

# IT'S NOT JUST SPORT: TAIWAN AND THE 2008 BEIJING OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY

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## Abstract:

This paper employs an approach drawn from the strategic relations approach in an empirical evaluation of the behavior of the participators in the governance of the political sporting system within/beyond the ‘Chinese Community’. The paper highlights the significance of political intentions as a key characteristic of the strategic environment which provides the two governments’ interests space to pursue ‘political actions’, and evaluates the responses of the participators in the governance system. Three major conclusions are as follows: first, this case illustrates how local Chinese-Taiwanese sports political nexus being implicated within a global sports system, as a strategic context, which provides a source of influence and power, constrains and/or facilitates the choices available to the participators; second, it points to evidence that the political intentions of modern states are more likely to pursue their projects by engaging in a complex network of competition or collaboration and the torch relay issue is thus characterized by a diversity of interests, preferences, values and ideas, which individuals or groups seek to promote or protect in such a context; finally, the case portrays how the outcome of one set of struggles (Olympic torch relay issue) sets the strategic context for subsequent governance decisions.

*Key words:* participator, governance, strategic relations approach

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## Introduction

The conventional view of Taiwan’s place in the global political system has, since the 1950s, oscillated precariously from that of a favored ally of the United States as a bulwark against the expansion of Communist China, to a position of marginalization as the United States sought to woo the Communist authorities from the beginning of the 1980s (Chu & Lin, 2001). International sport, in particular the relative positions of Taiwan and Communist China within the Olympic movement (Bairner & Hwang, 2011), gained symbolic importance as the issue of the ‘Two Chinas’ manifested itself in the sports domain, with both sides seeking to claim legitimacy in representing the ‘interests of China’ during the Nationalists (KMT) ruling period. With the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) gaining power in 2000, Taiwan underwent another significant change in politics, which also had a profound impact on sport development since the ‘new’ government recognized sport as an important part of national policy, and as a useful tool to establish Taiwanese identity (Lin, Lee, & Cheng, 2010). Sport thus became an important facet of claims to nationhood and national pride on the part of the Taiwanese (‘One China, One Taiwan’), intensified by the troubled relation-

ship with China. Looking at Taiwan’s political development in recent decades, types of manifestation at the level of international policy flow from the clash of ideology in relation to the issue of Greater China/Two Chinas. Problems within the Olympic movement, problems and conflicts between Taiwan and China in international sports events are identified (Liu, 2007). Indeed, “Taiwan’s Olympic role, always nettlesome for China, is more problematic at a PRC-hosted Games” (DeLisle, 2008, p. 33). Lind has also pointed out that “the most heated competition in the Olympics could take place not in a stadium but in the Taiwan Strait (Lind, 2006, p. 38). The episode underscores the deep mistrust between Beijing and Taipei, antagonists in an unresolved civil war, and how entwined in politics the Olympic Games became (*New York Times*, 2007).

The following specific example serves to illustrate the nature and diversity of the subtle relations between the IOC, China, and Taiwan in this political sporting structure. Just how complicated and suspense-filled the relations between Beijing and Taipei are was seen in the dispute over the route of the Olympic torch. The torch relay has become an expression of universalism in the context of the host nation, with an emphasis on using the route to encapsulate the peaceful dimensions of the world’s

multiple cultural, ethnic, political identities. The delicate political situation involving the 2008 Olympic torch arises from the decades-old difference in standpoints between China and Taiwan regarding the state sovereignty claims (Bairner & Hwang, 2011). Because a torch relay [route] including Taiwan may imply that "Taiwan is part of China, which Beijing so insists and Taipei so resists, it raises a serious doubt that this may happen at all" (Xu, 2006, p. 104). Like all host countries, China attempted to use the Olympic Games to promote its own agendas. The torch relay was intended to symbolize national unity when it announced that the international relay would advance from Vietnam to Taiwan and on to Hong Kong (Brownell, 2009). In response to China's intention, Taiwanese authorities refused Beijing's proposal because the move that "the Chinese were seeking to create was that this would be part of the domestic leg of the torch's journey rather than being clearly international" (Bairner & Molnar, 2010, p. 7) which could amount to an admission that the nation is part of China. Consequently, Taiwan became "the first IOC member to decline to be included in the route" (Yu & Mangan, 2008, p. 838). Tensions in relation to the torch relay route had significant implications for diplomatic/sport policy, while also/again providing China and Taiwan with a 'competence' in the field of the Olympic movement.

