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Summer Olympic Games in Beijing in the context of selected scientific theories²

Introduction

Summer Olympic Games, apart from football world cup, the most popular sports event. It is widely believed that it is something more than just sports event. It can be analysed from economic, marketing or political perspective. It is an opportunity to present country's own culture, technology and history. However, there is also some kind of threat associated with such events. Organization of such events is not possible without involvement of public sector and political bodies. It creates specific relationship, in which sport affects functioning of the state in some areas and state may use Olympic Games for its own particular interests³.

Such relationship occurred also in the case of 29th Summer Olympic Games in Beijing that took place between 8.08.2008 and 24.08.2008. It was believed that Olympic Games was supposed to be the most important event for China in the first decade of the 21st century. One of the main goals was to show new image of China. The authorities wanted to show transformation from „global factory” into superpower, of which advantages are not only cheap workforce and production of competitive products. Olympic Games also symbolically closed 30 years of economic reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping. Therefore, they wanted to show fruits of Chinese economic miracle, its dynamics and development⁴.

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³ M. Ponczek, *Sport jako kategoria politologiczna*, „Studia Nauk Politycznych” 1989, No. 1, p. 131.

⁴ K. Caffrey, *Olympian Politics in Beijing: Games but not games*, [in:] *Beijing 2008: Preparing for Glory-*

Therefore, we should ask whether organization of Olympic Games by China actually changed China's image? The deliberations must be based on various scientific theories defining role of sport in building the image of the state in the international arena. The role and meaning of sport were widely considered in the research on international relations.

Character of Summer Olympic Games in Beijing

Using Olympic Games to show positive image of the state is not as simple as it would seem. It was clearly seen in earlier experiences of Asian countries organizing such competition. Beijing sports event was the third Summer Olympic Games organized in Asia. In 1964, 18th Summer Olympic Games took place in Tokyo. The Japanese were not completely recovered from war trauma. Therefore, they carefully praised and promoted their own culture. The opening ceremony and accompanying events promoted Japanese history and culture to a limited extent. In addition, the competition was overshadowed by big politics – Leonid Brezhnev removed Nikita Khrushchev from power and China conducted first successful nuclear test during the Olympic Games. On the other hand, innovative methods of measuring time and distance were presented. It created an image of Japan as a country that can create and apply modern technologies⁵.

In 1988, South Korea put more effort in promotion. 24th Summer Olympic Games was organized in Seoul. The right to host the competition was granted to South Korea a few months after suppressing of the demonstrations of the opposition by the government of Chun Doo-hwan. Controversial choice largely resulted from exceptional mobilization of the authorities of South Korea. They assured the members of IOC Executive Committee of works that had been done and large expenditure on infrastructure and successfully promoted their candidacy during various foreign trips. In addition, before the commencement of the competition, the government increased civil liberties, among others, declaring an amnesty. However, all these efforts were not beneficial. The image of South Korea in the international arena was not improved. Olympic Games in Seoul were remembered as one of the most controversial in history. Above all, it was a result of doping scandals and "mistakes" of the referees, mainly for the benefit of the representatives of the host. South Korea has been for a long

-*Chinese Challenge in the 'Chinese Century*, eds J.A. Mangan, D. Jinxia, London 2009, pp. 59–64; S. Brownell, *Beijing's games: what the Olympics mean to China*, Lanham 2008, p. 19.

⁵ D. Miller, *Official History of the Olympic Games and the IOC, Athens to London 1894–2012*, Edinburgh–London 2012, pp. 198–203.

time treated as a country applying dishonest methods to achieve good results⁶.

Olympic Games in Beijing would also have been negatively remembered – especially in the context of the protests of numerous environments showing that the organizer of this competition is the country violating human rights. In 2007, Amnesty International published a critical report about China. The organization emphasized that before the Olympic Games, China was violating civil liberties. Media has become more controlled by the Communist Party and repressions against the journalists and activists suspected of disloyalty to the system have intensified. China was also criticized by the Human Rights Watch. In 2001, it supported selection of Beijing as an organizer of Olympic Games, hoping that the competition would change internal policy of the government. However, subsequent reports of this organization showed that working conditions for foreign journalists were difficult⁷.

