

*Beijing Olympics 2008: Governmental Incentives for Commitment to Environmental Consciousness
in China*

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Research Question: Why does the Chinese government strive to go “above and beyond” minimal standards to reduce pollution in China for the Olympics? A rationally acting government would likely decide to barely meet International Olympic Committee guidelines, considering that Beijing has already won the 2008 bid. What external factors influence what some consider Beijing’s radical departure from this rational path? My findings may answer the secondary, but related, question of what impact this could have on the Tianjin Olympic bid and also what implications it has for environmental policy changes associated with the Shanghai World Expo and other international events China hosts.

Outline:

Introduction

Context and Counterexamples

- a. Indian shipwrecking- argument about high skilled and low-skilled labor. Analyze from trade viewpoint
- b. Timeline of events
- c. Brief case study- South Korean Olympics and governmental change

Description of actors and influences

- a. Civil Society, including NGOs
- b. Public perception and Internet organization and opinions
- c. Foreign and domestic investment
- d. International Political interests (including other nations, as well as treaties and conferences)
- e. Chinese culture
- f. Governmental institutions

Analysis

- a. Analysis of government investment in the environment – what happened in terms of the data.
- b. Present mathematical model of situation and scenarios
- c. general analysis of findings

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

- a. summary
- b. conclusions
- c. recommendations
- d. potential applications

I. Importance

Since 1994, the Olympic Committee has required that host cities strive to host an environmentally-neutral event. Some cities, such as Sydney, Australia, have taken this as a cue that the Olympics should improve the environmental quality of life in the city. Beijing undertook a range of promises to make the city a healthier atmosphere for the athletes that participate, and to ensure that the Olympics was powered by solar and geothermal electricity sources. Government mandates required that heavy industry be moved out of the city.

Many Chinese view the Olympics as a defining moment in Chinese environmentalism as a whole. As Olympic Bid ambassador Yang aptly stated, “The Olympics provide a unique opportunity to spotlight environmental issues at a national and global level and get people everywhere involved in environmental work.”ⁱ Not only is Beijing meeting its targets for the number of required “Blue Skies Days,” but Chinese media and blogs are proclaiming the “Olympic Spirit” of cleaning up the city. The Olympics has sparked a political, economic, and social transition in China. Politicians admit to the need for environmental reforms and the SEPA, State Environmental Protection Agency, has grown in intuitional power. An extreme example of governmental “greenness”: apparently a new team of “energy police” were set up to hunt down businesses and schools who fail to meet the national standard for energy efficiency, threatening to publish their names on television or in newspapers if conditions did not improve. Economically, a huge market has been created for clean technology, renewable and recyclable materials. And socially, the Internet allows for hundreds of thousands of Chinese to express their opinions on this new “Green China.” Bloggers are proud to be hosting such an event and proud that government action is finally coming to fruition. Environmental NGOs are increasingly popular volunteer sites and tend to work harmoniously with government agencies.

I plan to evaluate the influence of the following factors on future environmental policy in China:

1. Civil Society, including NGOs
2. Public perception and Internet organization and opinions
3. Foreign and domestic investment
4. International Political interests (including other nations, as well as treaties and conferences)
5. Chinese culture

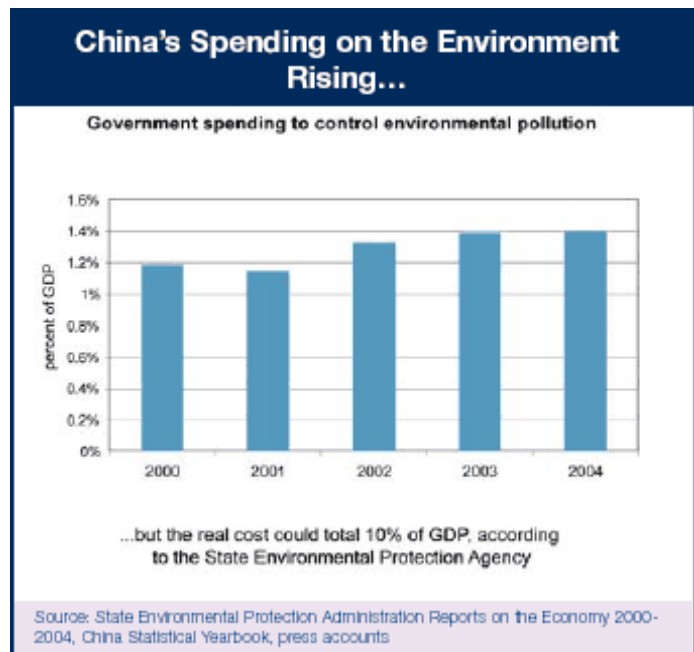
Research concerning the Olympics and China's commitment to a greener environment not only sheds light on important “Green” societal phenomena; it also can have implications for the future of China's environment. In my research, I plan to view the Olympics as a catalyst for change, and identify factors that built the Green Olympics into the political and social phenomena it is today. This research may have important implications for Tianjin's Olympic bid.

II. Timeline of Relevant Events

It is important to place the Olympics within the context of other environmental consciousness benchmarks in Chinese history.

