

# The Development of Olympic Movement: The Controversial issues of “Two Chinas” and “Chinese Taipei”

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## Abstract

This aim of this article is to provide a historical analysis, which helps to understand the influence of utilizing Chinese Taipei in the Olympic movement reflected in Taiwan's history before and after the signing. It starts by looking at the ‘Two Chinas’ issue in the Olympic movement raised by KMT's retreatment to Taiwan after 1949. Secondly, it offers the illustration of the emergence of Chinese Taipei, which helps Taiwan be able to participate in the international sport system. Finally, the attention is devoted to an understanding of implications of utilizing the title of Chinese Taipei, which may or may not satisfy needs of two sides between the Taiwan Strait.

**Key words:** Olympic Movement, Chinese Taipei

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### **Prelude: The Two Chinas Issue**

Chinese involvement in the Olympic Movement can be traced back to the 1920s when Mr. Wang Zhenting, a high ranking diplomat and sports leader under the government Republic of China (ROC) was selected as the first Chinese IOC member in 1922 (Ren, 2002; Tang, 1999a). At the same time, China's National Amateur Athletic Federation (CNAAF) was recognized by the IOC as the Chinese Olympic Committee. In 1949, the government of Chiang Kai-Shek was forced out of mainland China by Mao Zedong's communist regime and re-established the Chinese government on the island of Taiwan. In 1951, CNAAF being re-established in Hsinchu Taiwan, not only informed the IOC that the 19 of 26 Chinese Olympic Committee members had come to Taiwan with the ROC government but also claimed jurisdiction over Olympic affairs both in the mainland China and Taiwan (Jarvie, Hwang & Brennan, 2008; Tang, 1999b). However, Taiwan's [ROC] claim was rejected by the People's Republic of China (PRC) which considered the CNAFF was based in Nanjing, China. In order to join the Helsinki Olympic Games, the CNAFF in Nanjing, the PRC was relocated in Beijing and renamed as All-China Sports Federation (ACSF) in 1952, which claimed its legitimate engagement in all Chinese Olympic activities (Wu, 1999a: 87-88). The respective assertion by the PRC and Taiwan raised disputes between Taiwan, China and the IOC.

In fact, reminded by the ambassador of the former Soviet Union, the PRC started participating in the Olympic Games in 1952 and regarded it not a sporting issue but a political matter because it was another manifestation of the cold war (Fan & Xiong, 2003). In order to achieve its political and diplomatic purposes, the PRC started contact with the IOC in February 1952. The President of the IOC, J. Sigfrid Edstrom, told the IOC Session that the mainland's ACSF had informed him that it supervised all sport in China and functioned as an NOC, and that he had told the committee how to proceed in order to be recognized (Hill, 1996). In the same year, both mainland China and Taiwan had said that they intended to send athletes to the forthcoming Olympic Game in Helsinki. However, the IOC rule was only one NOC per country and ROC/Taiwan was already recognized and still existed, the issue of which the PRC could attend the game was arisen. In order to tackle with this trouble case, the IOC decided to regulate its own rules by allowing participation by a territory without a recognized NOC, but argued that the circumstances were exceptional (Tang, 1999b). After much internal debate, the IOC adopted a proposal permitting both committees to participate

in the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, which led Taiwan to withdraw from this Games and offered the PRC's athletes a good opportunity, for the first time, to participate in the Olympics (Hwang, 2002; Jarvie et al., 2008; Liu, 2007; Tang, 1999b).