As a result of created reports and pressure of various non-governmental organizations, more ideas had emerged before the commencement of the Olympic Games to partially or fully boycott the competition. In 2007 western media strongly emphasized the will to punish China for its policy towards Tibet. The opponents of China thought that the toughest sanction would be boycotting the competition that the Chinese put some much effort in. Partial boycott was supposed to be more symbolical – the athletes were supposed to participate in the competition, but no western leaders would appear in China during the event. Both ideas have not been carried out, but the issue of „boycotting Beijing” was present in international media and political discourse for a long time⁸.

On the other hand, there were also defenders of the Olympic Games in Beijing in western countries. Their main argument was that China could not be measured with western standards, and even the loudest protests would not threaten the Communist Party. In addition, Chinese citizens rarely enjoyed such broad civil liberties in the past like in the beginning of the 21st century. Some people even timidly thought that Olympic Games would initiate the democratization of China, just like in the case of South Korea⁹.

However, the most fervent opponents of the Olympic Games were not convinced and they were calling for boycott and warning that Chinese want

⁶ Ibidem, pp. 305–319.

⁷ B. Kidd, *Human rights and the Olympic Movement after Beijing*, [in:] *Documenting the Beijing Olympics*, eds D.P. Martinez, K. Latham, London 2011, p. 158.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 160.

⁹ Ibidem.

to make another Berlin – the competition overshadowed by aggressive propaganda. Due to lack of reaction of western politicians, many organizations decided to discredit the competition on their own – focusing on the case of Tibet. Because they wouldn't do it in China, they had decided to emphasize the facts inconvenient for China during the relay of the Olympic torch. It all started with an incident in Olympia, where organization called Reporters Without Borders organized a pro-Tibetan protest while lighting a torch. This torch was later smothered many times by the opponents of the Olympic Games – in San Francisco, Paris and London¹⁰.

Although the whole situation was inconvenient for Chinese authorities, the problems with the relay and protests of non-governmental organizations were of minor character and did not cause panic. The most important element of showing „new China” was 16 days of Olympic spectacle. The whole state was supposed to unite around the Olympic Games and initiator of the event the – Communist Party. Therefore, the authorities have built impressive facilities. Beijing'2008 has become the most lavish Summer Olympic Games in history. However, the specialists estimated that even EUR 40 billion was spent for all investments. A record amount of EUR 27 billion was spent only on infrastructure. Underground in Beijing was extended two times, the largest air terminal in the world at that time and 19 new sports facilities were built for the Olympic Games. The goal of gigantic investments was to show a grand scale of development of Chinese economy. Just like in the case of other large sports events, the money spent on its organization has not paid for itself. China earned only EUR 760 million from the agreements with the sponsors. This amount, although it was record at that time, was small in comparison with organizational costs¹¹. On the other hand, western economists emphasized that the goal of China was not financial profit. The state economy was so big then that negative financial balance of the Olympic Games was not even noticed. The case of Montreal that had to pay off debts for 30 years for building the objects and infrastructure for the Olympic Games in 1976 could not happen again. Although demand in some sectors of Chinese economy decreased soon after the end of the competition, practicality and innovativeness developed during preparations have become the factors affecting development of Chinese investments in the subsequent years¹².

¹⁰ J. Horne, G. Whannel, *The 'caged torch procession': celebrities, protesters and the 2008 Olympic torch relay in London, Paris and San Francisco*, [in:] *Ibidem*, pp. 28–32.

¹¹ H. Preuss, *The Economics of Staging the Olympics: A Comparison of the Games 1972–2008*, Mainz 2008, pp. 221–223.

¹² A.M. Broudehoux, *Mega-events and Urban Image Construction: Beijing and Rio de Janeiro*, London 2017, pp. 26–29.

From the point of view of a state organizing large sports event, one of the most important issues is opening ceremony. It is great opportunity to show own culture and civilizational achievements. Chinese also wanted to use opening ceremony in such a way and organized it on a grand scale. It took place at the Olympic Stadium called Bird's Nest. On August 8, 2008, more than 15 thousand artists performed on a large stage. The whole spectacle was directed by Yimou Zhang – a director of an Oscar-winning movie, "House of Flying Daggers". The ceremony started with a colourful performance presenting centuries-old achievements of Chinese civilization. Olympic flag was carried to the stadium by children wearing regional dresses of 56 national groups living in China. Impressive countdown and presentation of Olympic rings made an impression on the guests. The whole ceremony was finished with a display of 30 thousand fireworks in various places in Beijing. The opening ceremony was attended by the presidents of the United States – George W. Bush, France – Nicolas Sarkozy and prime ministers of Japan – Yasuo Fukuda and Russia – Vladimir Putin¹³.

