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Sporting Exchanges between China and the United States, 1980–1984: Inevitable Politics and Excessive Political Strings

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ABSTRACT

Sino-US sporting exchanges between 1980 and 1984 largely paralleled the patterns of the larger bilateral relations between the two nations. The over-politicization of sports by the two governments – and especially by the PRC – created the parallelism. Curiously, scholars of sport and international relations have paid little attention to Sino-US athletic interactions in this period, an oversight that needs to be remedied in light of the reciprocal correlations between international sport and international politics. Indeed, Sino-US athletic exchanges in the context of their bilateral relations underscores the mutual connections between sport and diplomacy.

On January 1, 1979 – eight years after the initiation of the ‘Ping-pong diplomacy’ and seven after then-US President Richard Nixon’s visit to China – the United States diplomatically recognized the People’s Republic of China (PRC) with its capital in Beijing and rescinded its recognition of the Republic of China (ROC). At the end of the same year, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) welcomed the Chinese Olympic Committee back to the Olympic Movement.¹ The Republic of China Olympic Committee, which previously monopolized the seat of China but only governed the sporting affairs of Taiwan and surrounding breakaway islands, was forced to change its name, flag and anthem.

The two incidents’ proximity in time was more a coincidence than not – the US recognition did not directly cause China’s reinstatement into the Olympics. Rather, both were trophies that Beijing garnered thanks to its rising power and strategic advantage in world politics. The Sino-US rapprochement resulted from changing power dynamics within the Sino-USSR-US strategic triangle in the 1970s: having parted way with the Soviet Union, China befriended the United States, which, under the ‘Nixon doctrine’, had offered an olive branch; the ensuing deterioration of Soviet-US relations drove Beijing and Washington to enter into a closer relationship after 1978.² The Olympic reinstatement, however, took place directly as the result of

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China's rising international status, the efforts of IOC officials, and a more tolerant policy by Beijing on the issue of Taiwan.³

These changes continued into the 1980s. Moreover, during the first half of the decade, three of four Olympic Games took place in either the United States or the Soviet Union. Seen in the context of the Sino-USSR-US strategic triangle, this fact set the stage for a broadening of sporting exchanges between the PRC and the United States. However, the relations between the two countries evolved into at best a partnership rather than a committed alliance, and previous enmities relating to political ideology and Taiwan remained. As a result, the improvements in Sino-US relations during this period did not occur without challenges. Indeed, a number of matters impacted the sporting exchanges between the two countries.

That said, Sino-US sporting exchanges also noticeably influenced the larger bilateral relations of the two countries. Because of differences in their respective sport systems and elite sport development models, China interacted with the United States in sport mainly through government-to-public exchanges.⁴ The impact of these efforts thus went beyond intergovernmental relations. Thanks to the principally unofficial features of international sport as well as the influence of the media, the exchanges helped to shape non-governmental relations between the two nations.

Sino-US sporting exchanges between 1981 and 1984 largely paralleled the patterns of bilateral relations between the two nations. The overpoliticization of sports by the two governments – especially by the PRC, largely accounts for the parallels. An analysis of Sino-US sport and political interactions in this period makes two major contributions to the existing literature on sport and international relations. First, it delivers a dynamic account of a subject that has received little attention from scholars. It is worth noting on this point that China remains to a large degree absent in the historiography of sport and diplomacy.⁵ Moreover, those which have considered the subject have for the most part either examined China's rise in international athletics from a very broad (rather than a focused) temporal perspective or have addressed single, narrow events.⁶ Second, tracing the history of Sino-US athletic exchanges in the context of their bilateral relations reveals the mutual connection between sport and broader diplomatic affairs.

Lake Placid

After a twenty-eight-year absence, the PRC returned to the Olympics at the 1980 Winter Games in Lake Placid, New York. After the IOC adopted the new China policy, the Lake Placid Olympic Organizing Committee (LPOOC) immediately announced its preparedness to implement it.⁷ The Carter administration had been on good terms with the People's Republic even before the establishment of the diplomatic ties in 1979, with both countries being the champions of anti-Sovietism and gaining strategic advantages over their common nemesis. Immediately after the commencement of official relations, Deng Xiaoping, vice president and the *de facto* leader of the PRC, visited the United States in February 1979.⁸ When US Secretary of defence Harold Brown visited Beijing in January 1980, he announced that the United States 'was prepared to sell China a ground station for receiving information from the Landsat

Earth Resources Satellite, which ha[d] possible military applications'.⁹ With many precedents of the Sino-US sport exchanges in the 1970s, sending a delegation to attend the Winter Games in the United States built on these budding ties.

