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THESIS

**SWEEPING THE SOFT POWER PODIUM:
A QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS
OF OLYMPIC SOFT POWER'S IMPACT ON THE HOST
NATION'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE**

by

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December 2021

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HOST NATION'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE**

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ABSTRACT

In February 2022, China will host the Winter Olympics in Beijing. During historical periods of international tension, nations use these types of mega-events as an extension of geopolitical competition to exercise soft power strategies and advance national interests. This thesis analyzes four Olympic case studies (2008 Beijing, 2010 Vancouver, 2012 London, and 2014 Sochi), using public international favorability polling to explore how Olympic hosts influence global perceptions and determine the measurable effects. Quantitative analysis of these factors reveals a strong correlation between increased international favorability ratings and hosting the Olympics, particularly when compared to non-Olympic hosted years.

Considering the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, the 2028 Los Angeles Summer Olympics, and future mega-event bids, this thesis provides associated recommendations to support the U.S. national and defense strategy shift toward strategic competition. These suggestions focus on sports diplomacy; promoting the culture and values of the allied host nation vice host city; publicly refuting an adversary host's false strategic narrative via media and government channels; and solutions to increase allied Olympic bidding that mitigate historical adverse financial, social, and environmental effects. Lastly, the thesis provides a metric to track and analyze mega-event soft power effects to shape future strategy.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AOR	Area of Responsibility
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
DOD	United States Department of Defense
GCC	Geographic Combatant Command
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
H1	Hypothesis 1
H2	Hypothesis 2
IFR	International Favorability Rating
IOC	International Olympic Committee
M1	Model 1
M2	Model 2
M3	Model 3
M4	Model 4
NOY	Non-Olympic Hosted Year
OY	Olympic Hosted Year

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I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

On July 31, 2015, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) awarded China hosting rights to the 2022 Winter Olympic Games. Beijing beat out Almaty, Kazakhstan, in the 128th IOC Session by four votes (44-40 with one abstention) after Oslo, Norway, withdrew considerations, citing high estimated costs and lack of government support.¹ Beijing's selection concludes a run of three straight Olympics hosted by East Asian countries, following the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics and 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics.² While other Olympic cities have hosted multiple games, Beijing is the first to host the Summer and Winter Olympics.³ The 2022 Games will feature 80 participating National Olympic Committees and 109 events across seven sports—the most ever in a Winter Olympics—including seven new events.⁴ In addition, the games will coincide with the 2022 Chinese New Year, with competition occurring across Beijing, Yanqing, and Zhangjiakou.

While the 2022 Olympics will bring international excitement toward competition on the snow and ice, Beijing's selection as host city is not without global political criticism. Cries of human rights abuses, media censorship, environmental pollution, territorial disputes, and the handling of the coronavirus pandemic are just a few of the issues China will have to face on the world's biggest stage. While the IOC states that “sport is neutral and must be separate from political, religious or any other type of interference,” host nations have historically used the Olympics to further their national interests while

¹ Cassandra Vinograd, “Beijing Wins Bid to Host 2022 Winter Olympics,” NBC News, July 31, 2015, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/sports/winter-olympics-beijing-wins-bid-host-2022-games-n401501>.

² Nick Zaccardi, “Beijing to Host 2022 Winter Olympics; First City to Hold Summer and Winter Games,” NBC Sports, July 31, 2015, <https://olympics.nbcsports.com/2015/07/31/beijing-2022-winter-olympics-almaty-ioc-vote/related/?cid=eref:nbcnews:text>.

³ “Beijing 2022 Olympics - Next Winter Olympic Games,” International Olympic Committee, accessed May 14, 2021, <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/beijing-2022>.

⁴ International Olympic Committee.

participants have used the games to undermine those interests.⁵ As a result, a soft power battle between China and those who share unfavorable views toward the Olympic host will be on full display in 2022.

A. RESEARCH QUESTION

The United States (U.S.) and China are in direct competition to either remain or attain the position of leading world power. Achieving this goal is accomplished not only through economic, defense, and political means but also through efforts to shape international order in accordance with one's national interests. Hosting the Olympics provides China with an invaluable opportunity to execute its soft power strategy on the world stage. A successful strategy can further legitimize the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), improve national image, and promote Chinese values, while at the same time countering Western influence.⁶ Therefore, considering the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and U.S. attention on strategic competition, how do host nations utilize the Olympic stage to enhance their cultural soft power, what measurable effects exist, and how do these effects influence the international community's perception of the host nation?

B. SIGNIFICANCE

Soft power is a vital feature of China's grand strategy, and the Olympic stage provides an invaluable opportunity to capitalize on this aspect. The 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics are widely considered China's "coming out party," however, research has not focused hard enough on Olympic soft power in the current environment.⁷ During the Cold War, the U.S. and the Soviet Union routinely used the Olympics as a platform to

⁵ Jules Boykoff, "The Olympics Are Political. The IOC Ban Denies Reality — and Athletes Their Voice.," NBC News, January 16, 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/olympics-are-political-ioc-ban-denies-reality-athletes-their-voice-ncna1117306>.

⁶ Andrew Scobell et al., *China's Grand Strategy: Trends, Trajectories, and Long-Term Competition*, RR-2798-A (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), 25.

⁷ Monroe E. Price and Daniel Dayan, eds., *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press and The University of Michigan Library, 2008), 6.

demonstrate political ideology superiority.⁸ This type of strategy may be at the forefront again during this era of renewed competition.

Now hosting for a second time, fourteen years later, and under a new president, China will use the 2022 Winter Olympics to the fullest extent to “enhance [its] cultural soft power.”⁹ International perceptions of China are currently unfavorable, and these Olympics will provide the CCP with an opportunity to improve its national image and advance its grand strategy.¹⁰ Analyzing the complex relationship between the Olympics and national image is essential, as 2022 will be the first games hosted by a direct competitor since the U.S. security and defense strategy shifted toward strategic competition. Furthermore, the findings can provide insight into potential Olympic soft power countermeasures and deterrence options.

⁸ Price and Dayan, 148.

⁹ Xi Jinping, “Full Text of Xi Jinping’s Report at 19th CPC National Congress” (Speech, 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Beijing, China, October 18, 2017), https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-11/04/content_34115212.htm.

¹⁰ Laura Silver, Kat Devlin, and Christine Huang, “Unfavorable Views of China Reach Historic Highs in Many Countries,” Pew Research Center, October 6, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/10/06/unfavorable-views-of-china-reach-historic-highs-in-many-countries/>.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. SOFT POWER IN CHINA'S GRAND STRATEGY

There is no specific or universally accepted definition of grand strategy but, instead, shared commonalities among them. For example, Chinese scholar Sulmaan Khan defines grand strategy as “the way in which [a country] marshals different forms of power to pursue national objectives.”¹¹ He argues that the grand strategy of Chinese leaders—from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping—share a “consistent definition of national goals and a harnessing of military, diplomatic, economic, and political means to pursue those goals.”¹² RAND senior political scientist Andrew Scobell and Chinese scholar Zhu Feng describe grand strategy as “the process by which a state relates long-term ends to means under the rubric of an overarching and enduring vision to advance the national interest.”¹³ This definition characterizes the term in “an ends-ways-means approach” where a nation must consider which resources to use to achieve the end goal by conducting an honest assessment of the current environment and one’s strengths and weaknesses.¹⁴

Scobell describes China’s current grand strategy as “national rejuvenation” and states its overarching goals are “to produce a China that is well governed, socially stable, economically prosperous, technologically advanced, and militarily powerful by 2050.”¹⁵ The international community is well aware of China’s rejuvenation, leading nations to reassess their strategies toward the rising power. The 2017 U.S. National Security Strategy states:

China and Russia want to shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests. China seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific

¹¹ Sulmaan Wasif Khan, *Haunted By Chaos: China’s Grand Strategy from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), 1.

¹² Khan, 1.

¹³ Andrew Scobell and Zhu Feng, “Grand Strategy and U.S.-China Relations,” (2009) quoted in Scobell et al., *China’s Grand Strategy*, 5.

¹⁴ Scobell et al., *China’s Grand Strategy*, 5–6.

¹⁵ Scobell et al., ix.

region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor. Russia seeks to restore its great power status and establish spheres of influence near its borders.¹⁶

To counter this international reorder, the U.S. national security and defense strategies pivoted from decades of counterterrorism and focused on the renewed strategic competition with China and Russia. While achieving desired goals in one's grand strategy relies on combining the means of military, diplomacy, economics, and politics, it is also heavily influenced by how the means are applied. This application includes two categories: hard power (coercion) and soft power (attraction), where in both cases the desired end state is to affect the behavior of others in a way that is conducive to one's national interests.¹⁷ Joseph S. Nye coined the term "soft power" and characterizes it as follows:

A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its example, and/or aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness. In this sense, it is also important to set the agenda and attract others in world politics, and not only to force them to change through the threat or use of military or economic weapons. This soft power—getting others to want the outcomes that you want—co-opts people rather than coerces them.¹⁸

China has focused heavily on executing these capabilities to shape a world adverse to U.S. values and interests while also promoting its national image. Soft power is a critical element of China's grand strategy and is identified as one of the essential tools of national power in China's arsenal to advance the regime's international goals.¹⁹ While countries implement soft power regularly, the strategy occurs amid the chaos of daily world events. However, every two years, the international stage provides an opportunity for a country to promote its national image and share its values with the world *via* the Olympic Games.

¹⁶ White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: White House, 2017), 25, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

¹⁷ Joseph S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 94.

¹⁸ Nye, 94–95.

¹⁹ Scobell et al., *China's Grand Strategy*, 14.

A 2021 CRS report states the shift from post-Cold War era to renewed Great Power Competition began in 2006–2008 and identifies the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics as one of the key events that “contributed to a perception in China of the United States as a declining power, and to a Chinese sense of self-confidence or triumphalism.”²⁰ Therefore, amid these considerations, it is vital to understand the merits of the Olympics as a platform to promote national image and determine to what extent these effects influence the international community’s perception of the host nation.

B. ADVANTAGES OF HOSTING THE OLYMPICS

The Olympics are the premier international mega sporting event. “Mega-events” are sporting events organized by a legitimate and recognized authority, generate high levels of media coverage and tourism for the host due to the event’s significance, and are often accompanied by festival and cultural events.²¹ Mega-events exist on three different levels: nationally (e.g., the Super Bowl), regionally (e.g., UEFA European Championship, Pan-American Games, Asian Games), and internationally (e.g., Olympics, FIFA World Cup).²² Due to mega-event popularity and media coverage, the events are often used “for obtaining political, cultural, and economic benefits for the hosting region.”²³ These benefits include further international recognition of the host, the ability to propagate political values held by the host, strengthening and sharing the host’s values, and increasing the host’s tourism and economy.²⁴

²⁰ Ronald O’Rourke, *Renewed Great Power Competition: Implications for Defense—Issues for Congress*, CRS Report No. R43838 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2021), 25–26, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R43838.pdf>.

²¹ Terri Byers, Trevor Slack, and Milena Parent, *Key Concepts in Sport Management* (1 Oliver’s Yard, 55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP United Kingdom: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2012), 2, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473914599>.

²² Byers, Slack, and Parent, 2.

²³ Byers, Slack, and Parent, 2.

²⁴ J.R. Brent Ritchie, “Assessing the Impact of Hallmark Events: Conceptual and Research Issues,” *Journal of Travel Research* 23, no. 1 (July 1, 1984): 2–11, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728758402300101>.

The IOC describes the Olympic Games as “the world’s foremost multi-sports event,” and as “the largest sporting celebration in terms of the number of sports on the programme, the number of athletes present and the number of people from different nations gathered together at the same time, in the same place, in the spirit of friendly competition.”²⁵ The Olympics are held every four years, with the Summer and Winter Olympics alternating every two years within those four years. Each Summer and Winter Olympics continue to build upon its predecessor not only in spectacle but more importantly, from a revenue and soft power perspective, in broadcast coverage and international reach.

Figure 1 details the broadcast audience across television and digital platforms for the six Summer and Winter Olympics from 2008–2018. Of note, the data indicate that Summer Olympics have a much broader international viewership. This difference is likely due to the Summer Games’ size and participation over the Winter Games. For example, in the 2016 Rio Summer Olympics, 11,238 athletes from 207 participating National Olympic Committees competed across 28 sports and 306 events.²⁶ While in the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics, 2,833 athletes from 92 participating National Olympic Committees competed across seven sports and 102 events.²⁷

²⁵ “Celebrate Olympic Games,” International Olympic Committee, May 12, 2021, <https://olympics.com/ioc/celebrate-olympic-games>.

²⁶ “Rio 2016 Summer Olympics - Athletes, Medals & Results,” International Olympic Committee, accessed May 15, 2021, <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/rio-2016>.

²⁷ “PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympics - Athletes, Medals & Results,” International Olympic Committee, accessed May 15, 2021, <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/pyeongchang-2018>.

OLYMPIC BROADCAST: GLOBAL VIEWERSHIP

Olympic Games: Broadcast Audience

Olympic Games	Television	Digital Platforms - RHB	
	Global Audience Reach (billion)	Digital Unique Users (billion)	Video Views (billion)
Rio 2016	3.2	1.3	4.4
London 2012	3.6	1.2	1.9
Beijing 2008	3.5	0.4	0.7

Olympic Winter Games	Television	Digital Platforms - RHB	
	Global Audience Reach (billion)	Digital Unique Users (million)	Video Views (billion)
PyeongChang 2018	1.92	670	3.2
Sochi 2014	2.1	300	1.4
Vancouver 2010	1.8	130	0.3

OLYMPIC BROADCAST: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Global Audience Reach** – The net number of people who saw at least one minute of the Olympic Games coverage on TV.
- **Unique Users** – The number of different individuals who visit a site within a specific time period.
- **Video Views** – The number of times a video is watched.
- **RHB** – Rights-Holding Broadcasters

Figure 1. Global Olympic Viewership Statistics²⁸

While television viewership may have decreased, despite the world population increasing, for the 2018 PyeongChang and 2016 Rio Olympic Games, the data shows a dramatic increase in viewership across digital platforms, consistent with the continued shift in how the world digests media. These two Olympics increased viewership in this domain by over 130% compared to the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics and 2012 London Summer Olympics.

The data provide three key takeaways about the 2016 Rio Summer Olympics. First, it was the most-viewed Olympic Games ever when viewership across television, digital

²⁸ Source: "Olympic Marketing Fact File 2020 Edition," International Olympic Committee, 2020, 25, <https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/Documents/IOC-Marketing-and-Broadcasting-General-Files/Olympic-Marketing-Fact-File.pdf>.

platforms, and engagement on social media is combined.²⁹ Second, half the world's population watched the games.³⁰ Third, the content viewed online doubled the 2012 London Summer Olympics, including over seven billion video views on social media platforms.³¹ Similar viewership records are visible in the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics. These Olympics received more coverage than any previous Winter Games and were watched by over a quarter of the world's population.³² Furthermore, 2018 was the most digitally viewed Winter Olympics, including over 1.6 billion video views on social media.³³

The opportunity to reach between 25–50% of the world's population across an increasing number of countries and territories through multiple media platforms is a rare event. The Olympic Games offer a two-week period where both athletic competition and the host nation itself are at the center of international attention. Cultural programs are often just as memorable as athletic achievements. The Olympic “opening and closing ceremonies are an invitation to discover the culture of the country hosting the Games, through music, song, dance, etc.” while “plays, concerts, ballets and exhibitions are held in the city, region and even the country hosting the Games.”³⁴ Furthermore, viewers are attracted to the “numerous artists, designers, architects, choreographers and musicians [that] play an active part in the success of the Games, be it through the construction of stadiums and other

²⁹ “Global Broadcast and Audience Report - Olympic Games Rio 2016,” International Olympic Committee, 2016, 2, https://library.olympics.com/Default/doc/SYRACUSE/166292/global-broadcast-and-audience-report-olympic-games-rio-2016-international-olympic-committee?_lg=en-GB.