The opening ceremony was initially given a favourable reception. But there were also many opinions that the spectacle was artificial, making an impression of complete dehumanization. Watching 1,5 thousand of dressed in the same way and disciplined human cogs telling impressive history of China was quite depressing. An official motto of the opening ceremony was – „one world, one dream". According to the critics, it was an alarmingly uniform message. There was no authentic enthusiasm in the behaviour of the artists. It was also revealed that firework display was „improved" by the Chinese specialists to make it look better in TV. The ceremony did not equal opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Sydney in 2000, the Australians organized less spectacular ceremony, but made a gesture that has been remembered for years. They made a symbolic gesture of reconciliation towards the Aborigines protesting before the Olympic Games. An athlete, Cathy Freeman, as a representative of indigenous population of Australia, lit a torch emerging from water. There were no such gestures and ideas in Beijing¹⁴.

Organizing the competition in quite extreme environmental conditions also aroused many controversies. The factories and steelworks that poisoned air the most were closed in five provinces around Beijing to solve smog problem. One million cars were removed from Beijing and their owners were demand-

¹³ Y. Hwang, *Olympiad, a place of linguistic struggle – the discursive constitution of 'human rights' in the 2008 Beijing Olympics*, [in:] *Documenting the...*, op.cit., pp. 123–125.

¹⁴ K. Caffrey, *Epilogue: Sideshow Beijing 2008: An Absence of Euphoria beyond the Southern Clouds*, [in:] *Beijing 2008...*, op.cit., pp. 188–190.

ed to move to public transport in August 2008. In addition, the systems for saving water and production of green energy were built near sports facilities and Olympic village. Despite many efforts that had been made during the Olympic Games, air pollution in Beijing still exceeded norms of the World Health Organization three times. Even after elimination of the half of car traffic, visibility in the city was no more than one kilometre¹⁵.

Chinese authorities hoped that the Olympic Games would remove from memory of the society a wave of defeats in Chinese from Opium Wars, tragedy of the World War II to the effects of Mao Zedong's experiments – Cultural Revolution and Great Leap Forward. A confirmation of the fact that China can prove its superiority over the rest of the world was the winning the medal table. Taking into consideration the ambition of China, its previous results were not too impressive. It was caused by the fact that China joined Olympic competition quite late.

Figure 1. The medals won by Chinese representatives during the Summer Olympic Games

	number of athletes	gold	silver	bronze	in total
1984 Los Angeles	216	15	8	9	32
1988 Seoul	273	5	11	12	28
1992 Barcelona	244	16	22	16	54
1996 Atlanta	294	16	22	12	50
2000 Sydney	271	28	16	15	59
2004 Athens	407	32	17	14	63
2008 Beijing	639	51	21	28	100
2012 London	396	38	27	23	87
2016 Rio de Janeiro	403	26	18	26	70

Source: Own study based on: medal classification in Olympic Games, <https://www.olympic.org> [accessed: 12.02.2019].

The goal was reached. Winning 100 medals, including 51 gold ones made Chinese convinced that their system has become more effective. Beating the representatives of the United States was also very important. It was a competition of two most effective, but also completely different systems of preparations. American model was based on self-reliance, raising funds from private sponsors and internal competition. China had different approach. The prepa-

¹⁵ A.M. Broudehoux, op.cit., p. 29.

rations were based on quartering athletes in the state centres, provision of public funds and ruthless assessment of their results¹⁶.

Although China had won, the commentators generally believed that the methods applied to reach this goal were not fair. It is widely believed that apart from psychological motivation, Chinese also applied biopharmacological methods. Soon before the Olympic Games, a film made with hidden camera in one of the Chinese hospitals by the British journalists caused consternation. For the price of 24 thousand dollars, the employees of a hospital offered „gene therapy” that couldn’t be detected with available anti-doping tests¹⁷.