In 1954, the IOC recognized the NOC of the PRC, while maintaining its recognition of Taiwan's NOC. The Beijing committee was initially known as the Olympic Committee of the Chinese Republic but changed in 1957 to the Olympic Committee of the People's Democratic Republic of China (Hill, 1996; Hwang, 2002) and Taiwan retained the title of Chinese Olympic Committee. However, Beijing not only refused to accept the IOC solution but also continually requested that Taiwan's membership should be annulled. Avery Brundage, then the president of IOC, rejected the request of Beijing and argued: 'Sport has nothing to do with politics' (quoted from Fan & Xiong, 2003: 324). Disappointed by the IOC's decision in related to the 'two Chinas' issue, the PRC withdrew from membership of the IOC and nine other international sporting organizations in protest against the two-Chinas policy in 1958 (Wang & Zhang, 2004; Dong, 2003). In 1956, one of Chinese IOC members, Tung Shou-I, proposed that Taiwan Olympic Committee should be erased from the list of NOCs and such a request was turned down because it was viewed as being a purely political claim (Espy, 1979). Later in the year the PRC withdrew from the Melbourne Games in protest against Taiwan's continuing membership and in 1958 it withdrew from the Olympic movement and from all international federations. The communist bloc IOC members wanted Taiwan expelled and the PRC reinstated. In 1959, the IOC agreed that the Taiwan committee could not continue under its present name, since it did not administer sport on the mainland China (Liu & Tsai, 1994). It would therefore be struck off the register under the name of Chinese Olympic Committee, though if it chose to reapply for admission under another name the application would be considered. Although, in 1960 the Taiwan's NOC had proposed that, as it was recognized by the United Nations as the Republic of China, its NOC should be known as the Olympic Committee of the Republic of China. In 1968, the name of the Olympic Committee of Republic of China was reaffirmed by the IOC (Tang, 1999b). During this period, Taiwan took advantage of the withdrawal of the PRC from international sport in the 1960s to consolidate its claim to recognition as an independent state (Houhulan, 2004).

### **A Turning Point: The Emergence of Chinese Taipei**

Taiwan's expulsion from the United Nations in 1971 led to international relations

becoming more and more limited for Taiwan. Events in the Olympic world marched in tandem. In 1971, the IOC decided that the PRC would be welcome back if it respected Olympic rules, though it also laid down that Taiwan would not be expelled (Liu, 2007). With the proposition of Japan and Iran, just prior to the Olympic Congress in October 1973, the Asian Games Federation voted to admit the PRC to the Tehran Asian Games and to exclude Taiwan (Wu, 1999a). After that, the fever of friendships with the PRC had been enlarged to the Olympic Congress by the delegates of Japan and Zambia who were in favor of including the PRC in the IOC in which both countries claimed that 'it is a shame that a country with one-fourth of the world's population is excluded from the world of sports' (Espy, 1979). By April 1975 the PRC had obtained membership of the required number of international federations and applied for IOC membership, stipulating however that it would join only if Taiwan were expelled (Liang, 2005). Then, Dr Hsu, the Taiwan's IOC member, pointed out that it was unprecedented for an applicant to attach conditions to its application and that the Taiwanese government was recognized by many states, including the USA as the government of China and that it was clear that the mainland did not control sport in Taiwan (Hill, 1996). In May, 1975, at the IOC's meeting with the NOCs in Rome, forty-three delegates spoke. Twenty-six favored dual membership; seventeen wanted Taiwan to be expelled (Tang, 1999b). No immediate decision was taken. Although the IOC was naturally reluctant to admit that a sporting decision should be governed by political arguments in which the PRC became a member of the United Nations while Taiwan was not (Hwang, 2002; Liu, 2007), it still had to face the pressure from more and more countries desiring to have friendships with the PRC.

The two-China issue had reached crisis point by the time of the 1976 Montreal Games (Liu & Tsai, 1993). The Canadian government had adopted a one-China policy in the early 1970s and recognized the PRC as the sole representative of all Chinese. Therefore the Canadians, in the 1976 Montreal Games, refused Taiwan the use of the word 'China' in its name to compete, and also stated that it might not use its flag or anthem either (Wu, 1999a). After much negotiation and proposal and counter-proposal, the Canadian government agreed that Taiwan could retain its own flag and anthem, provided its team paraded as 'Taiwan' (Liang, 2005). However, Taiwan refused and the Canadians would not allow the counter-compromise proposed by Taiwan that they parade as 'Republic of China - Taiwan' (Liu & Tsai, 1993). Arguments continued with no resolution and in the end, the day before the Games was due to start, the Taiwan's team packed their bags and went home (Wang & Zhang,