In mid-January, China formed its delegation, including six coaches and twenty-eight athletes.¹⁰ Tailors from a state-owned clothing manufacturer were assigned the urgent task of making the uniforms for the delegation.¹¹ Before it arrived at Lake Placid later in the month, the forty-three-member Chinese contingent made a stop in New York City, where they received a warm welcome from the US-China People's Friendship Association at the Lincoln Center.¹² According to *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*), Maud Russell, an eighty-six-year-old woman who worked in China during and between the World Wars (and later became a pro-Communist China political activist), made an appearance to congratulate the Chinese Olympians on their participation in Lake Placid.¹³

The LPOOC scheduled a press conference on the day of the delegation's arrival.¹⁴ According to a *New York Times* article, delegation leader Li Menghua 'declared that his nation's athletes were [in Lake Placid] to learn and improve, not necessarily to win', and that 'they [would] be ready to compete with all competitors', including the Taiwanese athletes, on the condition that the Taiwanese delegation complied to the Nagoya resolution.¹⁵ Most probably because of a request by the PRC, the Chinese received separate housing within the Olympic Village.¹⁶ This arrangement, however, did not prevent Chinese athletes from meeting fellow Olympians from all over the world. The *Xinhua* (*New China*) News Agency and *Renmin Ribao*, both organs of the Chinese government, closely covered the 'friendships' the delegation members made in the United States. The state-owned media went to great lengths to assert that relations between China and the United States were positive by reporting on interactions between Chinese and American athletes, coaches and officials. For example, *Renmin Ribao* published a photograph in which biathletes from both countries appeared to be conversing amicably together before a training session.¹⁷

15 February 15 1980, happened to be the Chinese New Year's Eve. The Chinese delegation hosted a celebration in its lounge. Both the chair of the US delegation, George Howie, and the vice chair showed up at the party, and Howie even brought his wife and two daughters.¹⁸ A *Xinhua* report depicted that '[h]ere, there, people [were] talking amicably and rejoicing over their friendship'.¹⁹ During a talk with a Chinese figure skater, the vice chair of the US delegation proposed that American coaches visit China and help train the athletes there, and that the Chinese send theirs to the United States. He expressed hope that '... this kind of exchange ... could contribute to the congenial relations between not only the athletes, but also the people of the two countries'.²⁰ For its part, *Xinhua* described an American journalist at the party in this way: '[w]hen he learned that the party was going to end soon, he could not wait until he finish[ed] his wine and immediately began to take one picture and another that recorded the friendship between the athletes from China, the United States, and Japan'.²¹

Not only did the Chinese media cover the American sportspersons, they also reported the goodwill the American public showed to the Chinese delegation. One representative report asserted:

[A]lthough the weather was quite cold, the enthusiasm of the American friends made the Chinese athletes feel very warm inside ... [Y]ou [could] spot their warm, smiley

faces and hear their affable greetings, and many American friends even picked up Mandarin. 'I learned some Mandarin, such as 'Hello', 'Goodbye', and 'Thank you', so that I could better express my fondness for the Chinese people', said an American friend who works at the Olympic Village.²²

Renmin Ribao described another 'American friend' who worked at the Olympic Village and went to the party as having grown 'more and more interested in China' after spending 'days and nights' with the Chinese athletes. The individual even, according to the Chinese report, wrote a poem lauding the friendship between the two peoples. The original poem in English could not be found, but the Chinese version translates back into:

Let the snow and ice of the dire winter,
Melt into clear creeks of the spring,
So that they could irrigate the dormant seeds, which will
Become summer blossoms of friendship.
On the rink of the Winter Olympic Games, I
Deliver to you,
My dear friends from China,
The warmest welcome of the people of America.²³

It was neither professional nor logical to present the goodwill that individual US citizens showed to the Chinese guests as demonstrative of a close relationship between the two countries. However, the reason that the Chinese media did so is significant. *Xinhua* and *Renmin Ribao* were almost the only channel through which the mass public in China could read about the larger world.²⁴ By framing Chinese-US relations through the lens of friendships forged by the two countries' athletes, the two outlets revealed much about the PRC government's international goals.

