partially in an effort to obtain a favorable position in the Cold War. Fighting for the exclusive representation of China, neither Beijing nor Taiwan was willing to make any concessions in its political stance. Although the fight for the sole representation of China happened between Beijing and Taipei, the IOC’s apolitical position further complicated the matter.

Chapter 5: A Change of Fate

Dissatisfied with IOC's decision to include two NOCs in China, Rong Gaotang, vice-chairman of the All-China Sports Federation, argued during the 1955 IOC session in Paris that the PRC delegation was the only delegation representing China: Taiwan, a province of the PRC, should not have the right to establish its own NOC, let alone represent China (Fan & Lu, 2012). Rong then suggested that the Taiwan committee should be excluded from the IOC. Avery Brundage, the then President of the IOC, claiming politics should not be involved in sports matter, turned down the PRC's request (Fan & Lu, 2012). Even the Soviet Union, China's communist "big brother", urged the Beijing NOC to cease the political talks and not argue with Brundage, since the socialist countries are in the minority in the IOC and continuing to mention politics might cause the problems for the East Bloc countries (Wang & Zhang, 2004). While some believe that the Soviet's intention to silence PRC's Taiwan talks was simply to keep the PRC and other communist countries alike out of trouble, others like Fan and Lu (2004), on the other hand, argued that the Russians had their own political motive, which was to support East Germany's desire for an independent recognition from the IOC. Since China's "one China" stance was contrary to the "two Germanys" position held by East Bloc countries, China's talks about Taiwan was heavily discouraged.

With the PRC's contempt towards the IOC mounting, the IOC also found it necessary to voice its displeasure about Beijing's political pursuit. In a letter sent to the PRC delegation prior to the 1956 Melbourne Games, the IOC expressed its anger towards Beijing as it "repeatedly raising political questions which have no place in IOC discussions" (Tang, 2000). Dong Shuoyi, the IOC contact for the PRC, found IOC's position to be hypocrite, as he believed that by assigning two NOCs in one national territory, the IOC itself was engaging in politics (Tan &

Dong, 1993). In the letter exchanges between Dong and Brundage from 1957-1958, the argument regarding the “two Chinas” issue kept getting heated.

As the two sides continued to allow no compromise to occur within their own ideologies, with Brundage claiming that Taiwan had an independent government that had been recognized by the United Nations, while Dong arguing the historic fact that “Taiwan has always been part of China from ancient times” (Tang, 2000), the relationship between Beijing and the IOC reached to a point that was no longer amendable at that time. As a result, Dong sent his final letter to Brundage on August 19, 1958, to resign from the IOC. In the letter, Dong did not forget to give Brundage another blow by claiming that “the IOC is today controlled by an imperialist like (Brundage) and consequently the Olympic spirit has been grossly trampled upon” (“République Populaire de Chine”, n.d.)”. As Dong resigned from the IOC, Beijing subsequently withdrew from the Olympic movement and announced that Beijing would stop recognizing the IOC (“République Populaire de Chine”, n.d.). Following the end of the relationship with the IOC in 1958, the PRC withdrew from eleven international sports federations that also recognized Taiwan’s membership (Wu, 1999).

After Beijing’s withdrawal from the Olympic movement, Taiwan’s NOC became the exclusive representative of China in the IOC. However, the circumstance in which Taiwan found itself after Beijing’s exclusion could hardly be described as a victory. During the 1959 IOC session in Munich, it was argued by a Russian representative that the ROC should not be granted the right to represent China since it had not governed sports in mainland China. The session adopted the stance that Taiwan should change its name to reflect the geographic area that it truly represented (“55th IOC Session”, 1959). This stance taken by the IOC consequently met with strong criticisms from Taiwan and its international allies. The head of the NOC of Taipei, King