2004). In 1977, the IOC determined to settle 'Two Chinas' issue before it could pose any threat to the Moscow Games (Hill, 1996). In June 1979, the IOC executive committee meeting in Puerto Rico ratified China's Olympic committee's name as the 'Chinese Olympic Committee' and suggested that Taiwan should stay in the IOC as the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee' with a different national anthem and flag (Liu, 2007), which was accepted at the Nagoya meeting of the IOC (Ren, 2002). After the Nagoya meeting, a postal vote was taken on a resolution that the PRC's NOC be recognized as the Chinese Olympic Committee, with the PRC's flag and anthem (Liu & Tsai, 1994). The emblem and statutes had been approved. Taiwan's NOC was to be known as the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee, with different anthem, flag and emblem from those then in use to participate in future Olympic Games, and the PRC gained entry into the Olympics (Myers, 2000). Therefore, following the end of the Cultural Revolution in China in the 1970s and the country's re-engagement with the international community it made the expulsion of Taiwan a condition of its membership of international sport organizations (Houhlan, 2004).

In the post-1971 period, most sovereign states have switched their diplomatic recognition to the PRC, recognizing the People's Republic of China to be the sole legitimate representative of the whole China. In effect, as Taiwan losing the UN's seat, disrupting the normal relationship with the USA and facing the new IOC President, Juan Antonio Samaranch favoring the China, Taiwan was forced to change its name to the 'Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee' and adopt a new flag and emblem in April 1981 (Liu & Tsai, 1994). Since then, the China successfully established the so-called 'Olympic Formula'. After compromises made by China and Taiwan and delicate diplomacy involving major sporting nations within the IOC, the bitter rows were eventually settled in 1979 when the 'Olympic Formula' was devised to handle the 'two Chinas' issue (Chan, 2002).

### **Implications: The Period of post-Chinese Taipei**

The arrangement of 'Olympic Formula' made by the International Olympic Committee has helped both China and Taiwan could participate in the Olympic Games. To Taiwan, there was no option but accept the resolution if it wished to stay in the Olympic movement (Chan, 1985, 2002). Apparently, the final deal is a compromise solution to the 'two Chinas problem' and it is politically and legally favorable to Beijing but acceptable to Taipei, however reluctantly (Xu, 2006). Such a compromising change was actually inspired by the doctrine of

‘One country, Two system’ proposed by Deng Xiaoping, Communist China changed its attitude to allow Taiwan joining the Olympic movement under the condition of using the name of territory of being part of China (Wu, 1999a). Undoubtedly, China was satisfied with the IOC’s cooperative resolution as it solved the problem of legitimate and sovereign Chinese representation (Liang, 2005). “This compromise was possible because both Beijing and Taipei, particularly the latter, showed a great degree of flexibility, and more importantly because the then KMT government in Taiwan remained committed to the ‘One China’ norm” (Xu, 2006: 103). To Taiwan, in accordance with the statements from Minister of Education in 1982 Physical Education Day,

...Because of NOC’s title issue in Olympic movement, we were unable to participate in the Games for many years. Now the issue has been sorted out, thus to participate in the Games and to win the highest prestige for ‘our country’ will be the most important task (Chu, 1982: 5).