Within this context, this paper seeks to focus on the strategic relations, roles and interactions between various participators in the international political sporting system in shaping policy outcomes during, and following, the period of the 2008 Olympic Torch relay dispute. The research is framed within a theoretical strategic-relational model, which offers an approach to the explanation of national activity based on an understanding of the structural contexts within which policy is generated, and of the (intentional) actions and (intended and unintended) consequences of the actions of individuals and groups of participators (Hay, 2002). It focuses on the network of relations in which state (or supranational) activity is conducted and as such it lends itself to the analysis of the complex policy networks which operate at a fairly abstract and generalized level. What the strategic relations approach emphasizes is that any analysis of the state form, including all forms of forces that might act within, beyond, and around the state, should be taken into account. The interaction between agents and the state-specific structures is always dynamic and dialectical (Jessop, 2008). The state structural factors focus on the context within which political events, outcomes, and effects develop, which are beyond the control of the participators. They are involved directly in the context (structure) and their behavior, conduct, and agency are responsible for effects and outcomes from different actions, which one can observe and explain, within/beyond/around

this state structure (Henry, 2001). As the state has only a set of institutional capacities, the state's power could be seen in relation to the forces acting in and through these institutions. "Power and policy are executed through various, contingent mechanisms that form part of the dialectic of structure and strategy" (Kelly, 1999, p. 112). The participators (forces) within/beyond/around the state, act in an historical context which is dynamic (contingent) (Liu, 2003).

In the sports arena, a strategic relations analysis offers a way to identify and characterize the salient relationships, interactions and strategies that characterize the management of a set of sporting organizations. It informs "the significance of specific historical settings in which state-society relations evolve and asserts the idea that previous contests form the conditions for recent/current struggles" (Girginov, 2009, p. 517). The fact that the historical context provides resources in specific situations, in which some groups are allowed to pursue their own strategic goals (Henry, 2001). The participators are conceptualized as "reflexive and strategic, orienting themselves and their strategies towards the environment within which their strategic intentions must be realized" (Hay, 2002, p. 210). Arguably, policy outcomes are contingent, and, the analysis of policy outcomes in political, economic, and social contexts during specific periods would be appropriately explained by the accounts of the structures within which state actions occur, the development and reproduction of such structures by the consequences of the agents involved, and the power struggles, which take place between the various forces (groups and individuals) within those structures (Jessop, 2008).

In essence, the strategic relations approach argues that one should focus at a more concrete level on the nature of 'strategic action', and of the 'strategically selective context' within which such an action is formulated, with each impacting on the other (McAnulla, 2002). It highlights access to, and the use of, resources within the strategic environment to achieve preferred ends for particular participators (Liu, 2003, 2005). My goal within this context is to identify the participators' perceptions/explanations of their own and others strategic actions, of the nature of the strategically selective context, and of the strategies facilitated by such contexts. Both the structures and their strategic selectivity are considered as significant as well as the role of various agents within and around sport (Liu, 2005). Guided by the strategic relations theory, this paper undertakes an analysis of the Olympic movement in China, Taiwan and the IOC, focusing on a specific set of debates around the scheme of proposing the 2008 Olympic torch relay route, which emerged in 2007, and evaluates how the system was managed in political and managerial terms in this context.

## Methods

The aim of this paper was to identify the range of interests and participators involved in the discussion of a competition/negotiation for sport, elaborating the complexities of the policy networks involved. In order to investigate the nature of the strategic context and the explanations/motivations/actions of strategic participators, an analysis of this study is based on three main sources: interviews, government documents, and media commentaries. Fourteen interviews were conducted with key individuals, including three officials of the government institutions from the Sports Affairs Council and the Mainland Affairs Council, two non-governmental sports administrators of the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee, two members of Taiwan's Parliament (one KMT, one DPP), one coach, one athlete, and experts in sports politics (three academics and two journalists) over the period from December 2008 to April 2009. A review of the literature and material from the interviews has brought to light a set of divergent motives among the participators. Nevertheless, there is a principal limitation on the selection of interviewees because this study was based on a Taiwanese perspective evident from the data, since both persons from the Chinese and the IOC constituencies were difficult to access.

As "documents do not simply reflect the facts, but also construct social reality and versions of events" (May, 1997, p. 164), and explanations forwarded for the forging of these associations are yet to be verified with primary evidence, motivations are suggested on the grounds of secondary, documented evidence. Secondary data were in the form of analysis of published and unpublished documentary materials produced by the government institutions (Mainland Affairs Council, Sports Affairs Council in Taiwan) involved, non-governmental sports administration (International Olympic Committee, China Olympic Committee, Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee, Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad), together with media commentaries regarding sports policy. In this study, the author reviewed 66 Government reports and 367 media articles. The period of analysis ran from the time when the 2008 Olympic Games was awarded to Beijing in June 2001 until September 2008 (the Beijing Games terminated). Interviews were transcribed and translated by the author. Meanwhile, interview transcripts, government reports/proceedings of parliamentary debates, and media commentaries were subject to coding employing the Nvivo 8 qualitative data analysis software package, and coding and analysis were undertaken employing an ethnographic content analysis approach. This approach employs a protocol which allows the application of both pre-determined deductive, research 'imposed' categories, and

inductively determined, categories or codes arising from respondents' (or report authors') comments.