³⁰ International Olympic Committee, 2.

³¹ International Olympic Committee, 2.

³² “Global Broadcast and Audience Report - Olympic Games Pyeongchang 2018,” International Olympic Committee, 2018, 2, https://library.olympics.com/Default/doc/SYRACUSE/174640/global-broadcast-and-audience-report-pyeongchang-2018-international-olympic-committee?_lg=en-GB.

³³ International Olympic Committee, 2, 6.

³⁴ “The Modern Olympic Games,” Olympic Museum Educational and Cultural Services, 2013, 8, <https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/Documents/Document-Set-Teachers-The-Main-Olympic-Topics/The-Modern-Olympic-Games.pdf>.

competition venues, the Look of the Games (logos, pictograms and mascots) or the opening and closing ceremonies.”³⁵

While there are many risks to hosting the Olympics, namely high costs, the amount of attention brought to the host country cannot be replicated and are rivaled only by the FIFA World Cup. Additionally, countries like the former Soviet Union and even Russia and China today view the Olympics as an “extension of geopolitical competition” where winning more medals and beating the U.S. provides evidence of a superior geopolitical system to domestic and international audiences.³⁶ For these reasons, the Olympic Games provide the host nation with a unique capability to execute its soft power strategy across an attentive and monumental audience.

C. CCP’S OLYMPIC PERSPECTIVE

In his book analyzing China’s perspective on sport and its relationship to its national image, Xu Guogqi states that “sports, perhaps more than other modern cultural activities, provide a useful perspective on—and may even help shape—how national identity is developed and internationalization is achieved.”³⁷ Furthermore, he argues that sport has emerged as “a key tool in Beijing’s all-out campaign for international prestige, status, and legitimacy.”³⁸ This pre-2008 Olympics assessment remains accurate and timely as President Xi Jinping referenced the upcoming 2022 Winter Olympics in his speech at the 19th CCP National Congress by stating:

We will carry out extensive Fitness-for-All programs, speed up efforts to build China into a country strong on sports, and make smooth preparations for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. We will strengthen people-to-people and cultural exchanges with other countries, giving prominence to Chinese culture while also drawing on

³⁵ Olympic Museum Educational and Cultural Services, 8.

³⁶ Dawn Brancati and William C. Wohlforth, “Why Authoritarians Love the Olympics,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 25, 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-03-25/why-authoritarians-love-olympics>.

³⁷ Xu Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams: China and Sports, 1895–2008* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=3300133>.

³⁸ Guoqi, 198.

other cultures. We will improve our capacity for engaging in international communication so as to tell China's stories well, present a true, multi-dimensional, and panoramic view of China, and enhance our country's cultural soft power.³⁹

This reference indicates that China recognizes the Olympics as a unique soft power opportunity. A successful strategy can improve the CCP's legitimacy "by playing up nationalist goals, patriotic achievements, and Chinese values, while, on the other hand, counteracting dangerous Western ideas, such as democracy, human rights, and freedom of religion."⁴⁰ In his book examining the leaders of the CCP, Khan states that "the search for further friendships—in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America—reflects not the type of ideological contest that animated the Soviet Union and the United States, but a deceptively simple insight: it helps to have all the friends you can get."⁴¹ In doing so, a successful Olympic soft power strategy could increase China's international favorability through the development of new and strengthening of current relationships with other nations.

D. OLYMPIC IMPACT ON NATIONAL IMAGE

The consensus among scholars is that the Olympics significantly impact the host's national image as this opportunity "cannot be imitated by any other campaign or event" and it "provides the host country with the opportunity of a lifetime to invent an image of itself on the world stage."⁴² There is, however, contention as to what extent national image is affected and what audience is impacted.

One school of thought centers around the concept of the "universality of a country's culture."⁴³ This term does not focus on shared ideologies but rather the appeal of one's

³⁹ Xi Jinping, "Full Text of Xi Jinping's Report at 19th CPC National Congress."

⁴⁰ Scobell et al., *China's Grand Strategy*, 25.

⁴¹ Khan, *Haunted By Chaos: China's Grand Strategy from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping*, 239–40.

⁴² Carlen Don, "Far From Gold: Why Hosting the Olympics Is Detrimental to the Host Country" (Senior Thesis, Claremont McKenna College, 2010), 47, https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/7/.

⁴³ Joseph S. Nye, "Limits of American Power," *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 554, <https://doi.org/10.2307/798134>.

culture to another culture.⁴⁴ For example, “when non-American citizens buy American clothes, music, or food products, it increases America’s soft power by increasing interest in its culture. The more attractive a nation finds [a] culture, the more likely it is to cooperate at the institutional level.”⁴⁵ International focus on the Olympic host, the event’s broadcast reach, and associated cultural programs likely magnify these effects, thus, providing the host with an opportunity for new or improved international relationships.

On the other hand, some argue that “the international prominence and global attention” brought upon by the games is a double-edged sword.⁴⁶ In this case, the international community’s perception of the host can become unfavorable if the Olympic spotlight focuses on the “pitfalls” and exposes “the ugly underbelly” of the host nation.⁴⁷ Moreover, with global media outlets on-site and over 3.5 billion viewers, criticisms of the host nation’s stances on contentious or ethical issues can be instantly accessed by half the world’s population. At the same time, however, the host nation can use this opportunity to craft a strategic narrative to combat the negative press. Despite this disadvantage, hosting the Olympics remains a highly competitive evolution, and to that extent, many countries assess that the potential gain is worth the risk.

There is much discussion about what audience is most affected by Olympic soft power in the days, months, and even years following the closing ceremonies. Some argue that the host nation’s soft power resonates more with its own populace. Manzenreiter contends that the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics “were used as a hallmark of modernity within a more complex message of progress and success targeting the Chinese people” who in turn regarded the event as “a triumphant symbol of the great progress their country and

⁴⁴ Megan M Granger, “The Beijing Olympics Political Impact and Implications for Soft Power Politics” (Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2008), 11, https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/3845/08Dec_Granger.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

⁴⁵ Granger, 11.

⁴⁶ Don, “Far From Gold: Why Hosting the Olympics Is Detrimental to the Host Country,” 47.

⁴⁷ Don, 48.

economy had achieved over the recent years.”⁴⁸ Others argue that the 2008 Olympics were a cultural and social event that boosted the international community’s understanding of Chinese culture and modernity and catapulted China onto the world stage leading to new international relationships and diplomatic opportunities.⁴⁹

E. LITERATURE GAP

Maintaining a generally positive international image is vital for a state to achieve its national goals and advance its interests. This thesis aims to understand how hosting the Olympic Games impacts the international community’s perception of the host nation. As seen by television and digital viewership statistics, the Olympics can provide an enormous and diverse audience. However, prior studies do not answer the question as to the scale and impact of its influence. This thesis will bridge the gap to demonstrate the relationship between unparalleled levels of global visibility and their potential influence over international favorability. This thesis uses a blend of quantitative and qualitative data to answer this question. International polling data centered on a nation’s post-Olympic hosted year provide a measurable aspect of global perception. Analyzing historical Olympic case studies demonstrates common themes and trends that hosts use to improve national image and enhance cultural soft power.

⁴⁸ Wolfram Manzenreiter, “The Beijing Games in the Western Imagination of China: The Weak Power of Soft Power,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 34, no. 1 (February 2010): 42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723509358968>.

⁴⁹ Don, “Far From Gold: Why Hosting the Olympics Is Detrimental to the Host Country,” 55, 67.

III. CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

A. INTERNATIONAL FAVORABILITY OF CHINA

As of October 2020, international favorability ratings (IFR) of China are at an all-time low. Figure 2 displays Pew Research Center’s IFRs of China from 2005–2020.⁵⁰ During this period, Pew surveyed 36 different countries across all U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC) Area of Responsibility (AOR). The x-axis corresponds to each year from 2005 to 2020. The y-axis measures the IFRs from each surveyed country for a particular year and is displayed by the blue dots. The green line tracks the yearly mean IFRs, while the orange line tracks the yearly median IFRs. The red dotted vertical line corresponds to the post- 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic survey period (results released in 2009).

⁵⁰ “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey December 5, 2019 Release,” Pew Research Center, December 5, 2019, 47–54, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/12/PG_2019.12.05_Balance-of-Power_TOPLINE.pdf; “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey October 6, 2020 Release,” Pew Research Center, October 6, 2020, 21–24, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/10/PG_2020.10.06_Global-Views-China_TOPLINE.pdf.

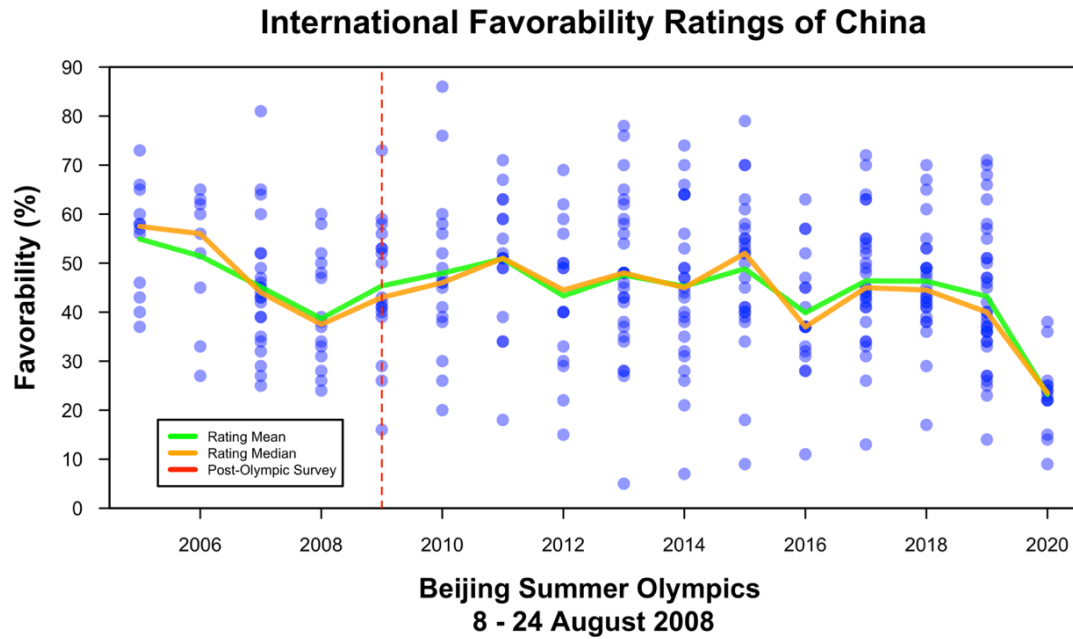


Figure 2. International Favorability Ratings of China (2005-2020)⁵¹

The most recent poll occurred in October 2020 and revealed that China’s international favorability reached an all-time low.⁵² Over 14,000 adults in 14 advanced economies—the U.S., Canada, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Japan, and South Korea—were surveyed from June to August 2020. The average mean favorability score reached 23.21% out of 100 (down from 43.21% in 2019), while the average median favorability score reached 23.5% out of 100 (down from 40% in 2019).⁵³ While issues such as the economy, environment, territorial disputes, and human rights related to China were factors in these low ratings, the steep overarching criticism came from China’s handling of the coronavirus pandemic.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Adapted from “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey December 5, 2019 Release,” 47–54; “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey October 6, 2020 Release,” 21–24.

⁵² Silver, Devlin, and Huang, “Unfavorable Views of China Reach Historic Highs in Many Countries.”

⁵³ Silver, Devlin, and Huang.

⁵⁴ Silver, Devlin, and Huang.

While this data demonstrates a suitable representation across democracies and advanced economies, the Pew Research Center did not achieve its typical global reach for the 2020 survey because of the coronavirus pandemic. While polling data from 2018–2019 does not account for the coronavirus pandemic, it includes a wider range of surveyed countries outside the democratic and advanced economy categories. These polls surveyed 25 and 34 countries, respectively. This data indicated that, since 2017, China’s favorability ratings continued to decrease from 2017–2018 (mean: -0.73%, median: -1.5%) and from 2018–2019 (mean: -3.35%, median: -3.5%).⁵⁵

With international favorability at an all-time low, China will look to the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics as a significant opportunity to boost these ratings, previously accomplished following its 2008 hosting duties. Ending this current run of unfavorable ratings may be challenging amid calls for an Olympic boycott over issues opposed by the international community.

B. GLOBAL RESPONSE TO THE UPCOMING 2022 BEIJING OLYMPICS

International human rights groups and politicians in the U.S., Canada, and the UK have urged Olympic members to boycott the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, citing issues such as China’s activities in Hong Kong and treatment of ethnic Uyghurs in Xinjiang Province.⁵⁶ Those in favor of a potential boycott cite the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics as a prime example. When the IOC awarded China the 2008 Summer Olympics, the international community believed the global spotlight would encourage freedom of media and improve human rights and environmental conditions. However, these conditions did not change, and the international community does not believe the 2022 Olympics will

⁵⁵ Laura Silver, Kat Devlin, and Christine Huang, “People around the Globe Are Divided in Their Opinions of China,” Pew Research Center, December 5, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/12/05/people-around-the-globe-are-divided-in-their-opinions-of-china/>; Richard Wike et al., “International Publics Divided on China,” Pew Research Center, October 1, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2018/10/01/international-publics-divided-on-china/>.

⁵⁶ Steven Lee Myers, “China Is Preparing for Another Olympics in Beijing, Like It or Not,” *New York Times*, February 19, 2021, <http://www.proquest.com/docview/2491103674/citation/631F58CB93B4CBAPQ/1>.

temper these behaviors.⁵⁷ A public letter drafted by international advocacy groups stated that “anything less [than a boycott] will be seen as an endorsement of the Chinese Communist Party’s authoritarian rule and blatant disregard for civil and human rights.”⁵⁸

In an effort to combat the threat of a potential boycott, a Chinese Embassy spokesman in Washington, DC, stated that any “U.S. attempts to interfere in China’s domestic affairs over the Olympics were doomed to fail.”⁵⁹ Additionally, China has also threatened sanctions against any country that executes a boycott.⁶⁰ These are not empty threats as China has used its economic influence to impose sanctions on Australian exports after Canberra called for a “probe into the origins of the [corona]virus and banned Huawei from building its 5G network.”⁶¹ In addition, China temporarily banned domestic broadcasts of the National Basketball Association after Houston Rockets General Manager Daryl Morey displayed support for Hong Kong protestors on social media.⁶² China also canceled a \$650 billion television contract with the English Premier League following the UK’s decision to ban Huawei’s 5G network.⁶³ In short, China has the economic leverage to affect both countries and companies significantly.

The Biden Administration states it is “not currently talking about changing our posture or our plans as it relates to the Beijing Olympics.”⁶⁴ While the U.S. and the Soviet

⁵⁷ Myers.

⁵⁸ “Joint Open Letter to Governments: Urgently Commit To A Government Boycott Beijing 2022,” No Beijing 2022, February 3, 2021, <https://nobeijing2022.org/joint-open-letter-to-governments-boycott-beijing2022/>.

⁵⁹ David Brunnstrom and Michael Martina, “Pelosi Calls for U.S. and World Leaders to Boycott China’s 2022 Olympics,” Reuters, May 18, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/pelosi-says-us-should-diplomatically-boycott-2022-olympics-china-2021-05-18/>.

⁶⁰ Brancati and Wohlforth, “Why Authoritarians Love the Olympics.”

⁶¹ “China ‘indefinitely’ Suspends Key Economic Dialogue with Australia,” BBC News, May 6, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-57004797>.

⁶² Myers, “China Is Preparing for Another Olympics in Beijing, Like It or Not.”

⁶³ Sam Shead, “English Premier League Terminates Lucrative Chinese TV Deal with Immediate Effect,” CNBC, September 3, 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/09/03/premier-league-terminates-chinese-tv-deal-with-immediate-effect.html>.

⁶⁴ Myers, “China Is Preparing for Another Olympics in Beijing, Like It or Not.”