Liang-kwe, strongly opposed IOC's resolution by claiming that Taiwan should "be recognized under the official name of the Republic of China, and his Committee should be addressed officially as the 'Republic of China Olympic Committee' " (Huang & Wang, 2013, pp. 2056). Taiwan's ally, the United States also put an enormous amount of pressure on the IOC regarding its demand for Taiwan to change the name. A representative from New York suggested during a Congressional session that the U.S. should boycott the following Olympic Games if Taiwan were expelled from the IOC ("86th Congress", 1959). Eventually, the IOC decided to allow the Taipei delegation to participate in the 1960 Games under the name "Taiwan" ("57th IOC Session", 1960). In an effort to demonstrate his displeasure towards IOC's resolution, during the opening ceremony of the 1960 Rome Olympics, the Taipei delegation marched with a sign that read "Under Protest" (Zhang, 2004).

Neither Beijing nor Taipei was satisfied with the IOC's attempts to resolve the China issue. Moreover, scholars like Xu (2008) argue that the IOC itself made a fair share of mistakes and proved to be incompetent in its handling of the matter. Xu (2008) believes that the IOC made two crucial mistakes that contributed negatively to the already-messy situation around Beijing and Taiwan's respective representation. Firstly, when the ROC government moved to Taiwan following its loss in the Chinese Civil War, the Taipei NOC member Hoh sent a request to the IOC to change the official address of the Chinese Olympic Committee from Nanjing to Taipei. Without considering the political implications of the address change, the IOC changed the address with no hesitation. Secondly, Xu (2008) believes the last-minute decision made before the 1956 Melbourne Games to extend invitations to both Taipei and Beijing further proved the IOC's passivity and incompetency. He further criticized Avery Brundage for constantly using two Germanys and two Koreas as examples to reject the PRC and ROC's demand to exclude the

other from the IOC, without realizing the severe impact made by the recent Chinese Civil War. Last but not least, it is pointed out that the IOC addressed the PRC and the ROC using incorrect names at multiple sessions, which were believed to reflect how little the IOC understood Chinese culture and politics on a larger scale (Brownell, 2007; Xu, 2008).

During the 1960s, the PRC found itself in the deep mud of economic disasters created by the Great Leap Forward movement, the Cultural Revolution, and the self-imposed isolation. The PRC's pursuit of internationalization suffered a major halt during this period. In addition, Beijing's relationship with the Soviets became deteriorated and later contentious due to military conflicts in their shared border in the late 1960s (Lenman & Anderson, 2000). Therefore, the PRC desperately searched for an opportunity to reopen the country to the rest of the world and establish new relations with the world community. On the other hand, with Richard Nixon's election to the White House, the U.S. was looking forward to ending its involvement in the Vietnam War. Moreover, with the PRC being a close ally of Vietnam, Nixon sought for a better relationship with China, which could further strengthen the United States in the Cold War (Yan & Gao, 1996).

As previously noted, after the PRC withdrew from the IOC, it also withdrew from eleven other international sports federations. However, Beijing remained a member of the International Table Tennis Federation (Kobierecki, 2016). Prior to the 21st World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, Japan in March 1971, Mao Zedong was approached by the Japanese Table Tennis Federation, which invited the PRC to send a team to the competition. Committing to reestablish PRC's relationship with the world, Mao sent a delegation to Japan, which subsequently invited the U.S. table tennis team to visit China. When the U.S table tennis team paid a visit to Beijing, PRC's Premier Zhou Enlai noted that a new chapter had been entered in

the relations between China and the U.S (Xu, 2008).

After the U.S. team departed for home, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, in preparation of Nixon's China trip, visited Beijing twice in 1971. It is believed that the visit by the U.S. athletes and officials "paved the way" for China's admission to the United Nations (UN) in October 1971 (Brownell, 2007, p. 264). With Nixon's arrival in Beijing in February 1972, the PRC successfully changed the relationship between Beijing and the U.S. As a result, the "Ping-Pong Diplomacy" turned out to be a significant accomplishment for both countries and thus bringing them closer during the 1970s, a period marked by hostility and political uncertainty worldwide, especially between the East and the West.