## Results

"The Olympic Games are by definition political" (Lenskyj, 2010, p. 15). "Throughout modern history the Olympics have been mired in power politics, international tension, the 2008 Olympics is not the first to highlight the rivalry between Taiwan and China" (Lind, 2006, p. 40). In 2001, the former IOC president, Juan Samaranch sent a letter of congratulation dated 23 March to President Chen Shui-bian, expressing the hope that Taiwan would continue to support the Olympic movement. To some extent, the new government responded in a positive manner and decided to support China's bidding for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games (Liu, 2005). And such a 'moderate' political atmosphere surrounding the inaugural DPP regime reflected well on sporting affairs if Beijing would host the Games. In the build-up to the Beijing Olympic bid, the two sides considered the possibility of Taiwan's involvement in co-hosting the 2008 Games and the inclusion of the Olympic torch relay route. However, the idea of co-hosting soon evaporated since China insisted that this could only be done on the premise of the 'one China' principle (Bairner & Hwang, 2011), in accordance with the IOC regulation that only allows the same Olympic Games to be hosted in the same country (International Olympic Committee, 2007).

Ever since Beijing won the bid in July in 2001, the government immediately assigned a National Security Commission in September, with a membership composed of the President's Office, the Executive Yuan, Sports Affairs Council, Mainland Affairs Council, Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee, etc., to deal with the related affairs of the Olympic torch relay route passing through Taiwan (Interview A, 20 March 2009). At that time, the government viewed the possibility of the torch relay in Taiwan with 'a cautious welcome' and emphasized the importance of equality, mutual benefit and national dignity (Interview C, 3 February 2009). For instance, in a written statement, the Cabinet spokesman of the pro-independence DPP government expressed 'sincere congratulations', while also encouraging the mainland to carry out the Olympic spirit in cross-Strait relations, and to abandon the use of force in cross-Strait disputes (Lianhe Zaobao, 2001, quoted in Xu, 2006, p. 104). China's proposal to let the Olympic torch pass through Taiwan ignited a heated debate from the propensity of domestic politics to push both Beijing and Taipei to harden their positions. Nevertheless, the ongoing contention between the political entities over Taiwan's mainland policy explicates how the parameters of Taiwan's internal policy debate toward the Olympic torch had temporarily ceased

because Beijing's schedule was only 'initially proposed' but not 'officially fixed'. In effect, the final decision would be jointly made by the IOC together with the host country and the final draft of the Olympic torch relay route had to be submitted to the IOC for approval at the end of that year [2005] as the BOCOG president Liu Qi indicated (Tsai, 2007). As a result, both sides remained caught in a contradiction which was reshaped by their domestic and international political priorities/realities and evolving strategic circumstances.

In November 2006, the BOCOG sent out invitations to the Olympic committees, which included the Taiwan/Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee/CTOC, under whose jurisdiction the proposed Olympic torch route would fall. On December 28, 2006, the president of the CTOC, Tsai, replied accepting the invitation and later signed a memoir which outlined the four points of consensus<sup>1</sup> related to the Olympic torch relay with the BOCOG on February 12, 2007. On March 2007, according to the BOCOG, the CTOC agreed with the previously mentioned points in a signed and confirmed letter, in which the CTOC president said:

*On behalf of the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee, I would like to confirm the reaching of consensus between the BOCOG and us in our meeting, as well as to confirm the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games torch relay route concerning the Taipei leg. I believe that with further planning and consultation between the two parties, the torch relay will be conducted successfully in Taipei and it will leave a perfect record. (China Daily, 2007)*

Having agreed the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games torch relay route concerning the Taipei leg by BOCOG and CTOC, the IOC also approved the planned route for the Beijing Olympic torch relay in the middle of April. While the 'concurrence' was 'reached', in contrast to the CTOC's behavior, its government rejected the deal. As Mr. Tsai indicated:

*The current evolution of many issues is out of our sports community's control. Taiwan's status as an independent sovereign state would be degraded if the Olympic flame travels to Hong Kong via Taipei, so my authorities request that the relay enter into Taipei and exit*

*Taipei through third-party countries. Though the CTOC is a non-governmental organization, it should respect and follow the government's decision. (Ma & Lan, 2007)*

Concurrently, apart from the authorities in Beijing criticizing the Taiwan government's unilateral abrogation of a bilateral agreement reached by both sides, the BOCOG appealed to the public by showing documents signed by CTOC president Tsai, pledging Taiwan's participation, which implied that the CTOC had agreed to the route (Yu, 2008). However, Tsai responded and pointed out that "I can only say there is a different opinion [in Taiwan] between sport officials and government officials" (Yu & Mangan, 2008, p. 838). The illustration implied that the CTOC was unlikely to have its own choice but to act as the government intended to achieve (Interview B, 17 March 2009).

On April 26 2007, the 2008 BOCOG of the XXIX Olympiad officially announced the schedule of the Beijing Olympic Games torch relay, which began its journey in Greece and covered more than 137,000 kilometers by visiting 20 international cities on five continents and all through China. The route proposed by BOCOG had the torch entering Taiwan via Vietnam from Ho Chi Minh city, and going on to Hong Kong, which is a special administrative region of China, making Taipei the last on the international leg and the first on the domestic leg of the relay (Lind, 2006). The outcome of the final torch relay route was none other than the proposal, in March 2005, that the "Beijing authorities concerned with the Taiwan issue is intrinsic to national self-respect and regime survival" (Chu, 2004, p. 491). Tensions emerged over Beijing's proposed inclusion of Taiwan in the torch relay route when Taiwan's government recognized that BOCOG's proposal dwarfed Taiwan's status, a marked dwarfing of its sovereignty. As the SAC minister indicates that:

*Political machinations aimed at downgrading our status in the IOC are evident in China's promotional activities for the 2008 Beijing Olympics (...). This route is a 'domestic' route decided in March 2005 by Beijing Organizing Committee President Liu Qi, without regard to the proposal of the CTOC that the torch enter Tai-*

<sup>1</sup> The four points are:

- 1) Both parties are committed to abiding by the regulations, resolutions and practice of the IOC and together preserving the purity and sanctity of the Olympic torch relay and Olympic flame.
- 2) The Beijing Olympic Games torch relay is an important part of the Beijing Olympic Games. Just like the Games, the relay must follow the Olympic Charter.
- 3) The Beijing Olympic Games torch relay passing Taipei is a sport and cultural activity carried out within the jurisdiction of the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee. The Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee will ensure that the torch relay is conducted smoothly under its jurisdiction.
- 4) When the torch relay is conducted under the jurisdiction of the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee, the use of relevant flags, emblems and songs should strictly follow the relevant regulations of the IOC. (China Daily, 2007)

wan from a third country and depart to a fourth country. China will most certainly publicize the transfer of the torch from Taiwan to Hong Kong as being from 'Taipei China' to 'Hong Kong China' and 'Macau China' and then onward to other cities in China. This is an attempt by China to engineer the relay route so that Chinese Taipei is included in China's domestic relay route. (Sports Affairs Council, 2007)

Having understood Taiwan's decision, the Beijing organizers advocated Taiwan's authorities could follow an agreement reached by the memoir of the meeting for the four-point consensus on the relay route and discard political consideration to obey the IOC's Olympic Charter, relevant rules and regulations, to make Taiwan's citizens' wishes for participating in the Olympic torch relay available. Internationally, the IOC which "has 'supreme authority' over the Games" (Lenskyj, 2010, p. 21), played an important role in this debate as a source of external authority Taiwan's rejection of the torch relay schedule indeed invited the IOC's concern as its president Jacques Rogge illustrated:

*I think we have only to judge for the route (...). Many things will happen in this field. Nothing is final (...). The Chinese organizers proposed to the Chinese Taipei National Olympic Committee to have the flame, they had accepted that in February [2007]. They have changed their minds now, but who says that that is final? So I wouldn't make comments at this stage. (Malaysia Sun, 2007)*

However, the above claim reflected no signal that the IOC had made a final decision. While the continuing emergence of issues associated with the torch relay may derail, the Olympic Games' spirit for Beijing was raised, the IOC issued its 'principles' for dealing with this case:

*We are hopeful that a satisfactory agreement will be reached. This matter is best resolved by BOCOG and the National Olympic Committee of Chinese Taipei. It is at this point a Games Organizing Committee matters. (International Olympic Committee, 2007, p. 4)*

Thus the IOC sent letters to the CTOC and the BOCOG on July 18, urging that both sides across the Taiwan Strait would conduct a new round of negotiations on the torch relay and reach an agreement by August 15, 2007. The deadline for the ne-

gotiation was further extended to the end of August under IOC's approval. On August 29, the Taiwan authorities claimed that both CTOC and BOCOG had reached a new three-point consensus<sup>2</sup> which had no relation to the former 'four-point consensus' of February 12, 2007 (Mainland Affairs Council, 2007). As for the previous 'four-point consensus', Taiwan's government tended to ignore it because the CTOC's signing had not been authorized/agreed by the Government, as is clarified by this comment by the former SAC Minister:

*I was wondering who authorized the CTOC to negotiate with the BOCOG about the torch relay route? (...). The CTOC needed government's approval before negotiation, didn't it? The torch issue was not simply a non-governmental affair (...). When China's airplane carrying the Olympic torch applied to land at Taiwan's airport, could CTOC decide this? It involves work with government Ministries such as the Interior, Mainland Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Transportation (...). So, the CTOC can't represent Taiwan's position without government's authorization. (Interview A, 20 March 2009)*

While Taiwan's political leaders denied the previous 'agreement' and proposed the new routing, BOCOG asserted that the "CTOC has broken four agreements reached by the two sides on the torch relay route, not to mention the principle of separating sports from politics as enshrined in the Olympic charter" (International Olympic Committee, 2007, p. 43). And it put out:

*The proposed route of the Beijing Olympic torch relay has been authorized by the IOC's final decision. It is unlikely for the hosting unit to change the route. In relation to the decision, we hope that both sides of the Strait may respectively seek an 'ambiguous Chinese lingual interpretation' to our people, especially those in Taiwan. (Lin, 2007)*

September 6, the BOCOG once more emphasized the importance of obeying the former agreement of the 'four-point consensus' and requested incorporation of it into the texts of the new memoir. Based on the 'consensus', the BOCOG pointed out that CTOC is obliged to coordinate all concerned parties to ensure any flags, emblems and songs which are inconsistent with IOC regulations would not be used during the torch relay. As Tai-

<sup>2</sup> The new three points are:

- 1) The BOCOG promises to abide by a 1989 agreement between the CTOC and the Chinese Olympic Committee (COC), and will no longer refer to the CTOC and Taiwan's athletic delegation as 'China Taipei' in Chinese moniker, but 'Chinese Taipei'.
- 2) The BOCOG further confirms that Olympic Torch relay route through Taipei is an overseas route, not China's domestic route.
- 3) The BOCOG will no longer use the term of 'area' in the expression of the overseas relay route, avoiding the implication of dwarfing Taiwan's status. (Mainland Affairs Council, 2007)

wan considered, Beijing sought to attach to the final agreement a clause saying when the Olympic torch passes through Taiwan, the national flag, emblem, anthem, or other symbol would not be displayed or played along the route, Taiwan found the demand unacceptable and decided to terminate China's proposal (Interview A, 20 March 2009). Subsequent attempts at negotiations, from both Taiwan and China, met with no degree of success. Though the IOC extended the deadline date for negotiations, to September 20, 2007, Taiwan was unable to be included on the route. The IOC e-mail, from Emmanuelle Moreau, media-relations manager from the IOC, expressed regret over Taiwan's non-inclusion in the route:

*Our understanding is that a solution between the two has not been found to date, and that, with time to firm up logistics running out, the route will now have to go ahead without a stop in Chinese Taipei (...). The IOC would have liked to see the participation of people from Chinese Taipei, but acknowledge this will not be possible given the fact the two parties have not reached an agreement. (Taiwan News, 2007)*

The dispute over the 2008 Beijing Olympic torch relay to passing through Taiwan, which had been turned into a partisan political struggle, was ended with the IOC's announcement. This noted tale, which illustrates a network system of negotiated order or governance, throws up a number of sets of participants in the emergent system. Within this context, the following sections seek to focus on the analysis of relationships between the relevant people in shaping policy outcomes.

## Discussion and conclusions

### The dynamics of the strategic context on the key participants

In recent decades, "rising national pride has lent strong support to the Chinese government and a deep sense of national identity plays, in fact, a crucial role in shaping fundamental aspects of China's rise and aspirations" (Carlson, 2007, p. 253). For the Chinese government, hosting the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games was intended to give political and national meaning for the country, particularly in relation to the recognition of a successful Communist leadership both in domestic and international arenas. With specific reference to China, the delicate political situation concerning the 2008 Olympic torch arose from the decades-old difference in standpoints between China and Taiwan regarding state sovereignty claims. For a long time, China has recognized Taiwan as its provincial state and thus has considered it as a 'local' stop in the mapping of the Olympic torch's route, which included Taiwan in the same route of its special administrative regions, Hong Kong and Macau. Indeed,

*the 'One China Principle' of Chinese foreign policy allows no expression of the existence of the ROC [Taiwan] as a sovereign state (...). Thus any move toward independence by Taiwan could provoke a military reaction in Beijing that would disrupt the Olympic Games. Taiwan is more important than the Olympic Games because it is considered a question of national sovereignty. (Brownell, 2008, p. 187)*

For China, "the Olympics is not one of [China's] three major tasks [which the Party leadership describes as modernization, reunification, and common development]; reunification is" (Peterson, 2004, p. 26). Politically, the PRC insists on the 'One China Principle' and avoids portraying an image of 'two Chinas' at a global level. The treatment of Taiwan by the World Health Organization (WHO) during the 2003 SARS outbreak, when the WHO acceded to Beijing's demand to secure Beijing's permission before going to Taipei, is but one example (Peterson, 2004, p. 25). As such, sport is subject to the same regulations stipulated under the 'One China Principle', "a condition set by Beijing for further cooperation" (Chan, 2002, p. 141). The Chinese government takes a more pragmatic look at the 'principle', emphasizing the need to locate sport firmly within the single Chinese political entity. For some decades, Chinese political authorities or sporting governing bodies confirm a rule.

*Taiwan is a province of China. Taiwan sports organizations should be under the leadership of the Chinese Olympic Committee. Item 24 of the Olympic Charter rules that within one country, there is only one Olympic Committee that organizes activities according to the Olympic Charter and the Olympic Ideal. (Fan & Xiong, 2002, p. 325)*

In the process of negotiating with the torch relay, China's message was evidently clear that sport was to be regarded as an area of both domestic and international politics like any other. A comment by Brownell illustrates this point:

*China is not trying to show its 'superiority' through the torch relay. It is trying to symbolically express that the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate government of all of China, and Taiwan is a dependent territory, which has been officially recognized by the UN, the IOC, and the nearly 200 nations that have diplomatic relations with the PRC. (Thesbjerg, 2007, p. 2)*

Thus restraints on Taiwan's actions which may imply an alienation of China's sovereignty were deemed to be reasonable. This example shows how sport as an important issue is subject to government control as are any other areas in a society. As a result of those failures, China shifted to a more nuanced Taiwan policy even though a minority had

celebrated such a possibility. China's reliance on the IOC in its United Nations present form, which defines a one China policy in the conduct of the Chinese, has sought to 'manage' this network of relations principally in two ways. The first is, as previously noted, by international recognition (sovereignty, diplomacy) or regulations where the nature of political obligations allows China to steer to some extent the activities of international sport governing bodies (the IOC in this case). For instance, Jiang Xiaoyu, vice president of the BOCOG once pointed out that:

*With the help of the IOC guidelines, I'm sure we can work together to satisfy everybody's goals. The torch relay schedule must be approved by the International Olympic Committee (IOC)'s executive board, which meets in Beijing (...). It had been 'generally settled' and would be announced by the end of April [2007]. (International World Games Association, 2007)*

While the 'One China Principle' was utilized by the Beijing government, as a means of protecting the Chinese cultural diversity of the regions and the nation states of China, it nonetheless constrains its position to negotiate with the pro-independence DPP regime.