The state media's coverage of the Winter Games also focused on the US's and the PRC's shared anti-Soviet sentiments. It is revealing that *Renmin Ribao* barely mentioned Soviet successes in Lake Placid while the Soviet hockey team's defeat by the United States received considerable attention. Moreover, by reprinting a *New York Times* feature on the event by journalist Robert D. McFadden, which was decidedly Americanist in tone, the outlet presented the United States as emphatically anti-Soviet.²⁵ *Renmin Ribao*'s disparate attitudes towards the two rival superpowers' athletic achievements reflected the state of the China-USSR-US strategic triangle. As hostilities between the two socialist nations were at the time acute, and as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan increased tensions between the United States and the USSR, Sino-US relations grew increasingly solid. In both countries (especially the PRC), sports were deeply involved in the political sphere, and as a result athletes and sports journalists became bound up in international affairs.

Disagreements on Taiwan

Not surprisingly, the Chinese state media said little (and at times actively concealed news) about Taiwan's participation. Among the events to go unaddressed was a lawsuit filed by Liang Ren-Guey, a Taiwanese skier, against the LPOOC. Liang demanded that the organizing committee allow the Taiwanese delegation to compete under the name, anthem, and flag of the Republic of China. In addition to posing a

nominal threat to Beijing's conception of its core interests, Liang posed a threat to the PRC's improving relationship with the United States. Despite the US recognition of a one-China policy, judge Norman Harvey overruled the IOC's new China policy in favor of Liang six days before the Games commenced.²⁶

The LPOOC instantly appealed the ruling, and the US Departments of Justice and State intervened.²⁷ The Department of Justice sent a trial attorney, Mark C. Rutzick, to Albany, New York, where the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court was located.²⁸ According to a *New York Times* report, Rutzick affirmed that 'the United States government... recognize[d] the international committee [*sic*] authority over the Olympics' and argued that 'it would cause embarrassment to [the United States] if the international committee was overruled and the Games were disrupted'.²⁹ This intervention constituted the only event that *Renmin Ribao* reported throughout the entire duration of the lawsuit.³⁰ The appellate court reversed the original ruling two days later, arguing that '[s]ince the Department of State, acting on the President's behalf, elected to defer to the IOC in matters concerning national representation at the Olympics, the issue was a political question, and beyond the powers of the court to review'.³¹ The Department of State was also involved in clearing the way for Beijing's delegation. Liang filed an appeal, but seven members of the Court of Appeals unanimously denied his request and upheld the order of the Appellant Division, noting that '[i]n view of the statement of interest submitted on behalf of the Department of State, the court must refrain from the exercise of jurisdiction to resolve a dispute which ha[d] at its core the international "two-Chinas" problem'.³² The Taiwanese did not file another appeal, for the Games had been going on by then.³³

Nonetheless, not all 'American friends' backed Beijing – the support for the Taiwanese not only came from pro-Taiwan politicians, but also from the sports world. A February 1980 *Los Angeles Times* column by Jim Murray is representative on the matter.³⁴ Entitled '*Olympics Non-Political? That's Bull—in China's Shop*', it teemed with sarcasm in rebuking what it saw as a manipulation of the Olympic Movement by a communist China.³⁵ Likewise, in his column for the *New York Times*, Pulitzer Prize-winning sport columnist Red Smith seconded judge Harvey's ruling, claiming that the mandatory name change for the Taiwanese delegation resulted from the IOC's 'flagrantly political character' as well as its ambition to bring 'the Big Red Machine back to the Olympic family of nations'.³⁶ Smith commented that if a higher court reversed Harvey's decision, the judgment would be 'in favor of discrimination'.³⁷

In the end, the Chinese, with the final US court ruling, competed in the Olympic Games for the first time in decades. As expected, its athletes failed to win a medal. But the PRC 'won' a considerable victory when Taipei declined to participate in Lake Placid in reaction to the decision that was made against it on the issue of team name and flag.³⁸ Meanwhile, another, perhaps even more important geopolitical matter was unfolding.