- **1966-76** "Cultural Revolution", political and ideological campaign initiated by Mao Zedong that was aimed at reviving revolutionary spirit. Phrases like “Man Must Conquer Nature” would shape Chinese environmental attitudes for years to come.
- **The 1990s** Internet Use in China rises drastically. Of the numerous citizen groups, China's environmentalists were among the first to embrace the Internet to advance their cause.
- **1992** At the Rio Earth Summit, the Chinese government formulated its strategies for sustainable development: the "China Agenda 21" white paper (paper issued in 1994)
- **1993** Construction begins on the Three Gorges Dam, a dam project that will create a lake 600 km long by the time it is finished, in 2009.
- **1993** Sydney, Australia wins Olympic bid over [Beijing](#), [Berlin](#), [Istanbul](#) and [Manchester](#)

- **1996** Chinese State Council publishes “Environmental Protection in China,” a document that compares Chinese government's state policy of environmental protection with actual environmental practices.
- **1999** Education Ministry conducts a survey of 9202 Chinese that reveals that the majority of Chinese citizens know little about environmental protection and see environmental protection as solely the responsibility of the state.
- **2000** Sydney Olympics- christened “The Green Olympics” by Australian and international media. Largely a success.
- **2001** China wins Olympic bid for 2008. China promotes the slogan “Green Olympics, Hi-tech Olympics and People's Olympics.” An array of environmental goals are set.
- **2001** China initiates the "Great Green Wall" project, a project to create a 2800 mile "green belt" to hold back the encroaching desert. The project cost will be \$8 billion.
- **2002** China signs Kyoto protocol
- **2002** Shenzhen receives UN award for its environmental protection efforts.
- **2004** The Chinese government holds the fifth China-Japan-South Korea Ministerial Meeting on the Environment.
- **2004** 1st China-EU Ministerial Dialogue on Environmental Policies.
- **2004** Chinese diplomats pay mutual environmental visits to Japan, South Korea, Canada, France, Italy, Norway, Russia and Sweden



- **2004** China ratifies the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)
- **2006** China completes construction on the Three Gorges Dam project
- **2006** The China-Africa Summit. Chinese government expresses concern over pollution, which it says has reached a critical level, threatening health and social stability.
- **2006** The Beijing 2008 Olympic Air Quality Supervision Group is born.
- **2007** In famous speech, Premier Wen Jiabao makes 48 references to "environment," "pollution," and "environmental protection." [\[5\]](#)
- **2008** (Jun 1) Plastic Bag ban goes into effect
- **2008** (Aug 8) Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony
- **2050** The date by which the Chinese government believes it will have reversed desertification through the Great Green Wall project.

III. Current Status of Relevant Literature

An abundance of news media sources and opinion blogs are available about this issue. Relevant books and reports that I have read are organized into the following categories:

Scientific:

In *Air quality during the 2008 Beijing Olympic games*, Streets et al. use atmospheric quality data to gauge the extent to which Beijing has/is projected to meet goals for “Blue Sky Days,” particulates, and ozone. The study points out that air pollution in Beijing is seasonal. This point has been taken into consideration by the Chinese government, which according to media sources plans to

mitigate humidity through using modern weaponry to induce rainfall outside of Beijing. The study concludes that although progress is considerable, new emission control strategies are necessary to ensure that standards are met.

Comparative:

In *Beijing 2008: Greening the Games*, authors Chan et.al. describes the status of the Chinese environment and casts doubt upon the sustainability of rapid progress for the Olympics. This article also compares the Beijing Olympics with Sydney's Green Olympics, ending with a set of suggestions for Beijing. *Sydney: The Results* by Leece was read to provide further background information on Sydney's Green Olympics.

Asia's Environmental Movements by Lee, details pan-Asian values and their impact on collective action and institutional response that may be useful in my introduction.

Political and Institutional Actors:

Mao's War against Nature sets the stage for studying Chinese Environmental Politics by providing a history that includes: environmental attitudes in ancient china, late imperial attitudes of destruction, and the Cultural Revolution, during which Mao Zedong sought to prove national strength through conquering nature.

Richard Cashman's *Impact of the Games of Olympic host cities* details the Olympic process, controversies including political marginalization of certain actors, and the international image that Olympic Games confer on a host city.

Environmental Regulation in China (Ma, Ortonalo) outlines and describes institutional and non-governmental actors in China and outlines the environmental policymaking process. Additionally, it sheds light on cultural obstacles and incentives for environmental progress. *Learning to Manage*

Global Environmental Risks goes further in identifying the processes, interactions, and influence of environmental NGOs on various environmental issues.

Citizens and Image

Green Cities by Kahn outlines how “Green city indexes” are formed and describes the “environmental Kuznets curve,” a concept that explains that in later stages of economic development, industry is more sustainable. Kahn argues that people tend to expect environmental policy improvements at this stage in development.

Brand China by Ramo provides a new framework for analyzing the Olympics in terms of international public perception of China. *Brand China* argues that a large disparity exists between Chinese views of the Chinese government and foreign views of the Chinese government. The results of this study may be crucial in understanding why China chooses to boost its image in terms of environmentalism.

IV. Methodology, Data, and Sources

I plan to employ various methodologies, including using a credible commitment framework and/or other game theoretical frameworks to analyze further commitment to China's environment. I will also elicit the help of Dr. Ali G in clarifying the interests of transnational companies in terms of environmental improvements. I will be volunteering at the Beijing Olympics, so I may be able to interview politicians on their own projections. At the very least, I will attempt to survey college students studying at universities in Beijing. I will also find interviews among NGO staff (predominantly at the Global Village of Beijing). Blogs will also play an interesting role in my study, as the Internet had an interesting and unique impact on Green organizing and public interest in environmental issues. I will explore the possibility of applying data collected about actors in an agent-based computer simulation.

IV. Individual Preparation

- Personal Background: I interned at an Environmental NGO in Beijing last summer. I am the president of UM Roots and Shoots. I'm competing for a Udall Scholarship (environmental awareness scholarship). I'm on the Faculty Senate Recycling task force and have attended multiple conferences related to environmental issues.
- I have completed my CITI training for human subjects' research.
- I read the book *Theory and Methods in Political Science*.

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