The second is by 'incorporation' of potential interest groups (e.g. KMT-affiliated politicians, business elites, and athletes, etc.), which might not challenge its authority, into 'membership of the Chinese Community' in the Olympic atmosphere. Admittedly, China's political intention for the torch relay left room for promoting national identity and sovereignty of a one China, and it also offered greater attention to providing business opportunities to the Taiwanese. China is a significant influence since an independent Taiwan versus Taiwan as an element in a greater China provides the major political and/or economic cleavage between the different parties. The prospect of hosting the first successful Chinese Olympic Games (torch relay included) generated a degree of incentives among some in Taiwanese political and business elites. The various groups/actors in Taiwan who made their positions apparent, and those who did not, inevitably rehearsed their arguments in anticipation of the Chinese Olympic glory, together with considering commercial interests. Such an attempt to generate a more economically responsive commercial approach by the Chinese government, however, met limited success. That is because the DPP regime successfully provoked the 'consciousness' amongst the general public of a 'Taiwanese nation' which is considered far more important than economic interest while dealing with the torch issue (Interview D, 13 March 2009). Surrounding such 'sociopolitical' circumstances, the strategies (actions), which individuals or groups adopt, will yield effects; some of these

maybe intended, but there are also likely to be unintended consequences (McAnulla, 2002).

The profound shifts in Taiwan's internal political, economic and social structures have had a significant impact on its place in the global political system (Lin, et al., 2010). During the KMT's ruling period, both China and Taiwan sought to claim legitimacy in representing the 'interests of China', nevertheless, as the DPP gained power in 2000, the political change has provided impetus for abandoning the KMT's core commitment to Chinese nationalism and facilitated ideological accommodation, with opposition on the issue of national identity (Lin, et al., 2010). The building of an independent Taiwan implies a different policy mind-set from that of viewing Taiwan as an integral element of a Chinese nation-state, implying some form of political sovereignty in the longer term. Domestic politics and domestic sporting politics are thus intimately affected by some differences between the KMT and DPP (Liu, 2003, pp. 234-235). Coupled with the promotion of some key political goals such as the establishment of a sovereign and an independent state by the DPP government, there is the recognition of how a growing sense of Taiwan's sovereignty and national identity is changing and shaping public attitudes. The 'consciousness' amongst the general public of a 'Taiwanese nation', supported by the DPP, began to grow and became stronger than the 'consciousness' of the 'ROC nation' promoted by the KMT. The ideology of what constituted 'Taiwan nationalism' began to significantly challenge the KMT's hegemony which, in turn, has had a profound impact on sport development. In the case of the torch issue, sport was thus utilized as an important facet of claims to nationhood, which intensified with the ongoing troubled relationship with China.

Girginov (2009, p. 517) argues that "the form of the 'state' and its basic structural mechanisms preconditioned the state as the site, the generator and the product of strategies". Although the Olympic movement is a global phenomenon, it has, nevertheless, operated within a specific regional environment in the Chinese context and became a battlefield for the enactment of contestation between the two different political entities. With regard to the strategic relations at play in the case study, the Olympic movement, on the one hand, has enabled both countries to participate in international sports under the so-called 'Olympic Formula' (Chan, 2002, p. 41). Under the 'Olympic Formula', Taiwan's government has focused on the aim of attending international sports events to enhance the image of the Taiwan/ROC. Thus a reflexive and formulative strategy, on the basis of partial knowledge of the structures, makes it possible for the participators to formulate strategies, which overcome the problems created for them by strategically selective contexts

(McAnulla, 2002). Taiwan's strategy of rejecting China's proposal, because it violated the 1989 formal agreement [Olympic Formula] that ensures the Taiwan/Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee, as a member of the IOC, shares the rights and obligations to participate in the IOC international sporting activities on equal terms with other members (Interview B, 17 March 2009).

The position of Taiwan is as clear as that of China. Taiwan tends to give greater emphasis to the principle of political sovereignty, Olympic conventions, and parity/reciprocity of cross-strait relations (Bairner & Hwang, 2011). However, these principles contrast with the approach of China, in particular with the issue of sovereignty. Interestingly, the 'Olympic Formula', to some extent, has constrained China's actions/interest since Taiwan's political will/interest was able to appeal to international regulations and thereby legitimate their claims as well as drawing on the strength of the global sporting body [the IOC], which lay beyond China-Taiwan's own sporting and political constituency. In this case, the effects of strategies can never wholly be predicted. Outcomes are contingent and they do ultimately tend to favor those participators' interests that are able to exert an influence given the structural advantages which are the product of past history (Girginov, 2009; Henry, 2001; Liu, 2003, 2005). As Hay has pointed out that,

*The ability of agents to change structural circumstances through an active process of strategic learning: agents are reflexive, capable of reformulating, within limits, their own identities and interests, and able to engage in strategic calculation about their current situation. (Hay, 1996, p. 124)*

Regional China-Taiwan sports politics are thus implicated within a global sports system, which provides a source of influence and power.