Union boycotted each other's Olympics in 1980 and 1984, there was no athletic boycott of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics despite similar calls to not attend. Whether a boycott occurs, the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics provides both China and the U.S. and its allies with a unique opportunity to execute soft power capabilities amid the highest concentration of international attention. These Olympics Games are just the start as the U.S. will host the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. Although the IOC granted hosting rights to Australia, China did prepare a bid to host the 2032 Summer Olympics in Chengdu and Chongqing.⁶⁵ Therefore, a thorough understanding of how countries use the Olympics to influence the international community and the measurable extent of said influence will significantly inform offensive and defensive soft power strategies over the coming decades.

⁶⁵ Myers.

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IV. CASE STUDIES

A. RESEARCH DESIGN

This research utilized four online datasets to analyze four Olympic case studies. The data used in this report are public, transparent, and reproducible. The datasets used include the following:

- BBC World Service Poll⁶⁶
- Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Survey⁶⁷
- World Bank’s World Development Indicators⁶⁸
- POLITY Scores⁶⁹

International polling data are at the core of answering the research question. The primary data used in this report comes from the Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Survey and the BBC World Service Poll that provide IFRs of different countries. Pew Research Center asks the following question in its surveys: “Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of [country name].”⁷⁰ The BBC World Service Poll provides respondents with a list of countries and asks whether they had a “mostly positive or mostly negative influence in the world.”⁷¹ Since the Pew Research Center includes two positive response categories

⁶⁶ Applicable polling data cited in subsequent case studies

⁶⁷ Applicable polling data cited in subsequent case studies

⁶⁸ World Bank, *World Development Indicators DataBank*, accessed May 27, 2020, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

⁶⁹ Center for Systemic Peace, “INSCR Data Page,” accessed May 27, 2020, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html>.

⁷⁰ “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey December 5, 2019 Release,” 47.

⁷¹ BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Israel and Iran Share Most Negative Ratings in Global Poll,” BBC News, March 6, 2007, 1, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/06_03_07_perceptions.pdf.

compared to only one from BBC, I combined the Pew responses of very favorable and somewhat favorable into one category to keep the data consistent across two sources.

1. Sample Constraints

This report focuses on the following four case studies based on available annual Pew Research Center⁷² and BBC World Service Poll⁷³ data:

- 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics
- 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics
- 2012 London Summer Olympics
- 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics

This research focuses on the survey periods pre- and post-Olympics, but also includes other years for comparison to measure changes in IFRs of the host country. Although the data is abundant, it is also quite broad because the survey questions do not explicitly ask respondents for favorability based on the Olympics themselves. Therefore, it is possible that other influential factors may have positively or negatively impacted the IFRs during each country's Olympic host year. Examples of these factors include, but are not limited to, the country's stances on human rights and environmental issues; representation in art, film, music, and sport; political and economic status as well as changes in political leadership; hosting major international conferences or summits; tourism; and participation in humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, or military operations abroad.

⁷² Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Survey data was applied to the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics and 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics case studies. While the Pew Research Center surveys multiple countries, the subject of that survey applies only to China, Russia, and the United States. Therefore, data could not be applied to the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics and the 2012 London Summer Olympics.

⁷³ BBC World Service Poll data was applied to the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics and 2012 London Summer Olympics. BBC World Service Poll does not have data prior to 2007, did not conduct surveys in 2015 or 2016, and ended its survey in 2017. Therefore, adequate data does not exist that could be applied to the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic and 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic case studies. Data does not exist to include cases studies prior to 2008 or the 2016 Rio Summer Olympics, 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics, and 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics.

Polling data are compiled from 2005–2020 to include the applicable Olympic hosted year (OY) and non-Olympic hosted year (NOY) periods for comparisons. These four case studies are prime candidates to answer the research question because they are recent, include democratic and non-democratic countries, and contain countries that have received generally favorable and unfavorable historical ratings. Therefore, this comprehensive data will adequately inform the degree to which the Olympics boost international favorability. Each case study section includes additional source details.

2. Unit of Analysis and Variables

The unit of analysis in this report is country-year. The dependent variable is the annual percentage change in IFRs of the Olympic host nations. The independent variable is the post-OY. The four control variables include polity score, gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, televisions per capita, and cellphones per capita.⁷⁴

Polity scores control for levels of democracy in a country. These measurements use a 21-point scale that ranges from -10 (full autocracies) to +10 (full democracies).⁷⁵ This report utilizes a revised polity score called polity2. Polity2 converts instances of “standardized authority score” (i.e., numbers outside the 21-point range) to conventional polity scores (i.e., numbers within the 21-point range).⁷⁶

GDP per capita controls for levels of economic development and wealth in a country. Televisions per capita measure the number of television sets per 1,000 people in a country. Cellphones per capita measure the number of cellphones subscriptions per 1,000 people in a country. These last two data sets control for levels of media consumption. The Olympics are a unique venue that can reach over half the world’s population through television programming as well as the internet and social media accessed through cellphone

⁷⁴ The World Development Indicators data set (GDP, televisions, cellphones) is only available through 2015. Polity scores data is only available through 2018. This data covers all Olympic year periods; however, these last known values were carried forward through 2020 and applied to the regression model.

⁷⁵ Sustainable Competitiveness Observatory, “Polity2 (Polity IV),” accessed June 6, 2021, <https://competitivite.ferdi.fr/en/indicators/polity2-polity-iv>.

⁷⁶ Sustainable Competitiveness Observatory.

subscriptions. These three control variables are logged transformed to normalize the data and reduce skewness.

3. Hypotheses

This report analyzes two hypotheses using the data sources and the outlined variables to answer the research question.

- HYPOTHESIS 1 (H1): Olympic host nations will receive increased IFRs in the survey period following an OY.
- HYPOTHESIS 2 (H2): Olympic host nations will receive higher expected changes in IFRs following an OY compared to NOY.

B. 2008 BEIJING SUMMER OLYMPICS

The 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics held competition from 8–24 August 2008. This was the first time China hosted the Olympics and the third time hosted in East Asia. A total of 10,942 athletes from 204 Olympic teams competed across 28 sports and 302 events.⁷⁷ The U.S. won the most total medals (112), followed by China (100) and Russia (60).⁷⁸ However, China won the most gold medals (48), followed by the U.S. (36) and Russia (24).⁷⁹ The 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics reached a global television audience of 3.5 billion people, 400 million unique digital users, and 700 million online video views.⁸⁰

1. Background

In 2001, the IOC granted Beijing, China hosting rights to the 2008 Summer Olympics over sites in Canada, France, Turkey, and Japan. The selection was a momentous

⁷⁷ “Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics - Athletes, Medals & Results,” International Olympic Committee, accessed May 16, 2021, <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/beijing-2008>.

⁷⁸ “Beijing 2008 Medal Table,” International Olympic Committee, accessed May 16, 2021, <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/beijing-2008/medals>.

⁷⁹ International Olympic Committee.

⁸⁰ “Olympic Marketing Fact File 2020 Edition,” 25.

achievement in Chinese history as the country's desire to become an active IOC member and a future host goes back much further. One year after their 1978 economic reform, China rejoined the IOC and in 1980 participated in the Olympics for the first time since 1952.⁸¹

In a 2011 article analyzing the relationship between sports, nationalism, politics, and international relations, the authors argue that China's "Olympic Strategy" was a vital part of an effort to "to make China a sporting superpower, as well as a political and economic power, that could compete on equal terms with the U.S. in the West and Japan and South Korea in the East."⁸² As part of this strategy, China participated in the Asian Games beginning in 1974 and the Olympic Games starting in 1980, hosted the 1990 Asian Games, and unsuccessfully bid for the 2000 Summer Olympics in an effort "to establish a national identity and play a major role in international politics and economy in a new era."⁸³

Although the 1990 Asian Games demonstrated China's progress and achievements, the country's unsuccessful bid for the 2000 Summer Olympics brought steep international criticism from the U.S. and many IOC members. International opposition toward China's human rights violations culminated in passing a U.S. House of Representatives resolution. The resolution stated that "holding the Olympic games in countries, such as the People's Republic of China, which engage in massive violations of human rights serves to shift the focus from the high ideals behind the Olympic tradition and is counterproductive for the Olympic movement."⁸⁴ China decided to forgo bidding for the 2004 Summer Olympics and rework its Olympic strategy before bidding on the 2008 Summer Olympics. In this effort, China recruited domestic and international experts from various fields such as sports, journalism, art, and economics who had experience in previous Olympic successful

⁸¹ Fan Wei, Fan Flong, and Lu Zhouxiang, "Why Did China Bid Twice for the Olympic Games? Sport, Nationalism and International Politics," *Journal of Olympic History* 19, no. 2 (2011): 31.

⁸² Wei, Flong, and Zhouxiang, 31.

⁸³ Wei, Flong, and Zhouxiang, 31.

⁸⁴ To express the sense of the House of Representatives that the Olympics in the Year 2000 should not be held in Beijing or elsewhere in the People's Republic of China., H.R. 188, 103rd Cong. (1993), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/house-resolution/188/text>.

bids.⁸⁵ In response to international criticism on its human rights violations, the Deputy Mayor of Beijing and Olympic official Liu Jinmin stated:

By applying for the Olympics, we want to promote not just the city's development, but the development of society, including democracy and human rights... If people have a target like the Olympics to strive for, it will help us establish a more just and harmonious society, a more democratic society, and help integrate China into the world.⁸⁶

Regarding internet restrictions and media censorship, the IOC and Chinese Olympic officials jointly announced that China would lift many restrictions during the Olympic period. IOC officials stated that “a number of websites are now available. That’s what counts—that things are moving forward. We are pleased with the way they have handled and resolved the issues” however, also acknowledged that Chinese Olympic organizers “could have done better.”⁸⁷ Lastly, the Beijing Olympic Committee pledged to commit a portion of its Olympic budget to support its “Action Plan for a Green Olympics” and work with environmental groups to launch an environmental protection plan to improve traffic infrastructure, reduce smog, and build parks and green areas.⁸⁸

Overall, China successfully revamped its Olympic strategy by focusing directly on improving these internationally criticized issues and was ultimately awarded 2008 Olympic hosting duties on July 13, 2001. Domestically, the successful Olympic bid was viewed as a landmark in Chinese history and signified China’s rise in the new century.⁸⁹ Internationally, the bid was considered a further step in the opening of China to the outside world and as a potential venue that could spark both political and social changes previously

⁸⁵ Wei, Flong, and Zhouxiang, “Why Did China Bid Twice for the Olympic Games? Sport, Nationalism and International Politics,” 34.

⁸⁶ Philip P. Pan, “China Using Rights Issue To Promote Olympic Bid,” *Washington Post*, February 21, 2001, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2001/02/21/china-using-rights-issue-to-promote-olympic-bid/dc41d7d5-869f-4075-8f17-28bc788a1e3e/>.

⁸⁷ Tania Branigan, “China Relaxes Internet Censorship for Olympics,” *Guardian*, August 1, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/01/china.olympics>.

⁸⁸ Wei, Flong, and Zhouxiang, “Why Did China Bid Twice for the Olympic Games? Sport, Nationalism and International Politics,” 34.

⁸⁹ Wei, Flong, and Zhouxiang, 6.

seen when Japan hosted in 1964 and South Korea hosted in 1988.⁹⁰ Given these actions, was China effective in its campaign to use the Olympic platform as a venue to increase its international favorability? The following sections analyze international polling data to determine to what extent the Olympics impacted China's global soft power.

2. Sources

This data set used two Pew Research Center reports. The Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey covered surveyed years 2005–2019, while the Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey covered the 2020 survey year.⁹¹ During this period, polls surveyed 36 countries across all U.S. DOD GCC AORs (NORTHCOM, SOUTHCOM, EUCOM, AFRICOM, CENTCOM, INDOPACOM). The average sample size per country surveyed each year is 1,000 respondents of the adult population age 18 and over.⁹² The data analysis focuses on the OY (2008) and post-OY (2009) survey periods. During this span, polls surveyed 14 countries across all AORs with the exemption of AFRICOM.

3. Visualization and Analysis

Figure 3 displays the percentage change in IFRs of China from 14 countries following the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics.

⁹⁰ Fang Wan, "How China Changed after 2008 Beijing Olympics," DW, August 8, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/how-china-changed-after-2008-beijing-olympics/a-44986744>.

⁹¹ "Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey December 5, 2019 Release," 47–54; "Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey October 6, 2020 Release," 21–24.

⁹² "Pew Research Center Country Specific Methodology," Pew Research Center, January 8, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/interactives/international-methodology/>.

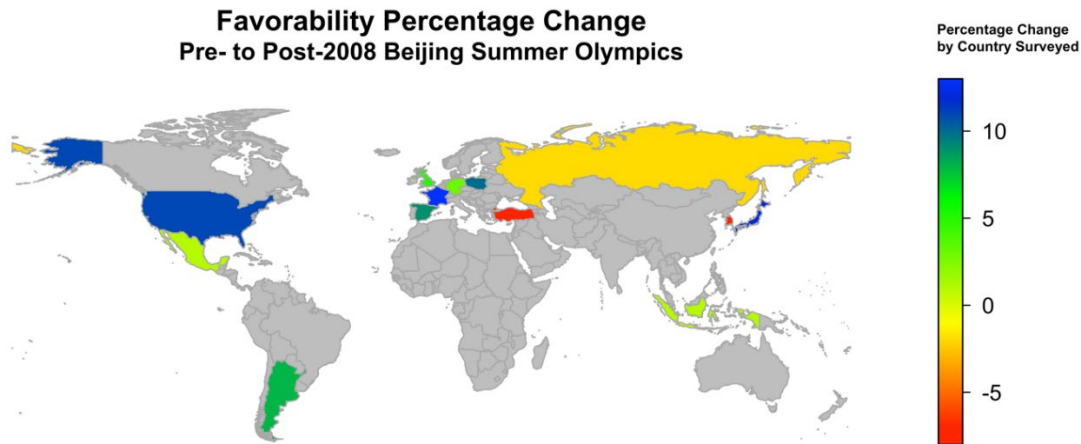


Figure 3. China: IFR Percentage Changes Post-2008 Olympics⁹³

The data indicate that 79% (11/14) of surveyed countries reported increased favorability in the survey year following the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics. The mean increase equated to 4.21%, while the median increase equated to 4%. The most significant increases in favorability came from France, the U.S., and Japan. Turkey, South Korea, and Russia are the only countries that reported decreased favorability of China.

Figure 3 demonstrates that China experienced increased IFRs both in the number of countries as well as mean and median percentage changes following its OY. However, are these data spikes truly unique to the Olympics? Figure 4 measures both the mean and median percentage changes of China's IFRs from 2006–2020. The x-axis corresponds to the survey year. The y-axis corresponds to the mean percentage change and thus affects the size of the bars in the graph. The z-axis measures the median percentage change and thus affects the colors of the bars in the graph. The red vertical line corresponds to the post-OY survey.

⁹³ Adapted from “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey December 5, 2019 Release,” 47–54; “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey October 6, 2020 Release,” 21–24.



Figure 4. China: Annual IFR Percentage Changes⁹⁴

Evidence reveals that China experienced its second-highest mean and highest (tied) median percentage change in favorability following the Olympics. In conclusion, Figure 3 supports H1, while Figure 4 adds significant depth to this finding by showing that the increased ratings experienced post-Olympics are unique when measured over a more extended time period and compared to other annual percentage changes.