Nyet to Moscow

After the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, US officials in the Jimmy Carter administration began to rally for a boycott of the Olympic Summer Games scheduled to begin in Moscow the following July. The Americans faced

considerable challenges. Carter and his representatives half-threatened and half-bribed the United States Olympic Committee to withdraw the American team. They met their Waterloo overseas (especially in Europe), however, when a number of National Olympic Committees decided to attend the Moscow Games (some against the wishes of their country's national governments). The PRC decided to stand with the United States, and in doing so forwent what would have been its first Summer Olympics in decades.³⁹

While the US role in the boycott movement has been studied abundantly, scholars have paid relatively little attention to China's decision on the matter.⁴⁰ According to historian Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, Carter was 'particularly pleased that China, West Germany, and Japan were boycotting' when challenges appeared in his efforts to seek a unified approach in the West.⁴¹ Beijing decided against attendance for several reasons. The fact that much of the world beyond the Soviet-bloc expressed opposition to the Soviet invasion certainly mattered. But the US government also went to considerable pains to convince Beijing as to the merits of its position. A *New York Times* article reported that on January 21, Carter sent 'personal messages to more than [one hundred] heads of government...in seeking their support' for changing the venue of the Summer Olympics unless the Soviet Union withdrew its troops within a month.⁴² The report did not specify the PRC position but mentioned that 'the first responses were only fragmentary' but that 'Asian governments were...generally supportive'.⁴³ The first report regarding China's stance was on January 23, when the *New York Times* revealed that the Chinese Olympic Committee would follow the majority of all National Olympic Committees.⁴⁴

When interviewed in Tokyo *en route* to Lake Placid for the Winter Games, Li Menghua, the head of the Chinese delegation, spoke on behalf of the Chinese Olympic Committee (which was essentially under governmental control). In doing so, he asserted that the call for a boycott was 'reasonable' and reiterated that his country would do as the majority did.⁴⁵ Notably, Li also spoke on behalf of his countrymen and -women that the Chinese people were firmly against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which he described as an 'act of hegemonism'.⁴⁶ He continued to comment that Beijing would decide independently based on the principle of protecting world peace and upholding Olympism.⁴⁷ When he arrived in Lake Placid and accepted another interview, Li argued against keeping Moscow as the Olympic host city, claiming that he 'ha[d] noted a number of persons who ha[d] proposed boycotting the Games' and that 'it [was] really inappropriate to have the Summer Games held in Moscow under the present conditions'.⁴⁸ Although he claimed that the statement only reflected his 'personal opinion' rather than the Chinese government's position, Li's answer signified China's approaching the boycott.⁴⁹

Sport historian Ying Wushanley observes a series of events that transpired soon after Jimmy Carter delivered a State of the Union address on 23 January 1980. Within a week's time, Washington expressed its willingness to sell Beijing military equipment; the US legislature granted China most-favored-nation status; the two nations 'signed a memorandum of understanding to build a ground station that would enable China to receive scientific data from an American satellite'; and China declared its intent to join the boycott movement.⁵⁰ In a telegram to Washington, Chinese Premier Hua Guofeng responded to the aforementioned letter from Carter:

The Chinese Government is going to issue a public statement in support of urging the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to decide on the transfer or cancellation of the games. In case the International Olympic Committee fails to make such a decision, the Chinese Government hopes that all justice-upholding countries take common action to stay away from the Moscow Olympic Games and organize alternative games as appropriate.⁵¹

Apparently, Beijing informed Washington of the decision before its Foreign Ministry issued a statement that it would not only support but also promote the initiative to relocate or cancel the Games.⁵² Not surprisingly, the boycott received widespread, if not unanimous, support from Chinese athletes and coaches (who, as members the state-run sport program, were obliged to follow the government's will). Several days later, *Renmin Ribao* released a news report titled *Our Sportsmen Firmly Support the Statement of the Foreign Ministry Spokesman and Demands the Relocation of the Olympic Games in Order to Uphold Olympism*.⁵³ According to the report, Chinese sport stars Ma Yanhong, Chen Xiaoxia, and Wang Jiawei all condemned the Soviet invasion, deeming it to be a desecration of the Olympic spirits. The three athletes, the report went on, threatened to stay at home unless the IOC replaced the host city.⁵⁴ In publishing such words, *Renmin Ribao* proclaimed the stance of the PRC government.