While the cases of China and Taiwan, representing the structure of sport, the interrelations of forces, and the role of individual agents, are considered as equally important for a comprehensive inquiry over a specific time horizon and in a specific context, the IOC represents a social relation that can be seen as the site, the generator and the product of strategies which has only relatively embraced 'neutrality' in sports politics. Interestingly, the IOC, although its principles were allegedly apolitical, plunged right into the heart of politics. To a certain degree, the IOC was concerned with its own 'interests', largely avoiding controversy, and placed a premium on developing a stable relationship with China because of China's politics and economy, and because it/China plays a key role in steering or even controlling an international agenda (Liu, 2007). On the other hand, the IOC represents an interesting attempt of rooting for sport in a peaceful culture and

human healthy activity other than that of politics and exploitative economics. In the case of the torch relay, it could not be regarded simply as a matter for a sporting arena, but also of political and economic interests. The political sporting 'state' is a terrain where IOC, China, and Taiwan are seen as a battle field. The state itself is a site of rivalries among its different branches where political participants struggle with one another to secure access to state resources (Henry, 2001). Sport (through individual agents) should be seen both as a force acting within the state and also as an ensemble of powers which act within sport and between sport and the state. As a force in itself, sport is subjected to the structures of power within the state and accordingly it may be regarded as a force struggling to secure access to the state resources for the realization of specific sports projects (Girginov, 2009). Thus the stances (e.g. international regulations in this case) being adopted are of importance as they canvass 'for' and 'against' the legal competence of the IOC, seeking to support their own positions.

Actually, the IOC, "in its Olympic Charter, states any of the celebrations or ceremonies held in relation to the Olympic flame and/or lighting of the Olympic torch must be approved by the IOC" (Cahill, 1998, p. 181). This is what China stresses, in its desire to protect and advance the interests of political participators, sports bodies and administrators, etc., it has helped galvanize the support of the Chinese government, the China Olympic Committee, and the BOCOG, behind the 'pro' inclusion of the Taiwan lobby. The torch relay, as the IOC emphasizes, which is supposed to embody the Olympic values of friendship through sports, is a popular public relations tool and the only contact most people have with the Olympics (Bowen, 2007). The IOC might have had its own reasons for compromising the situation, by acknowledging two committees in order to react to all of the political issues that now seem to surround Beijing 2008. The IOC claimed that:

*Whilst it is not the right of the IOC to directly influence relationships between sovereign powers, we believe that the Olympic Values of respect and friendship will set a positive independent example at the Games. The IOC does not take a role in influencing the behavior of the Chinese government either internally or on its position on the world stage. (International Olympic Committee, 2007, p. 4)*

It further reflects its attitude toward the controversial torch relay issue between China and Taiwan.

*The differences of opinion between China and Taiwan are specifically related to Taiwanese issues of independence. The IOC has no appropriate role in determining a solution to this disagreement. It is a matter for BOCOG to re-*

*solve as the organizing committee for Beijing 2008. (International Olympic Committee, 2007, p. 43)*

Of significant importance, in light of the world's highest arbitrating sporting governing body, the question becomes: to what extent must the IOC obey its own position? Not surprisingly, the IOC's members are primarily interested in maintaining their rule through inducement of moral persuasion rather than through direct action and control. The role of the IOC is in part related to seeing that 'Olympic values' are not 'subverted' by political intervention, while also ensuring that the two national Olympic Committees' goals are pursued in the sport field. The IOC seems likely to take a more pragmatic look at the torch relay agenda, emphasizing the need to locate sport within the Olympic movement. There is a general consensus among members of the IOC that there is a need for the IOC to be more neutral, comprising and coordinative, to support Olympic development for a long-term sustainable growth and to make the IOC project more tangible and equitable to IOC members. The notion of steering (rather than commanding) is thus a key word in the IOC's agenda in relation to dealing with the torch relay case.

### Concluding remarks

What the study reported in this paper has sought to show is that the governance system in the political-sporting domain in the 'Chinese Community' is perhaps best understood through the prism of a strategic relations approach. In essence, a form of strategic relations theory is required to characterize the contingent outcomes of battles between contending groups of participants, highlighting the structural context within which they operate, and the way in which such contexts act as resources and constraints for the shaping of such a political-sport nexus. With regard to the strategic relations at play in the case study, the 2008 Olympic Games torch relay route exemplifies local Chinese-Taiwanese sports politics being implicated within a global political-sporting system, which provides a source of influence and power. Our understanding of strategic context is crucial if we are to understand the opportunities and constraints which exist for any participant in the system. Past and present struggles and their outcomes create various socio-political environments that presuppose the forms of state intervention in sport. The nature of the relationships between the participants and the tactics adopted underline the claim that the nature of the system of governance which has developed in sport in the China-Taiwan context has politically specific characteristics. The development of a sports policy over the last six decades inside/beyond the 'Chinese Community' has been linked to wider

power struggles (e.g. the Olympic Movement) and this has presented the participants with resources for, and constraints on, any actions taken. Both of the key actors in Taiwan (ROC) and China (PRC) have taken advantage of structure, in terms of global regulations, to promote their interests. The 'state' has been seen as the outcome of past struggles between the actors which also forms the context of, and resources for, contemporary struggles. The outcomes of these past struggles will invariably reflect the interests of the powerful groups. The history of local struggles and outcomes of state activity are contingent, not determined.