4. International Reception and Legacy

Immediate international reception of China following the 2008 Olympics and its historical legacy significantly differ. The available evidence indicates that the global perception of China increased favorably following its Olympic hosting year. The 2008 Olympics, at the time, were the largest and most expensive ever held and are often publicly regarded as highly successful in terms of ceremonies and athletic competition. The opening ceremony “framed China as a model of spectacle and national collaboration” using “dance, music and theatre...to dazzle spectators while also presenting a politically strategic image to the world,” most notably the unforgettable scene of 2,008 musicians drumming in

⁹⁴ Adapted from “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey December 5, 2019 Release,” 47–54; “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey October 6, 2020 Release,” 21–24.

unison.⁹⁵ Despite international criticisms from the time of bidding, global protests during the torch relay, and some setbacks during competition, the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics received “wide media praises and glowing remarks by world leaders whose high turn-up also reflected the event as a political convention.”⁹⁶

Overall, these Olympics helped brand China as a rising power with growing political and economic influence while increasing its business and tourism sectors.⁹⁷ Although China received increased IFR gains following its hosting duties, this bump began to decrease in the following years as pre-Olympic promises regarding internationally criticized issues did not improve. In the decade following the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, several China analysts concluded that the promises made pre-Olympics were short-lived, and the country became “even more repressive and authoritarian.”⁹⁸ Despite a soft power win during the Olympics, the gains were quickly undercut when the CCP restored media censorship and the country clamped down on human rights activists.⁹⁹ Furthermore, Chang Ping, a Chinese political commentator, stated:

Before 2008, the Chinese government kept a low profile on the international arena. It also made promises to the Chinese people that there would be more rights and more democracy in the country. After the Beijing Olympics, Chinese authorities changed their tone completely. They said they did not need to learn from the West anymore, and that the Chinese political system was better than other systems in the world.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Caitlin Vincent and Katya Johanson, “Forget the Medals, the Real Game of the Olympics Is Soft Power — and the Opening Ceremony Is Key,” *The Conversation*, July 22, 2021, <http://theconversation.com/forget-the-medals-the-real-game-of-the-olympics-is-soft-power-and-the-opening-ceremony-is-key-164791>.

⁹⁶ Evans Phidelis Aryabaha, “The Role of the Beijing Olympics in China’s Public Diplomacy and Its Impact on Politics, Economics and Environment” (Master’s Dissertation, University of Malta, 2010), 86, <https://www.diplomacy.edu/resource/the-role-of-the-beijing-olympics-in-chinas-public-diplomacy-and-its-impact-on-politics-economics-and-environment/>.

⁹⁷ Aryabaha, 86–87.

⁹⁸ Wan, “How China Changed after 2008 Beijing Olympics.”

⁹⁹ Matt Johnson, “What China and Russia Don’t Get About Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy*, April 29, 2013, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/29/what-china-and-russia-dont-get-about-soft-power/>.

¹⁰⁰ Wan, “How China Changed after 2008 Beijing Olympics.”

In conclusion, data analyses indicate that the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics support both hypotheses. While the soft power gains may have been brief, hosting the Olympics helped brand China as a rising power in the new century and significantly transformed the larger field of geopolitical competition.

C. 2010 VANCOUVER WINTER OLYMPICS

The 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics held competition from 12–27 February 2010. This was the third time Canada hosted the Olympics (1976 and 1988). A total of 2,566 athletes from 82 Olympic teams competed across seven sports and 86 events.¹⁰¹ The U.S. took home the most medals (37), followed by Germany (30) and Canada (26).¹⁰² However, Canada won the most gold medals (14), followed by Germany (10) and the U.S. and Norway (tied at 9).¹⁰³ The 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics reached a global television audience of 1.8 billion people, 130 million unique digital users, and 300 million online video views.¹⁰⁴

1. Background

In 2003, the IOC granted Vancouver, Canada, hosting rights to the 2010 Winter Olympics over sites in South Korea and Austria. Canada's desire to host in Vancouver first began during the 1960 Winter Olympics in Squaw Valley, California, when the Canadian Olympic Committee initiated research on the possibility of hosting in British Columbia.¹⁰⁵ However, due to deficient infrastructure, transportation systems, and access, Canada concentrated its Olympic bids on other developed cities such as Banff, Quebec City,

¹⁰¹ "Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics - Athletes, Medals & Results," International Olympic Committee, accessed May 16, 2021, <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/vancouver-2010>.

¹⁰² "Vancouver 2010 Medal Table," International Olympic Committee, accessed May 16, 2021, <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/vancouver-2010/medals>.

¹⁰³ International Olympic Committee.

¹⁰⁴ "Olympic Marketing Fact File 2020 Edition," 25.

¹⁰⁵ Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, "Vancouver 2010 Bid Report" (LA84 Foundation, November 2009), 15, <https://digital.la84.org/digital/collection/p17103coll8/id/45534/rec/97>.

Montreal, and Calgary.¹⁰⁶ In 2002, Canada put forth the Vancouver 2010 bid focusing heavily on building “a stronger Canada whose spirit is raised by its passion for sport, culture and sustainability” and creating “a strong foundation for sustainable socio-economic development in Vancouver’s inner-city neighbourhoods,” as well as the “incorporation of the interests of different groups, such as Aboriginal people.”¹⁰⁷

Despite these stated intentions, members of Canada’s First Nations people criticized the Olympic bidding, planning, and approval process for selecting a venue on unceded indigenous land.¹⁰⁸ As the land is “not under the protection of a signed treaty,” any Olympic construction would require “the permission of the First Nations government before being developed.”¹⁰⁹ This opposition prompted the “No Olympics on Stolen Native Land” campaign, that while not ultimately meeting its goal, significantly improved dialogue between the indigenous communities and the British Columbian government.¹¹⁰

In addition to this domestic indigenous controversy, the French-Canadian province of Quebec also criticized the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. Quebec, the host nation’s second-largest province by population, criticized the Olympics for the absence of the French language and French-Canadian dignitaries during the opening ceremonies.¹¹¹ Based on these internal disputes and a lack of substantive international backlash, pre-Olympic controversy originated more so from Canada’s domestic population than the international community. Given these actions, was Canada successful in its campaign to

¹⁰⁶ Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, 15.

¹⁰⁷ Price and Dayan, *Owning the Olympics*, 381; Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, “Official Report of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games,” 10.

¹⁰⁸ Tyler Dusanek, “Canada First Nations Challenge Government over Stolen Land (Vancouver Olympics) 2010,” Global Nonviolent Action Database, November 25, 2013, <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/canada-first-nations-challenge-government-over-stolen-land-vancouver-olympics-2010>.

¹⁰⁹ Dusanek.

¹¹⁰ Dusanek.

¹¹¹ Will DiNovi, “Why the Olympics Have Been Bad for Canada,” *Atlantic*, February 26, 2010, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2010/02/why-the-olympics-have-been-bad-for-canada/36596/>.

use the Olympic platform as a venue to increase its international favorability? The following sections analyze international polling data to determine to what extent the Olympics impacted Canada's global soft power.

2. Sources

This data set used six BBC World Service Poll reports. These reports covered surveyed years 2009–2014.¹¹² During this period, polls surveyed 36 countries across all AORs. The average sample size per country surveyed each year is 1,000 respondents of the adult population age 18 and over (in some countries age 15 and over).¹¹³ The data analysis focuses on the OY (2010) and post-OY (2011) survey periods. During this span, polls surveyed 24 countries across all AORs.

3. Visualization and Analysis

Figure 5 displays the percentage change in IFRs of Canada from 24 countries following the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics.

¹¹² BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of China and Russia Decline in Global Poll," BBC News, February 5, 2009, 4, https://drum.lib.umd.edu/bitstream/handle/1903/10692/BBCVals_Feb09_art.pdf;jsessionid=8A9A9559C38031AB3B1EAD0A923BC3DE?sequence=1; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Global Views of United States Improve While Other Countries Decline," BBC News, April 18, 2010, 16, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/160410bbcwsppoll.pdf>; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of U.S. Continue to Improve in 2011 BBC Country Rating Poll," BBC News, March 7, 2011, 20, https://globescan.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/bbc2011_countries_release.pdf; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of Europe Slide Sharply in Global Poll, While Views of China Improve," BBC News, May 10, 2012, 24, https://globescan.com/images/images/pressreleases/bbc2012_country_ratings/2012_bbc_country%20rating%20final%20080512.pdf; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of China and India Slide While UK's Ratings Climb: Global Poll," BBC News, May 22, 2013, 21, https://globescan.com/images/images/pressreleases/bbc2013_country_ratings/2013_country_rating_poll_bbc_globescan.pdf; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Negative Views of Russia on the Rise: Global Poll," BBC News, June 3, 2014, 15, <https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/country-rating-poll.pdf>.

¹¹³ Specific methodology detailed in each applicable report

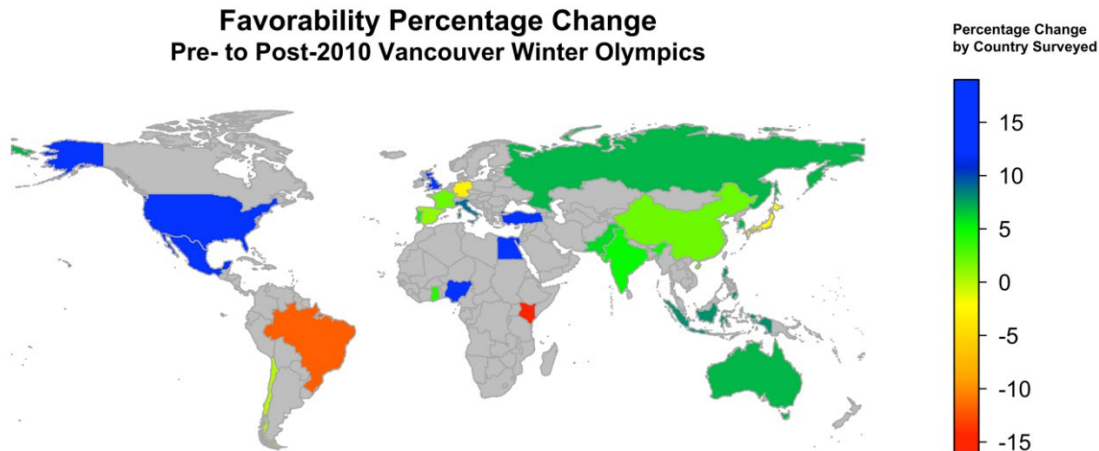


Figure 5. Canada: IFR Percentage Changes Post-2010 Olympics¹¹⁴

The data indicate that 79% (19/24) of surveyed countries reported increased favorability (Chile reported no change) in the survey year following the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. The mean increase equated to 5.29%, while the median increase equated to 6.25%. The most significant increases in favorability came from Turkey, the U.S., and the UK. Kenya, Brazil, Germany, and Japan are the only countries that reported decreased favorability. Interestingly, Canada received high increases from both Pakistan and Mexico. 2010 was the first overall winter Olympic appearance for Pakistan and the first for Mexico after missing the previous games.

Figure 5 demonstrates that Canada experienced increased IFRs both in the number of countries as well as mean and median percentage changes from the previous year. However, are these data spikes truly unique to the Olympics? Figure 6 measures both the mean and median percentage changes of Canada's IFRs from 2010–2014.

¹¹⁴ Adapted from BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of China and Russia Decline in Global Poll," 4; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Global Views of United States Improve While Other Countries Decline," 16; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of U.S. Continue to Improve in 2011 BBC Country Rating Poll," 20; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of Europe Slide Sharply in Global Poll, While Views of China Improve," 24; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of China and India Slide While UK's Ratings Climb: Global Poll," 21; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Negative Views of Russia on the Rise: Global Poll," 15.

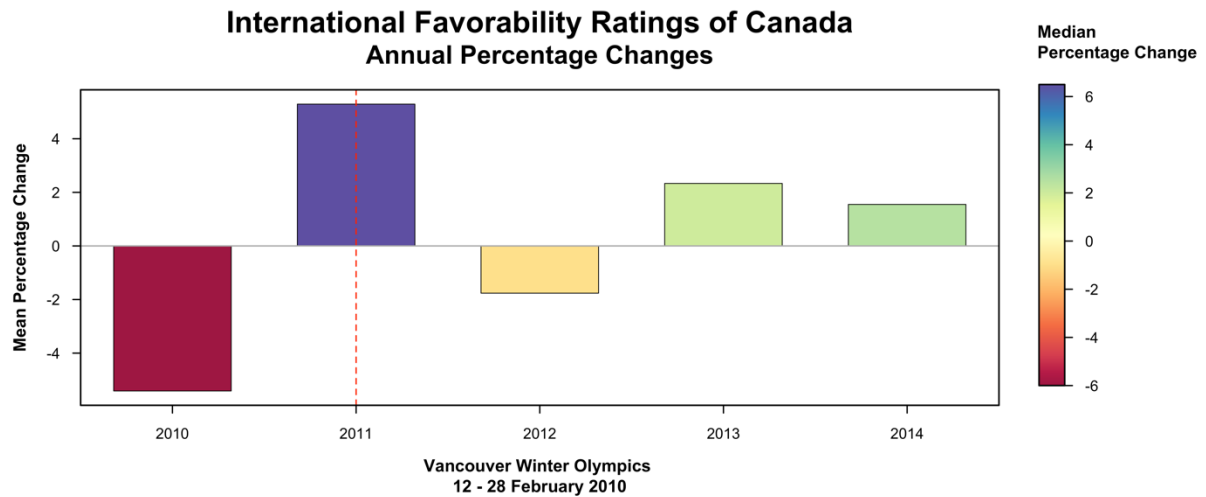


Figure 6. Canada: Annual IFR Percentage Changes¹¹⁵

Evidence reveals that Canada experienced both its highest mean and median percentage change in favorability following the Olympics. In conclusion, Figure 5 supports H1, while Figure 6 adds significant depth to this support by showing that these increased ratings experienced post-Olympics are unique when measured over a more extended time period and compared to other annual percentage changes.

4. International Reception and Legacy

The 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics are widely viewed as successful, although tempered by the death of a Georgian luge athlete during pre-trials.¹¹⁶ The Olympics received praise for the inclusion of First Nations participation; it “mark [ed] the first time

¹¹⁵ Adapted from BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Views of China and Russia Decline in Global Poll,” 4; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Global Views of United States Improve While Other Countries Decline,” 16; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Views of U.S. Continue to Improve in 2011 BBC Country Rating Poll,” 20; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Views of Europe Slide Sharply in Global Poll, While Views of China Improve,” 24; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Views of China and India Slide While UK’s Ratings Climb: Global Poll,” 21; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Negative Views of Russia on the Rise: Global Poll,” 15.

¹¹⁶ “FactSheet Vancouver Facts & Figures,” International Olympic Committee, 2011, 1, <https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/Games/Winter-Games/Games-Vancouver-2010-Winter-Olympic-Games/Facts-and-Figures/Facts-and-Figures-Vancouver-2010.pdf>.

in the history of the Olympics that indigenous peoples have been recognized as official partners.”¹¹⁷ Furthermore, the Vancouver 2010 Bid Corporation and British Columbian government signed agreements with First Nations representatives that led to economic developments, shared ownership of Olympic infrastructure and housing, and contributions to First Nations’ cultural center, endowment, and youth sports legacy funds.¹¹⁸

In its further promotion of human rights, the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics organized the first Pride House in Olympic history.¹¹⁹ This area served as a welcoming venue where LGBT athletes, coaches, families, Olympic volunteers, and the local community could experience the games. These venues have since been incorporated in other major international sporting events, including the Olympics and FIFA World Cup—although the Russian government denied its involvement during the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. Financially, the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics broke even and served as a good model for countries reluctant to bid on the Olympics, fearing high costs and crippling debt.¹²⁰

D. 2012 LONDON SUMMER OLYMPICS

The 2012 London Summer Olympics held competition from 27 July–12 August 2012. This was the third time the UK hosted the Olympics (1908 and 1948). A total of 10,568 athletes from 204 Olympic teams competed across 26 sports and 302 events.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ “Aboriginal Involvement in Games Makes History,” CBC, February 14, 2010, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/aboriginal-involvement-in-games-makes-history-1.945693>.

¹¹⁸ Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, “Official Report of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games,” 12.

¹¹⁹ Dean Nelson, “Why Pride House Is the Most Significant Legacy of the 2010 Olympics,” CBC, February 16, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/pride-house-vancouver-olympics-1.5463687>.