Although they wanted to win a medal table, the authorities were aware of potential negative consequences of achieving sporting successes. Leaving aside the suspicions of taking doping, the image of China in the world would be spoiled by nationalism of the fans celebrating sporting successes. The authorities were afraid that the joy at winning would make foreign guests feel that Chinese nationalism revives. They particularly feared of behaviour of the so-called – *fengings*. It is a group of well-educated young citizens, fascinated with economic success, who believe in the primacy of China over the rest of the world. As a consequence, the authorities were forced to create a guide containing information about proper behaviour during sports events. More than 4 million of such documents were distributed in Beijing. They included instructions about applauding athletes from other countries, encouraging the rivals of Chinese athletes in a civilized way and keeping calm in the event of a defeat¹⁸.

Apart from instructions for the fans, they also wanted to „educate” ordinary citizens. The authorities declared war on cursing, elbowing in the streets, making a mess and noise. An educational campaign about how to stand in the queues, how to drive a car in accordance with the rules and be polite towards foreign tourists was launched. The homeless people were removed from the streets of Beijing before the Olympic Games¹⁹.

Whereas, the authorities did not keep their promises concerning freedom of speech for the inhabitants of Beijing, as well as fans and journalists. The

¹⁶ M. Dyreson, *Preparing to Take Credit for China's Glory: American Perspectives on the Beijing Olympic Games*, [in:] *Beijing 2008...*, op.cit., pp. 167–178.

¹⁷ E. Emrich, W. Pitsch, *Sport und Doping: zur Analyse einer antagonistischen Symbiose*, Frankfurt am Main 2009, pp. 120–122; L. Zichner, P.E. Nowacki, *Doping: Wirkstoffe, fachärztliche und interdisziplinäre Aspekte*, Stuttgart 2011, pp. 80–82, 109–113.

¹⁸ J. Lovell, *The Mixed Messages of Contemporary Chinese Nationalism*, [in:] *Beijing 2008...*, op.cit., pp. 23–27.

¹⁹ P. Glebe, *Peking 2008: die Volksrepublik China und die Olympischen Sommerspiele 2008*, Wuppertal 2008, p. 76.

places for expressing opinions were supposed to be created in some of Beijing parks. It was turned into fiction in a way typical of authoritarian political systems. The procedure of applications and permits was very complicated, and despite filling applications, in many cases people were refused to speak. Chinese leaders were also afraid that undesirable images may sneak into TV coverage. Controlling the broadcasting was one of the biggest challenges for the organizers. Chinese were granted the right to produce official TV broadcast. As a result, there was a 5-second delay to cut potential undesirable contents. In addition, the televisions were ordered to say in what places outside broadcast vans would be placed. A special permit had to be obtained for every independent coverage. No foreign television would broadcast materials from Tiananmen Square and Forbidden City. It was disappointing for many western broadcasters. The televisions reminded how much they paid for the right to broadcast Olympic Games. It had turned out that during the competition Chinese service turned a blind eye to behaviour of foreign stations so as not to be accused again of suppressing freedom of press. As a result, restrictions implemented earlier were more of warning character and did not make the work of western journalists more difficult²⁰.

Granting the right to organize Olympic Games for China did not cause dissatisfaction among all foreign institutions, just like initially among TV stations. Taking into account 1,3 billion of Chinese customers, international corporations had decided that sponsoring the Olympic Games and promoting their own products may be very profitable. Their approach was not changed by the appeals of the defenders of human rights saying that paying millions of dollars for the right to use "Beijing'2008" label on their products is an immoral legitimization of the regime. In accordance with official announcement, the sponsors said that their actions were politically neutral and they supported athletes, not the communist party. For the largest global concerns, potential benefits were much greater than potential damage to their reputation. Therefore, despite complaints for cooperation with Chinese authorities in the field of negotiating agreements and product placement, they had decided to invest large amounts in sponsoring the Olympic Games²¹.

²⁰ B. Smith, *Journalism and the Beijing Olympics: Liminality with Chinese Characteristics*, [in:] *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China*, eds M.E. Price, D. Dayan, Michigan 2008, pp. 214–216; A.M. Broudehoux, op.cit., pp. 65–68.

²¹ J. Grix, *Leveraging Legacies from Sports Mega-Events: Concepts and Cases*, Birmingham 2014, p. 155.