After the PRC's admission to the UN, Taiwan's seat was consequently replaced by Beijing. It was during this period when a majority of the countries in the UN that had previously established diplomatic relations with Taiwan, decided to recognize the PRC and obey Beijing's "one-China principle", by cutting ties with Taiwan. One of the countries was Canada, which happened to be the host of the 1976 Olympic Games. Due to the economic incentive that was associated with trading with the PRC, Canada was quick to realize the negative impact it would cause to the newly established relationship between Canada and Beijing if Taiwan were to attend the 1976 Games representing China (Cady, 1976). However, when Canada bid for the opportunity to host the 1976 Games, Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau promised the IOC that it would allow all IOC-accredited NOCs to participate ("Minutes", 1976). Reluctant to break its promise with the IOC, during the Executive Board meeting on July 10, 1976, Canada came up with a strategy that would allow Taiwan's entry to the Montreal Games, under the condition that the Taiwan delegation may not use the name, flag, or national anthem, that represented the Republic of China. Taiwan subsequently rejected this idea, with the head of the Taipei NOC

proposed the Games be canceled in Montreal (“Minutes”, 1976). As a last attempt to persuade Taiwan’s participation, Canada conceded during the Executive Board Meeting on July 15, 1976, that the ROC team could use its flag and national anthem, as long as the ROC change its representation from “China” to “Taiwan” (“Minutes”, 1976). Unwilling to accept the parameters set by the Canadian government, the ROC team withdrew from the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

Similar to the previous chapter that summarizes the fight for representation of China between Beijing and Taipei, this period marked the struggles of both sides, as the PRC withdrew from the Olympic movement and subsequently eleven other international sports federations, while Taipei was faced with obstacles to go to the Olympic Games even as a recognized IOC member. However, on the one hand, despite setbacks in the Olympic movement, Beijing was able to establish diplomatic ties with Western countries like Canada and the U.S, a byproduct of the recent hostility between China and the Soviet Union. On the other hand, although Taiwan was able to remain a member of the IOC after Beijing’s withdrawal, its official name and representation came under serious attack. As a result, Taiwan’s position in the Olympic movement started to marginalize, as Beijing started to be recognized by Western countries and international sports federations.

Chapter 6: Returning to the Olympic Movement

Given the Taiwan issue's exposure worldwide after the 1976 Games, it was within the IOC's best interest to solve the problem of who represented China once for all. During the Executive Board meeting in Nagoya, Japan in 1979, the IOC approved the PRC delegation's application for membership reinstatement. The IOC confirmed the Chinese Olympic Committee (Beijing) to be the representative of the Olympic movement in China. While the IOC ceased to recognize the "Chinese Olympic Committee" previously established by the Nationalist government that moved to Taiwan in 1949, the NOC in Taiwan was given the permission to stay in the Olympic family as China's local organization, using the name of "Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee" ("Reinstatement", 2004). As a result, the "two Chinas" problem that forced the IOC and Beijing to sever their tie in 1958 was finally resolved. The reinstatement of the COC marked the re-entry of China into the world of international sports. Having the habit of using sports as a way to improve its international reputation and consolidate its legitimacy, China thought now it would be the perfect opportunity to showcase to the world the prowess of the Chinese athletes. However, just like the PRC, who used the Olympic movement as a platform to make political statements, the other countries did just the same thing.