¹²⁰ “No Debt from Vancouver Olympics, Final VANOC Report Says,” CBC, July 4, 2014, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vancouver-2010-winter-olympics-debt-free-vanoc-final-report-says-1.2695994>.

¹²¹ “London 2012 Summer Olympics - Athletes, Medals & Results,” International Olympic Committee, accessed May 16, 2021, <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/london-2012>.

The U.S. took home the most medals (104), followed by China (91) and Russia (67).¹²² The U.S. also won the most gold medals (46), followed by China (38) and Great Britain (29).¹²³ The 2012 London Summer Olympics reached a global television audience of 3.6 billion people, 1.2 billion unique digital users, and 1.9 billion online video views.¹²⁴

1. Background

In 2005, the IOC granted London, UK hosting rights to the 2012 Summer Olympics over sites in France, Spain, the U.S., and Russia. As a “World City,” the London 2012 bid focused heavily on its ability to “celebrate cultures, people and languages—in London, the UK and around the world.”¹²⁵ Like Vancouver, the bid focused as a local effort to increase the “social and economic outreach to some of [the UK’s] poorest and most violent regions.”¹²⁶ Overall, the 2012 London Summer Olympics lead-up did not receive much international criticism; however, substantial domestic and international fears of terrorism dating from London’s host city selection loomed.

On July 7, 2005, just one day after its selection as host, al-Qaeda-associated suicide bombers conducted four synchronized attacks across the city’s public transportation systems, killing 56 and injuring 700.¹²⁷ In March 2011, the Olympic Safety and Security Strategy identified terrorism as “the greatest threat to the security of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.”¹²⁸ Three weeks before the opening ceremonies, London’s Metropolitan Police arrested six people on terrorism charges, although also stating there

¹²² “London 2012 Medal Table,” International Olympic Committee, accessed May 16, 2021, <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/london-2012/medals>.

¹²³ International Olympic Committee.

¹²⁴ “Olympic Marketing Fact File 2020 Edition,” 25.

¹²⁵ Price and Dayan, *Owning the Olympics*, 386.

¹²⁶ Price and Dayan, 385–86.

¹²⁷ “Terrorists Attack London Transit System at Rush Hour,” HISTORY, July 21, 2010, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/terrorists-attack-london-transit-system-at-rush-hour>.

¹²⁸ United Kingdom Home Office, *Olympic and Paralympic Safety and Security Strategy* (London, UK: Home Office, 2011), 12.

was no link between the motivations and the Olympics. Despite these incidents, the games operated smoothly without incident. Given these actions, was the UK successful in its campaign to use the Olympic platform as a venue to increase its international favorability? The following sections analyze international polling data to determine to what extent the Olympics impacted the UK's global soft power.

2. Sources

This data set used eight BBC World Service Poll reports. These reports covered surveyed years 2007–2014.¹²⁹ During this period, polls surveyed 36 countries across all AORs. The average sample size per country surveyed each year is 1,000 respondents of the adult population age 18 and over (in some countries age 15 and over).¹³⁰ The data analysis focuses on the OY (2012) and post-OY (2013) survey periods. During this span, polls surveyed 21 countries across all AORs.

3. Visualization and Analysis

Figure 7 displays the percentage change in IFRs of the UK from 21 countries following the 2012 London Summer Olympics.

¹²⁹ BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Israel and Iran Share Most Negative Ratings in Global Poll," 16; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Global Views of USA Improve," BBC News, April 2, 2008, 13, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/02_04_08_globalview.pdf; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of China and Russia Decline in Global Poll," 4; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Global Views of United States Improve While Other Countries Decline," 10; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of U.S. Continue to Improve in 2011 BBC Country Rating Poll," 13; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of Europe Slide Sharply in Global Poll, While Views of China Improve," 13; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of China and India Slide While UK's Ratings Climb: Global Poll," 11; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Negative Views of Russia on the Rise: Global Poll," 19.

¹³⁰ Specific methodology detailed in each applicable report

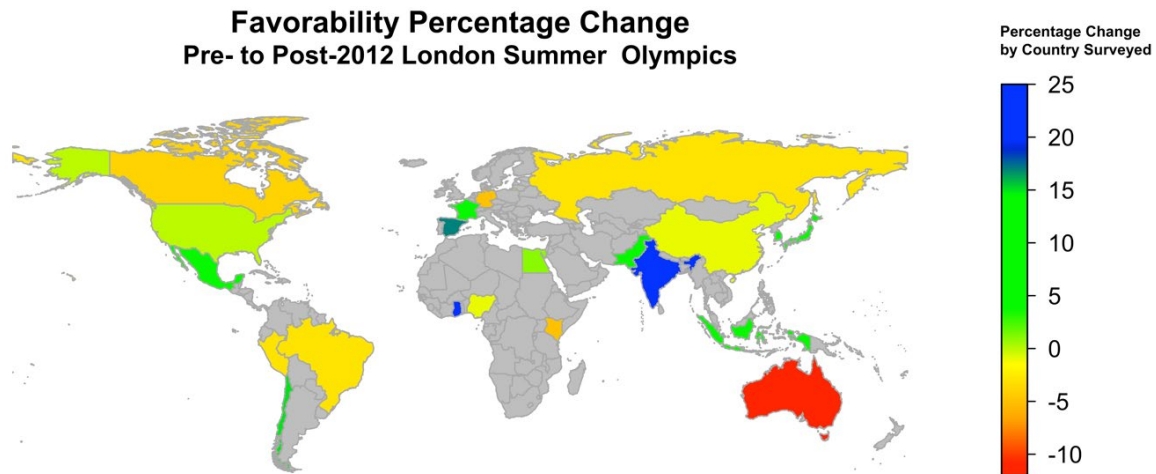


Figure 7. United Kingdom: IFR Percentage Changes Post-2012 Olympics¹³¹

The data indicate that 52% (11/21) of surveyed countries reported increased favorability (the U.S. reported no change) in the survey year following the 2012 London Summer Olympics. The mean increase equated to 4.43%, while the median increase equated to 1%. The most significant increases in favorability came from Ghana, India, and Spain. Conversely, Australia, Germany, and Kenya reported the highest levels of decreased favorability. Figure 7 demonstrates that the UK experienced increased IFRs both in the number of countries as well as mean and median percentage changes following its OY. However, are these data unique in the UK data set? Figure 8 measures both the mean and median percentage changes of the UK's IFRs from 2008–2014.

¹³¹ Adapted from BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Israel and Iran Share Most Negative Ratings in Global Poll," 16; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Global Views of USA Improve," 13; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of China and Russia Decline in Global Poll," 4; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Global Views of United States Improve While Other Countries Decline," 10; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of U.S. Continue to Improve in 2011 BBC Country Rating Poll," 13; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of Europe Slide Sharply in Global Poll, While Views of China Improve," 13; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of China and India Slide While UK's Ratings Climb: Global Poll," 11; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Negative Views of Russia on the Rise: Global Poll," 19.

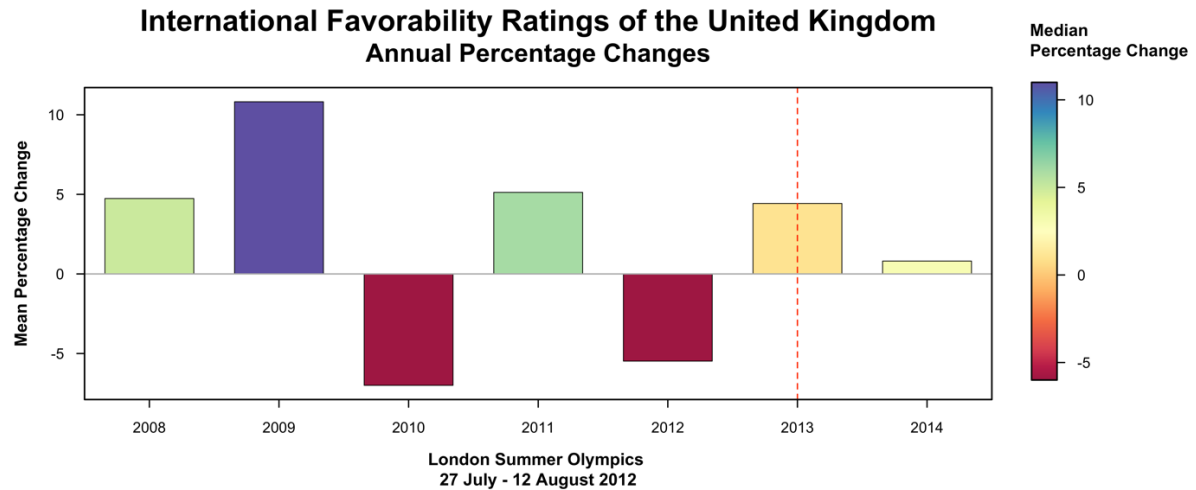


Figure 8. United Kingdom: Annual IFR Percentage Changes¹³²

Evidence reveals that the UK experienced the fourth-highest mean and fifth-highest median percentage change in favorability following the Olympics. While the post-OY was not the highest percentage change the UK experienced, it nevertheless brought both mean and median favorability out of the negative from the previous year. In conclusion, although Figure 7 supports H1, the data represented in Figure 8 does not necessarily add significant depth when applied over a more extended period and compared to other annual percentage changes.

4. International Reception and Legacy

Overall, the 2012 London Summer Olympics are widely praised for many reasons. Locally, Olympic infrastructure and supporting projects revitalized 560 acres of London's

¹³² Adapted from BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Israel and Iran Share Most Negative Ratings in Global Poll," 16; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Global Views of USA Improve," 13; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of China and Russia Decline in Global Poll," 4; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Global Views of United States Improve While Other Countries Decline," 10; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of U.S. Continue to Improve in 2011 BBC Country Rating Poll," 13; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of Europe Slide Sharply in Global Poll, While Views of China Improve," 13; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of China and India Slide While UK's Ratings Climb: Global Poll," 11; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Negative Views of Russia on the Rise: Global Poll," 19.

East End.¹³³ At the opening ceremonies, the UK highlighted some of its biggest musical and cinematic exports. Paul McCartney performed, and there was a pre-recorded video with Queen Elizabeth II and Daniel Craig, acting as James Bond, jumping from a helicopter into London's Olympic Stadium followed by a live cut to the Queen in the audience.¹³⁴

Above all, the 2012 London Summer Olympics succeeded in achieving its Olympic motto to "Inspire a Generation."¹³⁵ Globally, these Olympics served as a momentous achievement in women's sports. Every participating nation's athletic delegation included at least one female competitor for the first time in Olympic history.¹³⁶ Moreover, Brunei, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia had female athletes in their Olympic teams for the first time in history.¹³⁷ International sporting organizations lifted bans on wearing hijabs in competition, thus encouraging more Muslim women to compete internationally.¹³⁸ Overall, more women participated in the 2012 London Summer Olympics than any other Olympic in history, making up 44% of all athletes compared to 24% during the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympics.¹³⁹ Lastly, in the U.S., NBC Universal broadcast coverage of

¹³³ "London 2012: Engaging, Inspiring and Transforming," International Olympic Committee, September 24, 2021, <https://olympics.com/ioc/legacy/london-2012/london-2012-engaging-inspiring-and-transforming>.

¹³⁴ Vincent and Johanson, "Forget the Medals, the Real Game of the Olympics Is Soft Power — and the Opening Ceremony Is Key."

¹³⁵ Gemma Cairney, "Get Inspired: Did the London Olympics Inspire a Generation?," BBC Sport, August 17, 2003, <https://www.bbc.com/sport/get-inspired/23738916>.

¹³⁶ Bill Chappell, "Year Of The Woman At The London Games? For Americans, It's True," NPR, August 10, 2012, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetorch/2012/08/10/158570021/year-of-the-woman-at-the-london-games-for-americans-its-true>.

¹³⁷ Roxane Coche and C. A. Tuggle, "The Women's Olympics? A Gender Analysis of NBC's Coverage of the 2012 London Summer Games," *Electronic News* 10, no. 2 (June 1, 2016): 121–22, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1931243116647770>.

¹³⁸ Homa Khaleeli, "Sports Hijabs Help Muslim Women to Olympic Success," *Guardian*, July 23, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/the-womens-blog-with-jane-martinson/2012/jul/23/sports-hijabs-muslim-women-olympics>.

¹³⁹ Chappell, "Year Of The Woman At The London Games?"; Robin Scott-Elliot, "London 2012 Olympics: The Women's Games," *Independent*, July 26, 2012, <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/olympics/news/london-2012-olympics-women-s-games-7976835.html>.

women's sports exceeded men's sports for the first time since the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics, famous for the U.S. women's soccer gold medal finish.¹⁴⁰

E. 2014 SOCHI WINTER OLYMPICS

The 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics held competition from 6–23 February 2014. This was the second time Russia hosted the Olympics (1980 as the Soviet Union). A total of 2,780 athletes from 88 Olympic teams competed across seven sports and 98 events.¹⁴¹ Russia took home the most medals (29), followed by the U.S. (28) and Norway (26).¹⁴² Russia also tied Norway for most gold medals (11), followed by Canada (10) and the U.S. (9).¹⁴³ The 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics reached a global television audience of 2.1 billion people, 300 million unique digital users, and 1.4 billion online video views.¹⁴⁴

1. Background

In 2007, the IOC granted Sochi, Russia hosting rights to the 2014 Winter Olympics over sites in South Korea and Austria. Similar to China in 2008, scholars analyze that Russia bid on the 2014 Winter Olympics to increase domestic nationalism and serve as an avenue to regain national glory.¹⁴⁵ The Russian Olympic Bidding Committee presented a bid focused on the “rehabilitation themes of traditional Olympic internationalism” and developing an Olympics that could “drive positive change across multiple areas of social life, including integration of people with disabilities, environmental awareness, corporate transparency and accountability.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ Coche and Tuggle, “The Women’s Olympics?,” 121.

¹⁴¹ “Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics - Athletes, Medals & Results,” International Olympic Committee, accessed May 16, 2021, <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/sochi-2014>.

¹⁴² “Sochi 2014 Medal Table,” International Olympic Committee, accessed May 16, 2021, <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/sochi-2014/medals>.

¹⁴³ International Olympic Committee.

¹⁴⁴ “Olympic Marketing Fact File 2020 Edition,” 25.

¹⁴⁵ Price and Dayan, *Owning the Olympics*, 385.

¹⁴⁶ Price and Dayan, 384.

Domestic and international protests concerning high costs, government corruption, terrorism threats, and human rights abuses such as Russia's 2013 anti-LGBT laws marred the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. In the lead-up to the opening ceremonies, international media quickly criticized the Russian government and the IOC's decision to grant Russia hosting rights. U.S. media stated, "the strong-armed dream of Russian President Vladimir Putin has thus far succeeded not in embellishing the Olympic motto, but altering it, from 'swifter, higher, stronger' to, 'unfinished, unsettling and uninviting.'"¹⁴⁷ Israeli media stated, "there is no doubt that the Sochi Olympics is a genuine fiasco, one of the biggest in Russia's modern history," adding, "the mere scandalous decision to hold the winter games in one of the hot cities of Russia testifies somewhat to megalomania, but from here the problems only gradually piled up."¹⁴⁸ Lastly, Japanese media stated that Russia was not deserving of hosting rights and that "the atmosphere surrounding the Sochi Games reflects many of Russia's worst traits."¹⁴⁹

Many countries enacted diplomatic boycotts of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics in response to these controversies, particularly the anti-LGBT laws. Most notably, U.S. President Barack Obama, UK Prime Minister David Cameron, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel were absent from the opening ceremonies.¹⁵⁰ Given these actions, was Russia successful in its campaign to use the Olympic platform as a venue to increase its international favorability? The following sections analyze international polling data to determine to what extent the Olympics impacted Russia's global soft power.

¹⁴⁷ Bill Plaschke, "From Russia with Dread; Sochi Lacks Joy," *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 2014, sec. Sports, <https://www.latimes.com/sports/more/la-sp-sochi-plaschke-20140207-column.html>.