Beijing in the light of selected scientific theories

Taking above organizational aspects into account, we should compare the goals achieved by China in the context of selected researchers examining, in a theoretical way, political implications of sports events. It will allow to assess to what extent organization of the competition was confirmed in the results of the research on previous large sports events and verify whether it has really improved the image of China in the international arena.

Andrew Rose argued that, for promotion of the country, organization of large sports events is profitable and prestigious and enhances development of sports infrastructure. According to him, various cities and regions want to organize large sports events, because they are a great opportunity for economic development. The sports events make it easier for cities and tourist regions to build new tools of infrastructure that would not normally be built in such a way²². The aspects emphasized by the author are not quite coincident with the experiences of Beijing. Observing the situation from the perspective of 10 years since the end of the Olympics, it must be emphasized that even the country having such large funds would not effectively develop and modernize Olympic facilities. A decade since the end of the Olympic Games, both „Bird’s Nest” stadium and aquatics center called „Water Cube” clearly need investments. It is more difficult to modernize gigantic facilities than smaller facilities. Olympic Games have also not significantly increased the interest of international sports institutions in organization of important competitions in the capital of China. As a consequence, the state must pay millions of yuans every year to maintain facilities and prevent their degradation. An idea to improve the condition of sports infrastructure in Beijing was an announcement of candidacy for organization of Winter Olympic Games in 2022. Beijing was granted the right to organize this event, but not due to great organization of the competition in 2008, but due to the fact that almost all other cities had withdrawn their candidacies.

Whereas, British researcher of mega sports events, Maurice Roche, analysing sports events between the end of 19th century and our times, emphasized two aspects related to involvement of the state and society in creating the character of sports events – rational and irrational. The rational aspects include all types of aid granted by the government and public agendas to

²² A.K. Rose, M.M. Spiegel, *Do Mega Sporting Events Promote International Trade?*, „International Affairs” 2011, No. 1, p. 82.

organizational committee – mainly financial and logistic aid and responsibility for the issues of security and transport. The state, through its tools, helps to carry out these tasks that can't be completed by the sports federations. The irrational elements include mainly issues of symbols and social behaviours, that is, creating the image in the eyes of foreigners, affecting the development of social ties through identification with national symbols and building international prestige²³.

The organizers perfectly fulfilled rational elements. However, we should be more careful while considering irrational issues. In theory, Chinese society exuberantly reacted during the competition and seemed to be proud of their own achievements. However, there was no real authentic enthusiasm. Whereas, the issue of symbols was completely omitted by the organizers and replaced with grand scale and uniformization. The most frequent expression concerning social behaviour during the Olympic Games that was used by western observers was „lack of naturalness”.

According to classification presented by Joshua S. Goldstein, large sports events are one of the phenomena of global culture and transnational identities. As a result of common participation or experiencing specific events, the so-called „transnational community” is being created²⁴. Olympic Games in Beijing are contradictory to his views. Creating transnational ties and transnational community are completely contradictory to assumptions that the organizers were inspired by. The aim of Chinese authorities was not to increase any impact of other cultures on Chinese society. Their goal was completely different – they wanted Chinese culture to become more influential. That's why there were so many restrictions for foreign journalists and sponsors. Creating transnational ties between the citizens of China and western countries was something that was limited in order to minimize the risk of making western model of culture more influential.

Barry Houlihan in his research, was focused on the fact that sport may improve international relations. Therefore, image aspects of the sports events may be regarded as a means of public diplomacy or at least as one of its main objectives²⁵. It was the goal of Chinese authorities. The authorities were not hiding the fact that promotion of positive image of China was, apart from sporting success, a priority of the competition. On the other hand, practical

²³ M. Roche, *Mega-events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture*, London 2000, pp. 17–19.

²⁴ J.S. Goldstein, *International Relations*, London 2004, p. 404.

²⁵ B. Houlihan, *Sport International Politics*, London 1994, p. 44; B. Houlihan, R. Hoye, M. Nicholson, *Sport and Policy: Issues and Analysis*, Oxford 2010, pp. 137–141.

achievement of this goal was inconsistent with the norms accepted in western civilization. The competition certainly improved international relations. China made no gesture towards any other nation or country that it had troubled history with. Olympic Games was a great opportunity to reduce repression against the supporters of free Tibet, which would certainly be interpreted in a positive way by the international community. China had not decided to take such step. The goal of the event was to show the power of China, whereas, every concession would be interpreted as a sign of weakness.