China's Boycott: Inspired by the United States, Firmer than the United States

The PRC's willingness to follow Washington's lead so soon after the Soviet invasion seems in hindsight remarkable. While Chinese sportspersons gravely criticized Moscow and actively championed the idea of a boycott, America's longstanding European allies were still debating the issue, and even back at home in Colorado Springs, Colorado, the US Olympic Committee (USOC) remained at odds with the White House.⁵⁵ On February 8, when meeting IOC president Lord Killanin at the Executive Board meeting in Lake Placid, USOC head Robert Kane said that his organization 'was basically against the boycott'. The minutes of the meeting furthermore indicate that Kane 'emphasised [*sic*] that all training and administrative preparations were proceeding for the Games' and guaranteed that 'the USOC would not just bend and agree to [the US president's] decision'.⁵⁶ It was not until April that the USOC surrendered in the face of multiple threats from the White House.⁵⁷

Geopolitics helps to explain China's decision to follow Washington's suit. As one of the two flagbearers of anti-Sovietism, it felt compelled to react to the invasion of Afghanistan in a way that fit its status among the anti-Soviet nations – not only was the Chinese government among the earliest to put the boycott into effect because of the Chinese Olympic Committee's *de facto* affiliation, but it also fiercely propagated anti-Soviet sentiments in international sports by distorting facts and omitting subtleties. For example, on January 28th, the USOC passed a resolution appealing for the relocation of the Moscow Games, which Sarantakes asserts was a tactic that its president Robert Kane 'play[ed] for time' rather than showing 'immediate compliance' to the US government.⁵⁸ However, a *Renmin Ribao* article called the resolution demonstrative of 'unanimous support for Carter's boycott proposal'.⁵⁹

Also, in an editorial titled *Extraordinary American Swimmers*, a *Renmin Ribao* journalist praised the athletes that it covered for ‘boycotting the Moscow Olympics to oppose the hegemonists’ invasion of Afghanistan’ in order ‘to protect the dignity of humanity’. In reality, however, the swimmers were actually bitter about the USOC’s surrender to the White House.⁶⁰

Eventually, among the closest allies of the United States, only Canada, Israel, Japan, and West Germany implemented a full boycott of the Moscow Games. China’s participation thus much strengthened Carter’s boycott alliance. It both resulted from and exhibited unprecedentedly good relations between the PRC and the United States, especially on issues related to their common rival. That said, Beijing’s response, both in rhetoric and in action, to the US government’s proposal demonstrated China’s ambition to be an equal force rather than a US ‘junior partner’ in their common causes. During the sixteen days that the Moscow Games took place, the Chinese media delivered consistently negative, politicized coverage of the event. In addition, the US and China (as well as other countries) worked together to create an alternative to the Olympics through a series of single-sport invitationals.

Beijing and Washington’s Alternative Games

On 16 and 17 July 1980, shortly before the Moscow Olympics commenced, the University of Pennsylvania, ‘under the urging of the State Department and The Athletic Congress’ organized a two-day track meet called the Liberty Bell Classic as an Olympic replacement.⁶¹ Although the US State Department issued a statement praising the meet as ‘a global condemnation of the Soviet’s invasion of Afghanistan’ and ‘the first of a series of international sport events that [was] scheduled to take place outside the Soviet Union under the Olympic principles’, the participating American athletes were bitter about the meet.⁶² The Chinese, however, were decidedly enthusiastic (at least according to Chinese state media). A *Renmin Ribao* report stated that ‘hundreds of excellent athletes who boycotted the Moscow Games gathered in Philadelphia’. Moreover, Qu Zhiqian, chair of the Chinese contingent, was reported as saying in an interview that the Chinese athletes and coaches ‘were very pleased that they could compete with athletes from other countries and regions and deepen [their] friendship’.⁶³