¹⁴⁸ Anthony Zurcher, "Sochi Olympic Success: Russia and the West Have Differing Views," BBC News, February 8, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-echochambers-26092729>.

¹⁴⁹ Nina L. Khrushcheva, "Russia's Potemkin Olympic Village," *Japan Times*, February 7, 2014, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2014/02/07/commentary/russias-potemkin-olympic-village/#.UvVPaD-B13s>.

¹⁵⁰ Michał Kobierecki, "Russia and Its International Image: From Sochi Olympic Games to Annexing Crimea," *International Studies. Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal* 18, no. 2 (December 1, 2016): 174, <https://doi.org/10.1515/ipcj-2016-0016>.

2. Sources

This data set used two Pew Research Center reports. The Spring 2017 Survey covered surveyed years 2007–2017, while the Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey covered the 2018–2020 survey years.¹⁵¹ During this period, polls surveyed 38 countries across all AORs. The average sample size per country surveyed each year is 1,000 respondents of the adult population age 18 and over.¹⁵² The data analysis focuses on the OY (2014) and post-OY (2015) survey periods. During this span, polls surveyed 29 countries across all AORs.

3. Visualization and Analysis

Figure 9 displays the percentage change in IFRs of Russia from 29 countries following the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics.

¹⁵¹ Margaret Vice, “Publics Worldwide Unfavorable Toward Putin, Russia,” Pew Research Center, August 16, 2017, 17–20, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/08/Pew-Research-Center_2017.08.16_VIEWS-of-Russia-Report.pdf; “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey December 16, 2020 Release,” Pew Research Center, December 16, 2020, 2–4, <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Views-of-Russia-Topline-for-Release.pdf>.

¹⁵² “Pew Research Center Country Specific Methodology.”

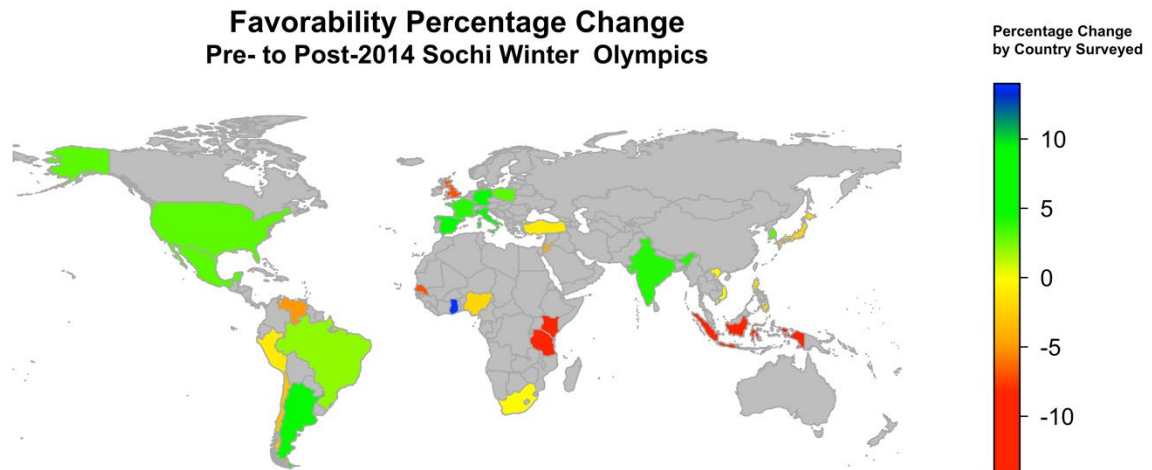


Figure 9. Russia: IFR Percentage Changes Post-2014 Olympics¹⁵³

The data indicate that only 41% (12/29) of surveyed countries reported increased favorability (South Africa and Vietnam reported no change) in the survey year following the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. The mean change in favorability equated to -0.31%, while the median change equated to -1%. The most significant increases in favorability came from Ghana, Argentina, and Germany. Conversely, Kenya, Tanzania, and Indonesia reported the highest levels of decreased favorability.

The last three case studies reveal that China, Canada, and the UK significantly increased their IFRs following the OYs. Furthermore, China and Canada recorded all-time highs in percentage change increases. However, these dramatic increases did not occur for Russia following the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics.

Figure 9 demonstrates that Russia received decreased favorability ratings from most countries surveyed and experienced negative mean and median percentage changes from the previous year. Figure 10 measures the mean and median percentage changes of Russia's IFRs from 2010–2015 and 2017–2020. Unfortunately, Pew did not survey in 2016; therefore, data cannot demonstrate the IFR percentage change from 2015–2016 or 2016–2017.

¹⁵³ Adapted from Vice, "Publics Worldwide Unfavorable Toward Putin, Russia," 17–20; "Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey December 16, 2020 Release," 2–4.

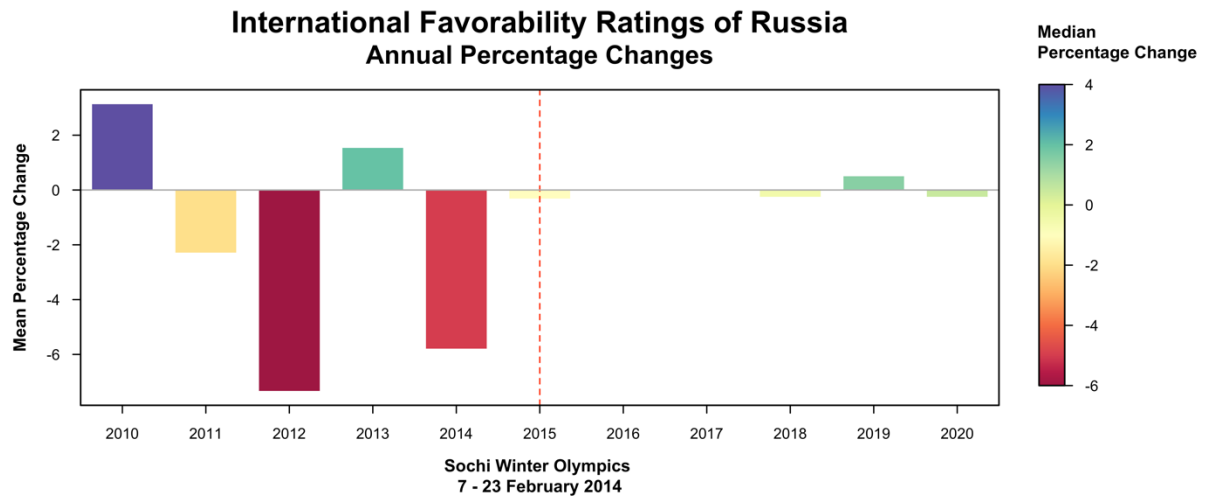


Figure 10. Russia: Annual IFR Percentage Changes¹⁵⁴

Evidence reveals that Russia experienced its fourth-lowest mean and median percentage change in favorability following the Olympics. Compared to the other case studies, Russian favorability was likely the most influenced by outside factors, notably the 2014 annexation of Crimea. Although not part of this study, it is important to note the favorability increase in 2019. This survey included the 2018 FIFA World Cup hosted by Russia from 14 June–15 July 2018. FIFA broadcasted the 2018 World Cup in every territory around the world to a combined 3.57 billion viewers.¹⁵⁵ Russian mean and median favorability increased 0.5% and 1.5% after the World Cup year, respectively. In conclusion, Figure 9 does not support H1, and Figure 10 does not demonstrate that these ratings are unique when measured over a more extended time period and compared to other annual percentage changes.

¹⁵⁴ Adapted from Vice, “Publics Worldwide Unfavorable Toward Putin, Russia,” 17–20; “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey December 16, 2020 Release,” 2–4.

¹⁵⁵ “More than Half the World Watched Record-Breaking 2018 World Cup,” FIFA, December 21, 2018, <https://www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/more-than-half-the-world-watched-record-breaking-2018-world-cup>.

4. International Reception and Legacy

Compounding the intensely negative pre-Olympic sentiments, allegations in December 2014 plagued Russia over claims that its Olympic Committee participated in a state-run doping program. The IOC stripped applicable Russian athletes of their medals and excluded their participation from the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics.¹⁵⁶ Further disciplinary action continued when the World Anti-Doping Agency banned Russia from competing internationally until the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics, although its athletes could compete under a neutral flag.¹⁵⁷

Financially, the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics set a record for “the most expensive sports event ever organized with a staggering cost of more than \$51 billion.”¹⁵⁸ Additionally, Russia will pay approximately \$1.2 billion per year for the considerable future due to defaulted state-backed loans and used Olympic infrastructure.¹⁵⁹ These high initial and ongoing costs also directly impacted future Olympic host bidding. Fearing these potential financial woes, four of the six countries that intended to bid for the 2022 Winter Olympics withdrew, leaving only China and Kazakhstan.¹⁶⁰

Above all, the international legacy of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics will likely always be associated with the subsequent Russian involvement in Crimea. Just four days after the Olympic closing ceremonies, pro-Russian forces seized parliament and other key government buildings in the Crimean capital. On March 18, a treaty formalized the accession of Crimea into the Russian Federation. In all, these events led to immense international criticism, and Russia’s Olympic soft power gains quickly dissipated. Therefore, of all the case studies, the ability to measure Russia’s Olympic soft power gains

¹⁵⁶ Rachel Trent, “What Is ROC? Here’s What to Know about Russia and the Olympics,” CNN, July 26, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/26/sport/what-is-roc-olympics-explainer-spt-trnd/index.html>.

¹⁵⁷ Trent.

¹⁵⁸ Karolos Grohmann, “Billion-Dollar Sochi Games a Sporting Success,” Reuters, December 19, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yearender-olympics-idUSKBN0JX26720141219>.

¹⁵⁹ Martin Müller, “After Sochi 2014: Costs and Impacts of Russia’s Olympic Games,” *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 55, no. 6 (May 2015): 649, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2015.1040432>.

¹⁶⁰ Grohmann, “Billion-Dollar Sochi Games a Sporting Success.”

was most affected by other influential events. In any case, both the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics and the annexation of Crimea supported an alternative objective by demonstrating Russia “as a powerful state, capable of fulfilling its goals” while also “showing the incapacity of the international community to prevent it.”¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Kobierecki, “Russia and Its International Image,” 181–82.

V. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The Beijing 2008, Vancouver 2010, and London 2012 case studies clearly support H1 by demonstrating Olympic host nations received increased IFRs following an OY. While the Sochi 2014 case study did not support H1, the Russian annexation of Crimea likely heavily influenced its IFRs. Therefore, as an alternative, Russian IFRs following the 2018 FIFA World Cup may provide further support to H1. In any case, while data associated with H1 offers valuable information, a more rigorous form of analysis is needed to fully answer the research question to understand the relationship between IFRs after OYs versus NOYs.

A. REGRESSION TABLE

H2 states that Olympic host nations will receive higher expected changes in IFRs following OYs compared to NOYs. To analyze H2, I designed one linear regression model and three log-linear regression models using the data sources and variables outlined in Chapter IV Section A.¹⁶²

Table 1 reports the results from the following models: MODEL 1 (M1) is a baseline model that demonstrates the relationship among IFRs between the OYs and NOYs of the four case studies with no control variables. MODEL 2 (M2) adds to this baseline model by adding polity and GDP per capita as control variables. MODEL 3 (M3) adds to the baseline model by adding polity, GDP per capita, televisions per capita, and cellphones per capita as control variables. Finally, MODEL 4 (M4) maintains all control variables but removes the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics case study and all IFRs of Russia.

¹⁶² A decrease in international favorability percent change is indicated by a negative integer. Therefore, negative binomial and Poisson regression models are not included in the table.

Table 1. Regression Table¹⁶³

	<i>Percent Change in International Favorability</i>			
	Model (1)	Model (2)	Model (3)	Model (4)
OLYMPIC YEAR	3.876*** (0.966)	3.770*** (0.983)	3.785*** (0.986)	5.121*** (1.233)
POLITY		-0.013 (0.108)	-0.035 (0.113)	-0.124 (0.135)
GDP PER CAPITA (LOG)		-0.289 (0.415)	0.767 (1.214)	1.624 (1.440)
TELEVISIONS PER CAPITA (LOG)			-1.021 (1.337)	-2.270 (1.602)
CELLPHONES PER CAPITA (LOG)			-1.566 (1.454)	-0.709 (1.642)
CONSTANT	-0.808** (0.361)	2.021 (3.659)	9.390 (9.232)	3.973 (10.585)
Observations	629	603	602	465
MAE	6.540	6.633	6.615	6.913
RMSE	8.391	8.461	8.456	8.780
AIC	4,467	4,297	4,293	3,354
BIC	4,480	4,319	4,324	3,383
Log Likelihood	-2,230.485	-2,143.291	-2,139.371	-1,670.015
<i>Note:</i>			*p**p***p<0.01	

Numbers outside the parentheses are regression coefficients that specify the expected change in the dependent variable. A positive coefficient equates to a positive relationship, while a negative coefficient equates to a negative relationship. Numbers inside parentheses indicate standard error. The asterisks correspond to the level of statistical significance of the regression coefficient, based on the precision of estimation, and correspond to the “p” value at the bottom of the table.

¹⁶³ Adapted from “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey December 5, 2019 Release,” 47–54; “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey October 6, 2020 Release,” 21–24; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Israel and Iran Share Most Negative Ratings in Global Poll,” 16; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Global Views of USA Improve,” 13; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Views of China and Russia Decline in Global Poll,” 4; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Global Views of United States Improve While Other Countries Decline,” 10, 16; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Views of U.S. Continue to Improve in 2011 BBC Country Rating Poll,” 13, 20; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Views of Europe Slide Sharply in Global Poll, While Views of China Improve,” 13, 24; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Views of China and India Slide While UK’s Ratings Climb: Global Poll,” 11, 21; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Negative Views of Russia on the Rise: Global Poll,” 15, 19; Vice, “Publics Worldwide Unfavorable Toward Putin, Russia,” 17–20; “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey December 16, 2020 Release,” 2–4.

Table 1 includes four different models, demonstrating that these results are robust to varying specifications. As a result, all models show a strongly significant coefficient and, therefore, are highly supportive of H2. After analyzing the results, M3 serves as the best model to further analyze H2 based on a few factors. M3 is stronger than M1 and M4 because it accounts for several control variables and all four case studies. Next, M3 is stronger than M2 because it delivers the lowest Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) score, thus, maximizing the models' predictive accuracy.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, I selected M3 based on its AIC score and because it incorporates all control variables and case studies.

B. LOG-LINEAR REGRESSION RESULTS

Figure 11 is a log-linear regression model that displays the results from M3. The x-axis corresponds to the IFR percentage changes from the four Olympic case studies. Specifically, the far-left (indicated by the 0) corresponds to host nation IFRs during NOYs, while the far-right (indicated by the 1) corresponds to host nation IFRs following an OY. The y-axis shows the expected percent change in IFRs a country is expected to receive in both scenarios.

¹⁶⁴ DeWayne R. Derryberry, *Basic Data Analysis for Time Series with R* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2014), 106, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=1719581>.