Modern states are more likely to pursue their projects by engaging in a complex network of competition and collaboration. In such a context, the torch relay issue is thus characterized by a diversity of interests, preferences, values and, ideas, which the individuals or groups seek to promote or protect. The case study illustrates how the participants behaved in order to achieve strategic goals. In this case, political factors, such as nation sovereignty and national identity, have shaped the thrust and pace of the developmental strategies in the specific 'Chinese Community' context. To some extent, Taiwan's 'interests' were defended by the state's political motivations (national sovereignty and identity), which contributed to shaping the goals and strategies of the development. Intervention conducted by the Chinese government, in contrast, provided an example of that regime exerting influence upon the nature of this issue, as well as its governing bodies (COC and BOCOG). The negotiating processes with the torch relay route conducted/directed by the Chinese Government or governing bodies sought to steer the sports system to achieve desired outcomes by moral pressure (both on Taiwan's Government and citizens, by promises of sharing Chinese culture and honor), use of economic or other incentives (to Taiwan's political parties and citizens), and regulations (one-China policy) to influence other parties to act in ways consistent with the desired outcomes. The IOC stood in a neutral position of China's proposal for the route, the dispute over the issue, which had been turned into a partisan political struggle, was ended with Taiwan's decision/rejection. The IOC, though incorporating the most powerful set of participants within the international sporting system, with access to financial resources, personnel, information, and so on, sought to steer rather than demand its preferred outcome. The two sides of the Taiwan Strait sought to utilize strategic resources to affect outcomes and protect their interests in the decision-making process. The situation underlined the fact that there was no single body, which was the sole author of sport's own destiny. This has a major implication that governing bodies in such contexts no longer govern, or wholly control, their sport, or at least if they do, they do by

virtue of their ability to negotiate outcomes rather than by dictating those outcomes to passive recipients of the message.

Finally, a key feature of a strategic relations approach is that it portrays the outcome of one set of strategic decisions as setting the strategic context for the next set of actions in this domain. Thus the outcome of the Olympic torch relay issue and the way it was dealt with by the participants (but in particular by governments) set the context for China's action (opening ceremonies' marching order) to regulate/limit Taiwan's position in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. 'Success' in the Beijing Games for China further set the context for the

IOC's 'connivance' in relation to the 'reconfirmation' of Taiwan or Chinese Taipei's stance in the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games. The 'title asymmetry' (against the 1989 agreement) of the Taiwanese 'downgraded image' in the international sport arena, and its impact on citizens underlined for the Chinese Government the centrality of the Olympic movement to political ideology. As the symbolic importance of the so-called 'Olympic Formula' (the use of Chinese Taipei) has not simply been adopted in the sports policy field, a major implication for a new development is its potential change of the structural position within the policy nexus in the future.

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## TO NIJE SAMO SPORT: TAIWAN I PUT OLIMPIJSKE BAKLJE ZA OLIMPIJSKE IGRE U PEKINGU 2008. GODINE

U ovom je članku upotrijebljen pristup formiran iz koncepta strategijskih odnosa u empirijskom vrednovanju ponašanja sudionika u upravljanju političkim sportskim sustavom unutar/iza "kineske zajednice". Članak naglašava važnost političkih namjera kao ključne karakteristike strategijskoga okruženja koje je stvorilo prostor za provedbu interesnih "političkih akcija" dviju vlada te vrednuje reakcije sudionika u sustavu upravljanja problemom. Izvedena su tri glavna zaključka: prvi, ovaj slučaj pokazuje kako je lokalni kinesko-tajvansko sportsko-politički splet kompleksnih veza bio uvučen u globalni sportski sustav kao strategijski kontekst koji osigurava izvor utjecaja i moći te ograničava i/ili olakšava odabir rješenja koja su na raspolaganju

sudionicima; drugi, ističe kako se političke namjere modernih zemalja, tj. njihovi projekti, sve više realiziraju uključivanjem u kompleksne mreže konkurencije/natjecanja ili suradnje, stoga je pitanje rute olimpijske baklje obilježeno raznovrsnim interesima, preferencijama, vrijednostima i idejama pojedinih grupa i pojedinaca koje oni žele promovirati ili zaštititi u takvom kontekstu; i na kraju, ovaj slučaj oslikava kako ishod čitavoga niza sukoba (pitanje rute olimpijske baklje) postavlja strategijski kontekst za iduće upravljačke odluke.

**Ključne riječi:** sudionik, uprava, pristup strategijskih odnosa