Leading up to the 1980 Moscow Olympics, in order to prepare its athletes for the upcoming competitions, the General Administration of Sports of China (GASC) advocated for the improvement of Chinese athletes' performance at the Olympics (Zhan, 2017). Shortly after its reinstatement in the IOC, the COC officially announced that the PRC would participate in both the 1980 Lake Placid Winter Olympic Games and the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games ("China Returning", 1979). The GASC subsequently published a report, setting a "top ten"

ranking as the goal for the Chinese team in the 1980 Olympics (“The Report”, 1980). On December 27, 1979, the Soviet military invaded Afghanistan. The initial response from China was to condemn the Soviet Union for its inhuman actions and violations of international relations. In addition, China demanded the Soviet to withdraw all its troops from Afghanistan (“The PRC”, 1980). Despite this announcement, China did not intend to withdraw from the 1980 Games. Instead, an interview with the head of the COC, Zhong Shitong revealed that China’s plan to prepare for and participate in the 1980 Moscow Olympics stayed unaffected (“Interview”, 1980).

According to Yu (2010), it was not until the then U.S. President, Jimmy Carter, announced the boycott of the Moscow Games and subsequently wrote to the head of the Chinese Communist Party to persuade, that China started to take the boycott seriously as an option. Although China and the Soviet Union had a cooperative relationship since 1949 due to their communist background, the friendship had soured starting in the late 1960s, largely due to the military conflicts in their shared border. Since then China had been hostile towards the Soviet Union. With the Sino-US relation reached a historic height when China and the U.S. formally established diplomatic relations in 1979, it made sense that the U.S. would add China to its boycotting campaign. On April 21, 1980, nine days after the U.S. Olympic Committee announced its decision to boycott the Moscow Olympic Games, the Chinese premier Hua Guofeng announced that the COC would stay away from Moscow that year (Xinhua News Agency, 1980).

Although it took a twenty-eight-year battle with the IOC for the PRC to reclaim its membership and sole representation of China, Yu (2010) argues that the decision to boycott the 1980 Moscow Games as a “simple choice”. Yu (2010) believes that mainly three elements

contributed to China's decision to boycott the Moscow Olympics: firstly, China was severely threatened by the Soviet's aggression towards China's neighboring countries, thus feeling a need to voice its displeasure to the Soviet. Secondly, by boycotting the Moscow Games, China showed its willingness to continue its friendly relationship with the U.S. Last but not least, close alignment with the U.S. would inevitably translate into closer relationships with the other Western countries, which further advances China's position internationally.

During the 1980s, China found itself in a time of domestic economic reform. Led by Deng Xiaoping, the president of the PRC, "Reform and Opening" was a movement that implemented a market-oriented economy and opened up the Chinese market to investors around the world, in order to save the declining economy in China (Brandt et al, 2008). Sports, seen by the Chinese government as a tool to serve for politics, naturally, underwent a systematic change in China at this time. It is commonly believed by scholars that during this time a heavy emphasis on winning was put in place in order to mirror a positive image of China and improve its international reputation (Yu, 2010; Xu, 2008). Consequently, China saw a significant increase in the quantity and quality of national-level competitions ("China Returning", 1981). When Zhong Shitong, president of the Chinese Olympic Committee announced China's plan to take part in the 1980 Moscow Games before China's eventual decision to boycott, he also included the 1984 Olympics as part of China's plan. After 1980, China experienced a significant improvement in its athletes' performances, an achievement that was attributed to the government's financial support and the recent reform of the sport system that included more sports (Li, 2001).

Although multiple documents suggest that the Soviet Union did not initially intend to seek revenge against the U.S. for not participating in the 1980 Moscow Olympics by boycotting the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, the Soviet Union announced on May 8, 1984, that it would not

send a delegation to the Los Angeles Games due to safety concerns (Edwards, 1984; Mertin, 2012; Yu, 2010). Consequently, in July 1984, China confirmed its participation and sent a delegation of three hundred and twenty-five athletes to the Los Angeles Games. The Chinese team at the 1984 Games marked a stark contrast to the one-man team that was sent by the PRC to the 1932 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. To make the contrast more staggering, China won fifteen gold, eight silver, and nine bronze medals, ranking fourth among the participating countries (“Olympic History of China”, n.d.). In addition, the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games labeled China’s long-awaited return to the Summer Olympic Games, as China would participate in all the following Olympic Games, and even hosting one in Beijing in 2008.