At the end of September, Beijing hosted its own multi-national invitational.⁶⁴ The Chinese government attached considerable importance to this event, with Vice Premier Wan Li personally inviting the heads of the International Association of Athletic Federations and the chairs of the delegations of eight participating nations, including the United States.⁶⁵ Along with his peers, Team USA’s head coach, Mel Rosen, offered advice as to how to improve the state of Chinese athletics (particularly on the issues of talent selection and the country’s training system).⁶⁶

Less than a month after the Moscow Games closed, gymnasts from eleven countries gathered in Hartford, Connecticut, for an international meet that was intended as an additional substitute for the Olympics. Unhappy with being deprived of a chance to compete for an Olympic medal, the American athletes in attendance complained about the situation. US team member Marcia Fredericks asserted, for

instance, that 'there [was] no alternative to the Olympics'.⁶⁷ The Chinese gymnasts, on the other hand, were described by the PRC state media as having a positive attitude. To take one example, the *Xinhua* news agency quoted Jiang Youzhen, the chair of the Chinese delegation, as saying that 'the USA. Gymnastics made extraordinary efforts to organize this meet'. The Chinese team, he affirmed, would avidly support the competition.⁶⁸ The Chinese gymnasts performed well, winning first place in nine events, including both the Women's and the Men's Team All-Around competition.⁶⁹

In addition to multi-national events, there were also dual meets between US and Chinese teams. Twenty-two members of the US Olympic swimming team chose to visit Beijing and Shanghai instead of an invitational in Honolulu, Hawaii.⁷⁰ Frustrated with having to skip the Olympics, many of them 'lost interest' in serious competition and transferred their focus to a Far Eastern adventure.⁷¹ These athletes trained alongside native Chinese stars and competed against them in exhibition meets, which *The Los Angeles Times* called 'a show of solidarity with another boycotting nation' and 'a propaganda coup of sorts for China'.⁷² The chair of the US contingent told two journalists from *Renmin Ribao* that the American swimmers were 'all willing to come to China and wanted to get to know the Chinese people and culture'.⁷³ In their report, Yu and Tan criticized the Moscow Games as 'inglorious' compared to the US National Championships, praised the American visitors for their sense of justice – despite the fact that the boycott was not their decision – and described the US Olympic team's half-recreational trip as 'a delivery of the American people and athletes' friendship to the Chinese people'.⁷⁴ Such blatantly propagandistic rhetoric aside, the event appeared to PRC leaders as a successful manifestation of the country's 'sending-out and inviting-in policy'. This impression strengthened China's commitment to deeper cooperation in and beyond coach development.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, China also sent a team to the aforementioned Hawaii invitational.

Two weeks after the swimmers' visit, members of the two nations Olympic diving teams attended a China-US diving invitational in Fuzhou (a city in Southeastern China). The two-day meet ended in a tie – Chen Xiaoxia from China won both the women's springboard and platform events while Greg Louganis from the United States accomplished the same on the men's side.⁷⁶ In a reflection of the broadening Sino-US athletic ties, another dual meet was held in Columbus, Ohio, that same year.⁷⁷ In 1981, the Chinese diving team was able to tour America for an entire month.⁷⁸

The Chinese media's rhetoric regarding Sino-US sporting relations was based on the genuinely close intergovernmental relations (at least in comparison to those which existed only a short time previously). Washington had its share in the display of goodwill. The Chinese women's volleyball team rose rapidly during this period. In March and April of 1982, the world top- and second-ranked Chinese and US national teams went on a seven-game exhibition tour, the fifth stop of which was at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.⁷⁹ According to a report of *Tiyu Bao* (*Sports*), a US assistant secretary of state and a representative of the mayor of the City of Washington, D.C. attended the game, and the organizers even requested the

US Marine Drum and Bugle Corps to perform at the university's Charles E. Smith Center.⁸⁰ Given the previous history between the two countries, this signified a warm gesture on the part of the United States.