Wolfgang Maennig and Andrew Zimbalist think that successes of the representatives of a host are the most important issue. Sporting successes may camouflage negative consequences of competition or organizational problems. It is a competition of the athletes that generates greatest emotions and makes media and societies focused on. Winning the medal table is something that particularly make people feel that Olympic Games was a success. As a consequence, the interest in sport is increasing, leading to development of various disciplines in the future²⁶. However, these are not the assumptions that motivated Chinese authorities. Chinese Communist Party did not want sports success to hide organizational flaws, because there were none. Whereas, winning in the medal table was interpreted as a triumph of the system. However, from a few years' perspective, we can see that Olympic Games has not considerably affected dynamic development of Chinese sport. Many commentators thought that Chinese would dominate medal table in next decades, but they did not. China took only the second place during the Olympic Games in London in 2012 – losing competition with the United States, winning 88 medals, including 38 gold ones²⁷. Whereas, during Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro' 2016, China was also outdistanced by the Great Britain. Winning 26 gold, 18 silver and 26 bronze medals, China took only third place in a medal table²⁸. Above results show that power of Chinese sport has decreased since 2008.

The organization of sports events is associated with an element of building prestige. It was reflected in many comparisons of the image of the states. The research results show the change in positive perception of the state organizing Olympic Games among foreigners²⁹. However, such mechanism was not the case of China. The results of the research conducted soon after the end of

²⁶ W. Maennig, A.S. Zimbalist, *International Handbook on the Economics of Mega Sporting Events*, Cheltenham 2012, pp. 109–116.

²⁷ *London medal classification*, <https://www.olympic.org/london-2012> [accessed: 12.02.2019].

²⁸ *Rio de Janeiro medal classification*, <https://www.olympic.org/rio-2016> [accessed: 12.02.2019].

²⁹ O. Gorganiuk, D. Radman, *Struktura wizerunku kraju i jej pomiar*, „Studia Socjologiczne” 2011, No. 4, p. 81.

the Olympic Games in Beijing have shown that the goals of China in the context of improvement of its image have not been fully achieved. TV broadcasts showed modern, efficient and rich country, but the interest in modern China among foreigners has not increased. The interest in Chinese culture has not increased even in the South-East Asia. Both in 2009 and 2010, the research results showed that the biggest cultural impact in this region had the United States, then Japan and South Korea. Just like before the Olympic Games, China took only fourth place³⁰.

The research conducted by Houlihan, Goldstein or Maening were based on the experiences related to organization of mega sports events by democratic countries. Therefore, the results of these research stand in contradiction to organizational and symbolical practice of the Olympic Games in Beijing. Above results clearly show that Beijing competition should be perceived in completely different terms. The policy of Chinese authorities was quite different than experiences of democratic countries on the line between state and sport. In order to understand the goals of Chinese authorities, we should go beyond scientific theories describing only sports events or relations between the state and sport. Chinese approach is identical with strictly political theories. The Beijing Olympic Games were one of the most politicized in history. It was a great example of theory of classical realism in international relations. China, in the dimension unprecedented during sports events after 1989, presented the elements characteristic of classical realism, that is, rivalry of ideological origin to increase its own potential. A follower of classical realism, Hans Morgenthau emphasized in the 1948 that "[...] prestige politics is about impressing other countries with power that we have or we believe that we have, or we want other countries believe in it"³¹. The character of the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008 showed that theory of classical realism is still valid and carried out by some countries in sport area.

Conclusions

Chinese authorities, deciding to organize the event, hoped that Olympic Games would improve perception of their state in the international arena. They wanted to show their country as a modern place, worth to visit with a good environment for making business. Some of these predictions have been

³⁰ G.G. Holyk, *Paper Tiger? Chinese Soft Power in East Asia*, „Political Science Quarterly” 2011, No. 126, p. 228.