Overall, although China made two completely different decisions in 1980 and 1984, both decisions were motivated politically and by the desire to improve China’s international status. More specifically, by distancing itself from the Soviet Union and following the U.S.’s lead to boycott the 1980 Moscow Games, China was able to consolidate its partnership with the U.S. and send friendly gestures to other Western countries. By participating in the 1984 Los Angeles Games, not only China again reinforced those benefits from four years ago, but it also managed to land the fourth place in the medal tally, thanks for the absence of the Soviet Union.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

With the demise of the Qing dynasty in 1912, Chinese reformists, influenced by nationalism ideals that military-minded citizens could form a strong country, adopted sports as a tool to save their country. Coincidentally, as Western sports were introduced and popularized with the help of the YMCA in China, the modern Olympic movement was revived at the same time. With foreign invasions pervasive, anti-imperialist, and subsequently anti-Christian movements started in China in order to regain control of China's education and sports system. Believing the Olympics to be the perfect opportunity to inspire the Chinese people and for China to be treated as an equal of rest of the world, the Nationalist government sent a one-man delegation to the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games last minute, after the Manzhouguo puppet state announced its plan to participate in the Olympics using Chinese athletes. Although the sole Chinese participant Liu Changchun did not win any medals, the significance of Olympic participation was felt throughout China. The following 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin were taken seriously as training camp invitations were sent to qualifying athletes. Despite the fact that a victory at the Olympics would improve China's international status and domestic spirits dramatically, China refused to send athletes who had previously associated with the Manzhouguo puppet regime in order to preserve national pride.

Prior to the establishment of the PRC, China constantly found itself as a victim of foreign invasions. Therefore Olympic participation was used as a way to show the world China's integrity and resistance. After the PRC was founded in Beijing in 1949, the Kuomintang government took the national sports governing body to Taiwan and subsequently, started a long-lasting battle between two sides for international recognition and legitimacy. Although Taipei's

IOC was accredited by the IOC, many pointed out that it did not control sports in mainland China. Moreover, representatives from both Beijing and Taipei criticized the IOC for violating the Olympic Charter after both were invited to the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games.

IOC's apolitical stance and general unwillingness to deal with the "two Chinas" issue further complicated the matter for Beijing, who withdrew from the Olympic movement altogether in 1958 after the issue could not be resolved. When the PRC was absent from the international sports scene, opportunities to establish diplomatic ties with other countries raised under the circumstance in which the Sino-Soviet relationship deteriorated starting in the 1960s, and China was in an economic crisis after self-imposed isolation. As the PRC replaced Taiwan's seat in the UN, Beijing gained the upper hand in the "two Chinas" issue and subsequently replaced Taiwan's seat in the IOC as the only representative of China. In 1979 the IOC reinstated PRC's membership and gave Beijing the exclusive right to represent sports in China. However, Beijing would not attend the first available Summer Olympic Games after its hard-fought battle with the IOC. With the Sino-U.S. relationship reached its height in 1979 when the two formally established diplomatic relations, China followed the U.S.'s lead by boycotting the 1980 Moscow Games, whose host country, the Soviet Union, invaded Afghanistan.

Four years later, China finally participated in the Summer Games in Los Angeles, marking a successful return to the Olympic Games with more than two hundred athletes, a stark contrast to the last time when the Kuomintang sent a one-man team to the 1932 Los Angeles Games. Overall, despite different backgrounds during different eras, China's desire to be present at the international Olympic scene has always been motivated by politics. If the Games were played, they were played in an attempt to inspire the Chinese people, acquire recognition from other countries, and improve the international status of China. If the Games were not played,

they were given up in an effort to protest against opposing political ideologies, consolidating its political stance, and aligning itself with other international powers. Whether the Olympic Games were played or not, the political games have always been on.

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