Here the concept of our country [ROC] was emphasized by Taiwan’s political institutions to deal with China’s political intention in which the China hopes that this sporting link or comprising Olympic agreement may act as a catalyst in the process of reunification of Taiwan with the mainland (Chan, 1985; Wu, 1999b; Xu, 1999). Admittedly, signing of the ‘Chinese Taipei’ agreement was an important diplomatic breakthrough for Taiwan at that time and its influence affected both government and non-government organizations whenever they join international activities where they come in conflict with the PRC with regard to appropriate name for Taiwan (Liu, 2007). The ‘Olympic Formula’ has become an accepted model for resolving the cross-strait conflict with regard to names when Taiwan seeks to participate in international activities. However, on several occasions, such as Taiwan’s attempt to bid for hosting international sports events, Taiwan always met with resistance from the PRC (Liu, 2003). Actually, this so-called ‘Olympic Formula’ seemed not to go the way as China expected as it has weakened Chinese identity in Taiwan, not least because the China now represented China (Yu & Bairner, 2008). More precisely, Taiwan’s authorities could practically show to the world that there existed a separate Chinese [political] entity in Taiwan other than the one in mainland China (Chan, 1985). It is evident that between 1945 and 1991, Taiwan’s government portrayed Taiwan as ethnically Han and nationally Chinese, even claiming that it was the lawful government of mainland China (Brown, 2004).



Such development was evident as, this [ROC/Taiwan] position started to be largely ignored in the early 1990s, changing to one that does not challenge the legitimacy of China rule over mainland China since the first native Taiwanese President Lee Teng-Hui was elected. The struggle to elucidate a specifically Taiwanese identity has become far stronger and more explicit through the 1990s (Weller, 2000) as Lee has provided the “impetus for abandoning the KMT’s core commitment to Chinese nationalism...and facilitated ideological accommodation with opposition on the issue of democratic reform and national identity” (Chu & Lin, 2001: 121). With the political and economic transformations of the 1980s, Taiwanese identity has changed dramatically, becoming increasingly inclusive, proud and, nationalistic (Brown, 2004: 12). More precisely, insisting on the one-China principle when virtually “all nations had shifted their diplomatic recognition to the PRC and upholding a Chinese identity in the wake of a re-emergence of Taiwanese identity” (Chu & Lin, 2001: 122). From this point on, the development of state policy in relation to Taiwan’s political identity shifted from viewing Taiwan as an integral part of mainland China, to a tension between this view and a policy of promoting Taiwan as an independent political entity.

With the emergence of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and its subsequent coming to power in 2000 and 2004, this policy tension became the major defining difference between the two major political parties. For the DPP government, sport (baseball in particular) was utilized as an important facet of claims to nationhood (Lin, 2003), and national pride on the part of the Taiwanese (‘One China, One Taiwan’), intensified with the ongoing troubled relationship with China (Liu, 2003). On the one hand, as identity politics intensifies in Taiwan, the ‘Olympic Formula’ seems to become one of many liabilities for Taiwan that the DPP government attempts to redress. On the other hand, Beijing happens to rediscover much of the value in such a formula, which serves its national interest as an asset to contain the Taiwan independence movement internationally. To a certain degree, the name of ‘Chinese Taipei’ sounds less and less politically correct (Xu, 2006).

After the DPP’s eight-year administration, the KMT regained power as its representative of Ma Ying-Jeou, who beat the ruling DPP candidate in the presidential elections in March 22 2008. For a long period of political stand, the KMT has promoted the [sovereign] concept of the Republic of China [in Taiwan] since its retreat from mainland China in 1949, which remains an important symbol of KMT’s links with the PRC to some extent. Thus, it is believed that such a political change in 2008 will raise fruitful issues or debates in certain

perspectives in Taiwan in which interpretation of meanings, utilization of title and so on in relation to Chinese Taipei, the so-called ‘Olympic Formula’ are mainly concerned.

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# 奧林匹克運動的發展 —中華台北名稱的緣起及適用性

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## 摘要

本文以歷史分析法探究我國以「中華臺北」之名參與奧運相關事務的歷史意義及其後續影響。以討論國民黨 1949 年後撤退至台灣以後，造成奧運賽事中的「兩個中國」議題為始。其次，闡述台灣為了參與國際運動組織，以「中華臺北」為名的相關發展。最末，分析「中華臺北」的運用意涵，發現此一名稱無法兼顧海峽兩岸人民的現實需求。

關鍵字：奧林匹克運動、中華台北