³¹ H.J. Morgenthau, *Polityka między narodami. Walka o potęgę i pokój*, Warszawa 2010, p. 100.

confirmed. The foreign observers were saying that the whole event was organized almost perfectly. The signs of wealth and grand scale of organization have convinced many foreign guests that China is a country that may soon become a key player in the global politics. From the point of view of internal policy, organizational and sports success improved public feeling and increased support for a thesis that the path for development of the country is correct. From the perspective of a few years since the end of competition, the expectations of some western observers that the Olympic Games open China more and initiate social processes affecting the change of political situation have not been proven. Whereas, a feeling of national pride has undoubtedly increased, leading to increased consolidation around the government³².

On the other hand, the opinions about applying pharmacological doping, restrictions imposed on foreign journalists and uniformization presented during opening ceremony evoked mixed feelings in the West. The admiration for the ability to perfectly organize the competition was weakened as a result authoritarian and full of suspicion of attitude of the authorities. There was a feeling that China was trying to hide something and grand scale of organization was just a cover to hide actual weaknesses of China. Such attitude must also be interpreted as a sign of political realism, emphasizing assets to make other representatives of international community feel that the state is internally strong. However, Olympic Games in Beijing is not a good example of popular liberal theories concerning relations between sport and politics. It shows how anachronistic Beijing Olympic Games were, because since the middle of 1980s, all international sports events showed social, non-state energy and they must be equated with liberal approach to politics and international relations.

Jacques Rogge – IOC President at that time, praised the competition during closing ceremony. He said that it was „really unique Olympic Games”³³. The host’s reaction for these words was enthusiastic, although some criticism was hidden in them. Traditional formula saying about „the best Olympic Games in history” was used earlier. However, the word „unique” is the best description of a climate of Beijing competition and organizational actions taken by Chinese authorities.

³² K. Caffrey, *Epilogue...*, op.cit., p. 187.

³³ L. Zichner, P.E. Nowacki, op.cit., p. 156.

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Summer Olympic Games in Beijing in the context of selected scientific theories

Summary

Summer Olympic Games is, apart from football world cup, the most popular sports event. It is widely believed that it is something more than just sports event. It can be analysed from economic, marketing or political perspective. It is an opportunity to present country's own culture, technology and history. However, there is also some kind of threat associated with such events. Organization of such events is not possible without involvement of public sector and political bodies. It creates specific relationship in which sport affects functioning of the state in some areas and state may use Olympic Games for its own particularistic interests. Such relationship occurred also in the case of 29th Summer Olympic Games in Beijing that took place between 8.08.2008 and 24.08.2008.

This article shows how China tried to use the olympic games to achieve political goals. Additionally, it was verified to what extent the organization of the event influenced the change of perception of China to international arena, civil liberties and the consolidation of society around the political bodies. The considerations were based on several scientific theories defining the role of sport in image building countries – presented by Barrie Houlihan, Joshua Goldstein, Walter Maening and Maurice Roche.

Keywords: Olympic Games, Beijing, politicization of sport, image creation, society, power

Летние олимпийские игры в Пекине в свете некоторых научных исследований

Резюме

Летние олимпийские игры наряду с Чемпионатом мира по футболу в наше время являются самыми популярными спортивными состязаниями. Принято считать, что в наше время они выходят далеко за рамки исключительно спортивного события. Мы можем заметить это во многих аспектах – экономическом, маркетинговом и политическом. Олимпийские игры являются возможностью презентации собственной культуры, технического развития и истории. В то же время с ними связаны разнообразные риски. Организация события такого масштаба невозможна без участия государственного сектора и политической составляющей. Это создает определенный союз, в котором спорт влияет на функционирование государства в некоторых сферах, а государство может использовать Олимпийские игры с целью реализации собственных интересов.

Взаимосвязанность такого типа также имела место в случае XXIX Летних Олимпийских игр в Пекине, которые проводились с 8.08.2008 по 24.08.2008. В текущей статье описано, каким образом Китай пытался использовать Олимпийские игры для реализации политических целей, а также приведена оценка успешности таких действий. Кроме того, проведен анализ насколько Олимпийские игры повлияли на восприятие Китая на международной арене, гражданские права и консолидацию общества вокруг властей. Выводы основаны на нескольких научных теориях, которые описывают роль спорта в образовании имиджа государства на международной арене. С этой целью было проведено сравнение Олимпийских игр в Пекине в свете теорий Барри Хоулигана, Джошуа Голдштейна, Волтера Менинга и Маурика Роше.

Ключевые слова: Олимпийские игры, политизация спорта, создание имиджа, общество, власть