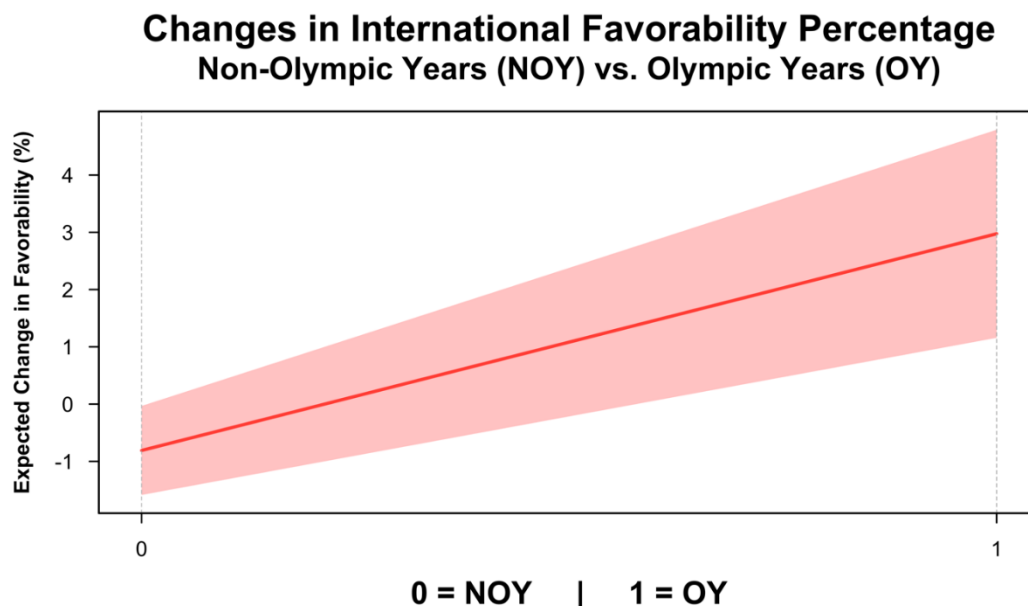


Figure 11. Log-Linear Regression Results (M3)¹⁶⁵

The data in this model reveals that the year after the Olympics, a host nation's IFRs are expected to increase by 2.98%. This ~3% increase may not seem like a large effect at face value; however, this number is substantively significant compared to the alternative. A host nation's expected IFR percentage change following a NOY is -0.81%. Overall, these predictive results, foreshadowed by the strong coefficients in Table 1, strongly support H2.

Interestingly, although the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics did not support H1, these regression results indicate that Russia's 2014 rating (-0.31%) is still higher than M3's

¹⁶⁵ Adapted from "Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey December 5, 2019 Release," 47–54; "Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey October 6, 2020 Release," 21–24; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Israel and Iran Share Most Negative Ratings in Global Poll," 16; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Global Views of USA Improve," 13; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of China and Russia Decline in Global Poll," 4; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Global Views of United States Improve While Other Countries Decline," 10, 16; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of U.S. Continue to Improve in 2011 BBC Country Rating Poll," 13, 20; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of Europe Slide Sharply in Global Poll, While Views of China Improve," 13, 24; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Views of China and India Slide While UK's Ratings Climb: Global Poll," 11, 21; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, "Negative Views of Russia on the Rise: Global Poll," 15, 19; Vice, "Publics Worldwide Unfavorable Toward Putin, Russia," 17–20; "Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey December 16, 2020 Release," 2–4.

expected favorability change for a NOY (-0.81%). Additionally, suppose one assesses that the annexation of Crimea heavily influenced the Russian case study, then the predictive results from M4 demonstrate that the expected change in favorability following an OY increases to 4.64%, while the expected change following a NOY measures at -0.48%. Of course, this is not to say that host nations will only receive positive changes in favorability following an OY and only receive negative changes in NOYs. Instead, it strongly indicates that an Olympic influence toward IFRs exists when compared to NOYs.

C. CONCLUSION

Overall, the data are both statistically and substantively significant, and show a strong correlation between increased IFRs and hosting the Olympics. The 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics, and 2012 London Summer Olympics strongly support H1. While the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics did not result in a positive change in favorability for Russia, the percentage change was still higher than M3's expected change in a NOY (even when accounting for standard error).

All models presented in the report show strongly significant coefficients and therefore are strongly supportive of H2. Furthermore, the results from M3 clearly indicate that the expected change in international favorability is significantly greater for Olympic hosts following an OY than NOYs. The ~3% increase—4.64% sans Sochi 2014—is a critical factor in understanding why Olympic host bidding is competitive despite the high financial costs and other associated risks.

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VI. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Analyses of these four case studies demonstrate that the Olympics provide an opportunity for the host nation to increase its international influence. However, while an expected ~3-5% change in IFRs post-Olympics can significantly increase a country's soft power, its effects may only last a few years. Hosting once can spark new international relationships and increase global influence, but the more significant implication of Olympic soft power comes from hosting multiple times over a generational period.

During the Cold War, the U.S. and the Soviet Union bid a combined 19 times for Olympic hosting rights, resulting in three successful bids for the U.S. and one for the Soviet Union. While sporting events such as the controversial 1972 gold medal basketball game and the 1980 "Miracle on Ice" highlighted athletic competition between the two world powers, the 1980 and 1984 Summer Olympic boycotts emphasized how world powers used the Olympics as a weapon of influence. In protest of the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, U.S. President Jimmy Carter led a 67-nation boycott of the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympics.¹⁶⁶ In response, the Soviet Union and 13 other communist countries boycotted the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympics.¹⁶⁷ In both the athletic and political arena, Cold War Olympics exhibited the competition between two world powers with different ideologies and the efforts to sway nations toward either camp.

China and the U.S. are currently engaged in the Cold War tactic of bidding to host multiple Olympics and other mega-events. China will host the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, and the U.S. will host the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. Additionally, the U.S. is attempting to bring the Olympics back to Salt Lake City and is currently

¹⁶⁶ "Moscow 1980 Summer Olympics - Athletes, Medals & Results," International Olympic Committee, accessed November 17, 2021, <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/moscow-1980>.

¹⁶⁷ "Los Angeles 1984 Summer Olympics - Athletes, Medals & Results," International Olympic Committee, accessed November 17, 2021, <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/los-angeles-1984>.

exploring whether to bid on the 2030 or 2034 Winter Olympics.¹⁶⁸ China explored hosting the 2032 Summer Olympics in Chengdu and Chongqing, but ultimately the IOC awarded the rights to Brisbane, Australia.¹⁶⁹ Interestingly, the U.S. will also jointly host the 2026 FIFA World Cup with Mexico and Canada, while China is exploring “potentially hosting a FIFA World Cup, possibly as early as 2030 or 2034.”¹⁷⁰ Often lumped with the Olympics as a type of mega-event, the FIFA World Cup provides similar soft power opportunities, supported by Russia’s mean and median IFR increase of 0.5% and 1.5%, respectively, following FIFA World Cup hosting duties in 2018. Official Olympic bids beyond these dates are not available; however, the high interest indicates that these world powers understand the Olympic platform’s advantages. Hosting provides a country with many opportunities to increase its soft power and international favorability, but these events also present several vulnerabilities to exploit. The following sections analyze specific actions the U.S. and its allies can take when hosting and when participating in an adversary-hosted Olympics.

A. OFFENSIVE STRATEGY: U.S. AND ALLIED HOSTED OLYMPICS

Following the Beijing closing ceremonies on 20 February 2022, the U.S. and its allies will begin a decade-long run of Olympic hosting: France in 2024, Italy in 2026, the U.S. in 2028, and Australia in 2032, with 2030 undecided at present. The next decade provides the U.S. and its allies a valuable opportunity to exercise Olympic soft power while also denying adversaries the benefits of hosting.

Some of these benefits are the opportunity to strengthen relationships with existing allies, spark relationships with neutrals, and initiate friendly contact with adversaries *via*

¹⁶⁸ Brady McCombs, “Salt Lake City Eyes 2034 Olympics after Sapporo Bid for 2030,” ABC News, February 12, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/Sports/wireStory/salt-lake-city-eyes-2034-olympics-sapporo-bid-68943395>.

¹⁶⁹ Sun Xiaochen, “Chengdu, Chongqing Planning Joint Bid for 2032 Summer Olympics,” *China Daily*, November 27, 2020, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202011/27/WS5fc0b218a31024ad0ba9804f.html>.

¹⁷⁰ Shi Futian, “China Preparing to Host ‘biggest and Best’ Asian Cup,” *China Daily*, October 23, 2020, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202010/23/WS5f922b6ba31024ad0ba806de.html>.

sports diplomacy. This type of diplomacy uses sport to facilitate communications between countries as it is “a universal phenomenon, transcending linguistic, national, and cultural boundaries.”¹⁷¹ The most famous instance occurred in April 1971 when American ping-pong players accepted an invitation to visit China following the World Table Tennis Championship in Japan.¹⁷² Known as the “ping heard round the world,” their visit was “the first officially approved American group to come to the PRC since 1949.”¹⁷³ The momentum continued when the U.S. terminated its trade embargo with China amid the easing of other policy restrictions, President Nixon’s visit to Beijing in February 1972, and the Chinese ping-pong team’s U.S. tour months later.¹⁷⁴ Overall, this example of sports diplomacy “generated an enormous amount of interest in China among Americans” and served as “a pivotal development in Chinese diplomacy and internationalization.”¹⁷⁵ Lastly, Chinese Premier Chou En-lai stated that “never before in history has a sport been used so effectively as a tool of international diplomacy.”¹⁷⁶

More recently, the effectiveness of sports diplomacy made an appearance before and during the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics. Both North and South Korea entered the opening ceremonies under a shared flag and even established a joint women’s hockey team. Furthermore, “participating in the Olympics effectively created an opportunity for face-to-face contact between the countries’ leaders, which was historically difficult [and] the countries’ delegations built personal relationships that helped broker cortical relations

¹⁷¹ Siobhan Heekin-Canedy, “The Power of Sport as Public Diplomacy,” *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, November 5, 2019, <http://www.fletcherforum.org/the-rostrum/2019/11/4/how-sports-diplomacy>.

¹⁷² Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams*, 135.

¹⁷³ David Devoss, “Ping-Pong Diplomacy,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, April 2002, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/ping-pong-diplomacy-60307544/>; Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams*, 135.

¹⁷⁴ Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams*, 145–46, 159.

¹⁷⁵ Guoqi, 162.

¹⁷⁶ Devoss, “Ping-Pong Diplomacy.”

between the two powers as well.”¹⁷⁷ Therefore, when hosting, the U.S. and allies should strongly consider the sports diplomacy aspect of the Olympics to strengthen and promote new international relationships and diplomatic opportunities.

Another critical component is to construct a strategic image of not only the host city but also the entire host country to appeal to a wider variety of international viewers. In the modern Olympics, the selection of host nations “who are outside or who have contested relationships with the West has served two important functions: graduation and rehabilitation.”¹⁷⁸ When the IOC, with international support, selected Italy (Rome 1960), Japan (Tokyo 1964), and Germany (Munich 1972) in the decades following WWII to host the Olympics, it signified their accession to “join an international community of developed and like-minded states.”¹⁷⁹ Moreover, the intent was not to highlight Rome, Tokyo, or Munich, but rather their respective country’s progress and development toward achieving more significant international influence; thus, “attention must be paid to the goals and global geopolitical context of the states where the host cities are located.”¹⁸⁰ The U.S. and its allies are already in this community of like-minded states, and therefore, should focus more on highlighting their country’s cultures as a whole versus those of the specific host city. This strategy will not be popular within the host city and surrounding region since these specific locations take on the economic risk. However, from a global competition standpoint, highlighting the host country will likely have greater success at appealing to a broader international audience. Host nations can better handle this balance if bids focus on larger cities with diverse ethnic, racial, religious, language, political and cultural identities, as is the case with the 2028 Los Angeles Summer Olympics.

¹⁷⁷ Joyee Au-Yeung, “Hosting the Olympics During a Pandemic: Japan’s Soft Power and National Image,” *Sigma Iota Rho Journal of International Relations*, April 18, 2021, <http://www.sirjournal.org/blogs/2021/4/18/hosting-the-olympics-during-a-pandemic-japans-soft-power-and-national-image>.

¹⁷⁸ Price and Dayan, *Owning the Olympics*, 382.

¹⁷⁹ Price and Dayan, 382.

¹⁸⁰ Price and Dayan, 381–82.

Amid these offensive strategy suggestions, the U.S. and its allies must be ready to enact a defensive strategy as the global prominence and attention open the door to negative scrutiny. Olympic hosts become a bigger and easier target for adversaries to execute information operation campaigns. Whether true or fabricated, adversaries can expose and criticize aspects of the host nation while international attention on the host is at an all-time high. Therefore, the U.S. and its allies must be on a heightened alert level and develop a robust strategy focused on the “soft power appeal of openness, transparency, and freedom” to not squander the opportunity to boost its perception among the international community.¹⁸¹

B. DEFENSIVE STRATEGY: ADVERSARY HOSTED OLYMPICS

Despite the upcoming long run of pro-democratic Olympic hosts, the U.S. and its allies need to undertake a defensive strategy in 2022 and in the decades to follow based on China’s interest in future bidding. Quantitative data analyses demonstrate that China’s IFRs are expected to increase following the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. Based on the direction and effectiveness of the CCP’s message, the U.S. could see its influence in the Indo-Pacific and around the world negatively impacted. If unopposed, China’s soft power standings in 2022 could see increases similar to 2009 when 79% of surveyed countries reported increased favorability following the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics.

Hosting the Olympics also plays favorably into China’s gold medal strategy. Before the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics, the head of the Chinese Olympic Committee stated, “we must resolutely ensure we are first in gold medals.”¹⁸² From a Chinese perspective, Olympic victories “reflect the rise of its national power overall” where “Olympic gold has become an important measure of China’s strength.”¹⁸³ Not unlike the Cold War Soviet model, China uses government-sponsored athletic programs to recruit “tens of thousands

¹⁸¹ Jonathan McClory, “2019 Overview: China,” The Soft Power 30, 2019, <https://softpower30.com/country/china/>.

¹⁸² Hannah Beech, “The Chinese Sports Machine’s Single Goal: The Most Golds, at Any Cost,” *New York Times*, July 29, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/29/world/asia/china-olympics.html>.

¹⁸³ Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams*, 257, 268.

of children for full-time training.”¹⁸⁴ To maximize its win-at-all-costs strategy, these programs focus “on less prominent sports that are underfunded in the West or sports that offer multiple Olympic gold medals.”¹⁸⁵

Analysis of summer Olympics from 1952–2012 concluded that host nations (14/16 observations) increased their medal count compared to their total in the previous games.¹⁸⁶ In 2008, China increased its medal count from 63 to 100 and won the most gold medals.¹⁸⁷ In general, the principal reason for this increase is that the qualification standards for individual events are lower for the host country, and the host is guaranteed a roster in each team sport, resulting on average in an additional 175.8 athletes for the host compared to its delegation from the previous games.¹⁸⁸ Additionally, the host city can also recommend new events, most recently accomplished when Paris organizers added breakdancing to the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics.¹⁸⁹

Therefore, when adversaries are hosting, it will likely be more difficult for the U.S. to sit atop both the total and gold medal standings, thus, providing the perception to those who believe the narrative that more gold medals equate to a superior ideological system.¹⁹⁰ Aside from its athletes, the U.S. cannot affect this aspect; however, it can develop and execute a strategy to combat the messages projected from an adversary host.

¹⁸⁴ Beech, “The Chinese Sports Machine’s Single Goal.”

¹⁸⁵ Beech.

¹⁸⁶ Stephen Pettigrew and Danyel Reiche, “Is There Home-Field Advantage At The Olympics?,” FiveThirtyEight, August 9, 2016, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/is-there-home-field-advantage-at-the-olympics/>.

¹⁸⁷ Pettigrew and Reiche.

¹⁸⁸ Pettigrew and Reiche.

¹⁸⁹ Sharon Pruitt-Young, “Here’s How The Olympics Decide What Sports To Include — And Which To Leave Out,” NPR, July 28, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/sections/tokyo-olympics-live-updates/2021/07/28/1021713829/how-the-olympics-decide-what-sports-to-include>.

¹⁹⁰ Greg Myre, “How The Olympic Medal Table Explains The World,” NPR, July 28, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/sections/tokyo-olympics-live-updates/2021/07/28/1020780003/how-the-olympic-medal-table-explains-the-world>.

Olympic coverage reaches between a quarter and one half of the world's population, across an increasing number of countries and territories and through multiple media platforms.¹⁹¹ The host nation can deliver a concerted, strategic message to the international community and its domestic population with this vast and diverse audience. Therefore, the U.S. and its allies, *via* government officials and media coverage, must use this opportunity to investigate the host's message and be quick to correct and inform global audiences of any inaccuracies, so the adversary's message does not become the internationally accepted narrative. This strategy is vital in times outside of Olympic coverage; however, it becomes even more crucial based on the Olympic spotlight.

This strategy is particularly important given the role of U.S. media corporations in the Olympics. In the week leading up to the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, the U.S. media focused mainly on China. Most stories focused on the upcoming opening ceremony and security preparations; however, only 2% centered on China's political system.¹⁹² During the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, "the one political issue that did get sizable attention the week prior was human rights (13%), though there was no coverage of the issue once the games began (for a total of 7% of Olympic coverage)."¹⁹³ While expanded coverage on these internationally criticized topics is important, the fact that the media did not continue the coverage throughout the games when international viewership was at its peak, was a missed opportunity from a competitive geopolitical standpoint.

In the opening ceremonies of the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics, NBC Universal – which owns U.S. Olympic broadcasting rights through 2032 – did not include Taiwan or features in the South China Sea in the associated onscreen map when Chinese athletes marched into the stadium.¹⁹⁴ China's New York Consulate criticized NBC's "incomplete

¹⁹¹ "Olympic Marketing Fact File 2020 Edition," 25.

¹⁹² "The Media's Olympics," Pew Research Center, August 22, 2008, 3, <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2008/08/22/the-medias-olympics/>.

¹⁹³ Pew Research Center, 3.

¹⁹⁴ Nancy Armour, "NBC Universal Pays \$7.75 Billion for Olympics through 2032," *USA Today*, May 7, 2014, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/olympics/2014/05/07/nbc-olympics-broadcast-rights-2032/8805989/>.

map” as having a “very bad influence and harmed the dignity and emotions of the Chinese people,” despite the 2016 international ruling rejecting China’s excessive claims in the South China Sea.¹⁹⁵ When China or other adversaries host, these instances of competing narratives will be at the forefront. NBC did not respond to these criticisms despite a record of other U.S. companies’ apologies in other cases.¹⁹⁶ Regarding these competing narratives and the upcoming 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, the director of the University of London’s China Institute states:

As long as Xi [Jinping] remains in power, Beijing will insist on media companies that want to operate in China to adhere to the narrative Beijing projects, particularly on ‘sensitive’ issues like Taiwan, Hong Kong and Xinjiang. Reporting for the Winter Olympics in China is likely to be subjected to such pressure. The question is how Western media will respond. If NBC is left on its own, Beijing will fall on it like a ton of bricks. But if it can get all major media to work together, Beijing may not push it so hard after all.¹⁹⁷

The U.S. and allies must be prepared to accept the threat or implementation of sanctions in response to the rejection and subsequent correction of false claims to combat China’s strategic messages effectively. The U.S. and its allies are currently considering implementing a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. In this case, American and allied athletes would retain the right to compete; however, funding would prohibit official government delegations from attending – a tactic last executed in the 2014 Olympics to protest Russia’s anti-LGBT law.¹⁹⁸ If a diplomatic boycott is approved, the U.S. and its allies should conduct engagements with neutral nations to counter China’s one-sided meetings with these delegations at the Olympics.

¹⁹⁵ David Bauder, “NBC Mum on Chinese Complaints about Map during Ceremony,” ABC News, July 26, 2021, <https://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/wireStory/nbc-mum-chinese-complaints-map-ceremony-79072196>.

¹⁹⁶ Bauder.

¹⁹⁷ Bauder.

¹⁹⁸ Eamon Barrett, “US Boycott of 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing Is More Likely than Not,” *Fortune*, April 7, 2021, <https://fortune.com/2021/04/07/us-boycott-olympics-2022-winter-beijing-human-rights-more-likely-than-not/>; Steven T. Dennis, “‘Diplomatic Boycott’ of Beijing Olympics Added to China Bill,” *Bloomberg*, April 21, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-21/-diplomatic-boycott-of-beijing-olympics-added-to-china-bill>.

C. REASONS TO INVEST IN THIS ARENA OF INFLUENCE

Despite its soft power applications, the Olympics can generate long-term adverse effects on the host city and country. Accepting host nation responsibilities also means assuming economic, social, and environmental risks. Over the past two decades, bidding costs as well as construction and maintenance fees of Olympic facilities and associated supporting infrastructure (i.e., hotels, roads, airports, subways, rail) have ranged from \$2.5 billion (2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics) to \$51 billion (2014 Sochi Winter Olympics).¹⁹⁹ In 2006, Montreal finally paid off its Olympic debt from hosting in 1976, while the incurred debt from the 2004 Athens Summer Olympics is often cited as a significant contributor to Greece's debt crisis.²⁰⁰ Socially, creating space for infrastructure construction has displaced population centers leading to increased poverty, homelessness, and violence.²⁰¹ Environmentally, the games leave a heavy carbon footprint and garner further criticism when host countries cannot generate sustained use of Olympic infrastructure or support the long-term maintenance fees resulting in abandoned and dilapidated stadiums.²⁰²

In the history of the modern Olympics, only one city has made a profit from hosting. The 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympics produced a \$223 million profit made possible by existing facilities and corporate sponsors.²⁰³ While the economic, social, and environmental risks may not be as high for larger economies or countries that view the soft power aspects as outweighing the negative impacts, the U.S. can continue to bid on hosting

¹⁹⁹ Robert A. Baade and Victor A. Matheson, "Going for the Gold: The Economics of the Olympics," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 30, no. 2 (May 1, 2016): 205, <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.30.2.201>.

²⁰⁰ Jennifer Wills and Robert C. Kelly, "The Economic Impact of Hosting the Olympics," Investopedia, August 9, 2021, <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/markets-economy/092416/what-economic-impact-hosting-olympics.asp>.

²⁰¹ Kieron Monks, "From Regeneration to Homelessness: The Blessing and Curse of London's Olympic Legacy," CNN, September 6, 2016, <https://www.cnn.com/2016/08/15/world/olympic-legacy/index.html>.

²⁰² Warren Mabee, "In a World Striving To Cut Carbon Emissions, Do the Olympics Make Sense?," *Smithsonian Magazine*, February 16, 2018, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/world-striving-cut-carbon-emissions-do-olympics-make-sense-180968181/>.

²⁰³ "Los Angeles 1984 Summer Olympics - Athletes, Medals & Results."

the Olympics and other mega-events by using existing infrastructure. The 2028 Los Angeles Summer Olympics will again rely on this existing infrastructure model, expecting to record a profit of at least \$1 billion.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, the U.S. bid for the 2030 or 2034 Winter Olympics would use existing infrastructure from the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics.

An analysis of Olympic viewership data demonstrates that while the global television audience has decreased, the digital viewership has increased.²⁰⁵ Therefore, determining how the Olympic host's message is delivered based on changes in media digestion needs to be further explored. U.S. media corporations need to create a better and easier viewing experience across different mediums domestically and globally.

Investing more time and resources into this area of influence can open soft power opportunities in regions of the world where the U.S. is interested in generating or strengthening its influence. Compiling qualitative data from the case studies in section IV, Figure 12 displays the average change in IFR each region of the world gave to the case study host nations (China, Canada, UK, and Russia) following its Olympic hosted year. Polling included 36 countries and 88 separate observations over four different Olympics (2008, 2010, 2012, 2014). Figure 12 breaks down regions into each DOD's GCC AORs.

²⁰⁴ Rory Carroll, "Olympics: Garcetti Says LA Will Rake in \$1 Billion Profit from 2028 Games," Reuters, June 25, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-olympics-2028-garcetti-idUSKCN1TQ07K>.

²⁰⁵ "Olympic Marketing Fact File 2020 Edition," 25.

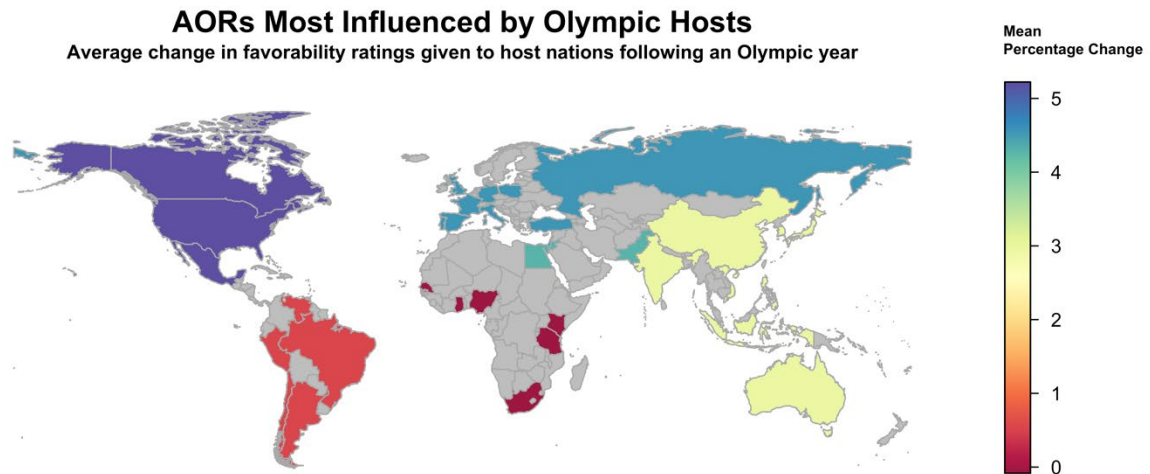


Figure 12. Olympic Influence by DOD GCC AOR²⁰⁶

The NORTHCOM AOR rated Olympic hosts the highest (5.22%) following an Olympic-hosted year compared to a non-Olympic-hosted year. The U.S., Canada, and Mexico provided 9 different observations among the four Olympic host case studies. EUCOM rated Olympic hosts the second highest at 4.56%, with 10 countries polled and 27 observations. CENTCOM followed at 4.29% (4 countries, 7 observations) while INDOPACOM rated at 2.95% (8 countries, 22 observations). SOUTHCOM rated at 0.55% (5 countries, 11 observations) and lastly AFRICOM rated -0.08% (6 countries, 12 observations). Assessed that SOUTHCOM and AFRICOM were influenced less than the other AORs based on a combination of smaller television/internet users per capita

²⁰⁶ Adapted from “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey December 5, 2019 Release,” 47–54; “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey October 6, 2020 Release,” 21–24; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Israel and Iran Share Most Negative Ratings in Global Poll,” 16; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Global Views of USA Improve,” 13; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Views of China and Russia Decline in Global Poll,” 4; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Global Views of United States Improve While Other Countries Decline,” 10, 16; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Views of U.S. Continue to Improve in 2011 BBC Country Rating Poll,” 13, 20; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Views of Europe Slide Sharply in Global Poll, While Views of China Improve,” 13, 24; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Views of China and India Slide While UK’s Ratings Climb: Global Poll,” 11, 21; BBC World Service Poll, Globescan, and PIPA, “Negative Views of Russia on the Rise: Global Poll,” 15, 19; Vice, “Publics Worldwide Unfavorable Toward Putin, Russia,” 17–20; “Topline Questionnaire Pew Research Center Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey December 16, 2020 Release,” 2–4.

compared to other AORs, and two of the four case studies are Winter Olympics where these AORs are less represented compared to Summer Olympic events. In the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics, only 8 African and 6 South American nations participated compared to 54 African and 13 South American nations in the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics.²⁰⁷

Although these data only provide insights into four Olympics, it may serve as a baseline for Olympic soft power strategy. Offensively, the U.S. can use this information as a model to understand what region or specific country to direct attention to and at what level of effort. Defensively, the U.S. can use this information to determine where adversaries may target their Olympic soft power. This model will continue to refine after each hosted event from both an offensive and defensive perspective. In summary, if the existing infrastructure method continues to succeed and broadcast means are improved to grasp the targeted audience better, then the U.S. can significantly exploit the soft power aspects of the Olympics with low economic, social, and environmental risk.

D. AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several short and long-term opportunities to expand upon this research, specifically related to the U.S. and China. In the short term, the 2023 Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Survey of China results will indicate whether China received the expected ~3% change in IFR following the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. This is an important metric to track longitudinally, but particularly when U.S. adversaries are host nations, to fully understand potential shifts in the strategic context. It may also be beneficial to analyze the strategic differences and similarities used in 2022 versus the 2008 Olympics to better inform U.S. strategy.

²⁰⁷ Conan Altatis, “2020 Summer Olympics Medal Table: List of African Countries’ Number of Athletes, Medals,” Conan Daily, August 8, 2021, <https://conandaily.com/2021/08/08/2020-summer-olympics-medal-table-list-of-african-countries-number-of-athletes-medals/>; Conan Altatis, “2020 Summer Olympics Medal Table: List of South American Countries’ Number of Athletes, Medals,” Conan Daily, August 8, 2021, <https://conandaily.com/2021/08/08/2020-summer-olympics-medal-table-list-of-south-american-countries-number-of-athletes-medals/>; “Winter Olympics 2018: A Guide to Africans Competing,” BBC News, February 9, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-43003302>; Jamie Vaughan Johnson, “Latin America at the Winter Olympics 2018,” BristoLatino, February 8, 2018, <https://bristolatino.co.uk/latin-america-at-the-winter-olympics-2018/>.

In the long term, 2026 and beyond, there are several opportunities where soft power strategy between the U.S. and China will compete against each other on the Olympic and FIFA World Cup stage. Expanding this research to include the FIFA World Cup will add another measurable factor to this study based on the event's international popularity and hosting interest among world powers. As of August 2021, confirmed and potential opportunities include:

- 2026 FIFA World Cup (U.S. co-host)
- 2028 Los Angeles Summer Olympics (U.S. host)
- 2030 or 2034 Winter Olympics (U.S. exploring bid)
- 2030 or 2034 FIFA World Cup (China exploring bid)
- 2036 Summer Olympics (China assessed potential bid based on 2032 failed bid)

In short, events in the coming decades will further contribute to research focused on Olympic soft power and add important components by accounting for an additional internationally popular sporting and cultural event while also explicitly focusing on the relationship between the U.S. and China. Qualitative analysis of soft power strategy and quantitative analysis of the extent to which it influenced the world, and by what region or country, following the conclusion of each mega-event, may further refine specific recommendations the U.S. should consider in crafting both offensive and defensive strategies.

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VII. CONCLUSION

As the premier international mega sporting event, the Olympics are a gold medal standard for executing global soft power strategies. The Olympic venue provides the host nation unparalleled opportunities to construct a strategic image of itself on the international podium by reaching 25–50% of the world’s population and showcasing its culture and values via athletic competition, infrastructure development, cultural programs, and opening and closing ceremonies among countless other examples. Moreover, these factors can increase political, economic, cultural, and tourism benefits for the host nation.

The Olympics serve as an “extension of geopolitical competition” where every IFR percentage point is significant.²⁰⁸ Hosting the Olympics boosts international favorability from ~3-5%, which is even more staggering when compared to ratings received when not hosting. The international attention on the host nation can significantly improve global understanding of its culture and improve national image. Politically, the venue attracts the leaders of the participating nations, and the associated exchanges can strengthen and promote new international relationships and diplomatic opportunities. Despite significant financial risks and potential international backlash, the measurable effects and various benefits help explain why Olympic bidding is competitive.

The Olympics once served as a venue for global outreach to assess a host nation’s progress toward joining the international community of like-minded states; however, the current movement now “operates as an enabling force for the multidirectional flows that bring mutually influencing actors together to challenge old boundaries and distinctions and negotiate the terms of a new global social order.”²⁰⁹ Due to force of the Olympic favorability boost and the opportunity to shift international order, China is not only exploring bidding on upcoming games but also other mega-events. Therefore, the U.S. and its allies must invest more in this arena of influence to increase their strategic competitive advantage and to withhold these soft power benefits from current and future adversaries.

²⁰⁸ Brancati and Wohlforth, “Why Authoritarians Love the Olympics.”

²⁰⁹ Price and Dayan, *Owning the Olympics*, 376.

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