The Sichuan Girl Who Disappeared into the Californian Night

Exchange also burgeoned in less-prominent, non-Olympic sports. Young, promising Chinese tennis players were sent to the United States to train under well-known coaches for short terms and to compete in junior tournaments, when the highest-level competition they could possibly participate in was the Asian Games.⁸¹ However, during a July 1982 tennis event held in Santa Clara, California, Sino-US relations took a transient, but abrupt and dramatic downturn. Although the damage to the bilateral relations between the countries was limited and soon under control, the controversy exposed, if nothing else, a potential risk in linking sports to international relations at higher levels.

During her third trip to the United States, Hu Na, a nineteen-year-old tennis player born in Sichuan Province and representing China at the Federation Cup, snuck out of her hotel room on the midnight of July 18 and left with friends.⁸² On the next morning, the Chinese delegation received a message from Hu's lawyer stating that she was seeking political asylum in America. Hu later revealed in interviews that she began to think about competing as a professional when she first visited the United States three years earlier in a trip that allowed her to train under champion coach Vic Braden.⁸³ However, her dream was impossible in China's state-run sport system, which did not attach importance to professional events that seemingly had nothing to do with national glory.⁸⁴ Having received propositions from American coaches, including Braden, to allow Hu to 'fly solo' over the past three years and having sensed her craving for a professional career, the State Sport Commission of China was 'more cautious than usual' with sending Hu Na on a second trip but prioritized achieving better results over playing the safe card.⁸⁵ This time she defected.

Hu submitted her formal asylum application on the following Monday, but neither she nor US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) officials revealed the reasons for her seeking shelter.⁸⁶ China immediately demanded Hu's return, denying any sort of persecution that Hu could possibly face, and a diplomat speculated that the asylum, once granted, 'would affect future exchanges'.⁸⁷ The Chinese government also accused Taiwan of 'engineering... Hu's defection' and the United States of negligence and connivance.⁸⁸ The US State Department, despite the political pressure from across the Pacific, had to review Hu's application and could only hope that 'occasional incidents would not influence [the] exchanges'.⁸⁹

It took almost nine months for INS to decide. US agencies were divided on this matter – the State Department made a favorable recommendation (in such cases, the INS usually went along), but the latter, a part of the Department of Justice, was reluctant to grant asylum in Hu's case out of a fear that doing so would spark a surge of similar applications.⁹⁰ Even within the State Department, there was a civil conflict, which ended with a victory by the agency's Bureau of Human Rights and

Humanitarian Affairs over the China desk.⁹¹ The hesitation by the INS revealed that, Beijing's protest put aside, political asylum was not a done deal for Hu due to the nature of domestic US politics.⁹²

During this period, US Secretary of State George Schultz and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Thomas O'Neill, Jr., both visited China, and Hu Na was one of the topics at their meetings with Chinese leaders. Schultz stressed mutual trust and confidence but refused to promise the return of the tennis player, despite the pleas of Deng Xiaoping.⁹³ During O'Neill's visit, Hu's parents sent him a letter 'imploring assistance to reunite their family', but the House Speaker deftly avoided talking about the controversy and only promised congressional support for improving the Sino-US relations.⁹⁴ In addition to the Hu incident, Sino-American relations concurrently suffered from US-Taiwanese arms deals and international trade frictions; the two visits helped to stabilize the situation, however. The Chinese Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang even accepted an invitation to officially meet President Reagan.⁹⁵ However, the discord would soon escalate.

Asylum and Beijing's Revenge

On 19 March 1983, Hu Na made her first public appearance after defecting, claiming that she sought asylum because 'the Chinese officials were coercing her into joining the Communist Party' as well as the fact that 'she feared becoming caught up in a factional political struggle in China'.⁹⁶ On April 4, the INS approved Hu's application, and the outraged Chinese put retaliation into action. After an immediate protest from the Chinese Embassy in Washington D.C., the Foreign Ministry handed the US Ambassador in Beijing a note berating the Reagan administration for interfering with its internal affairs and deliberately conspiring on the incident. In addition, the Culture Ministry announced that all official cultural and sporting exchanges scheduled for 1982 and 1983 would be suspended.⁹⁷ According to the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times*, nine exchange programs were cancelled, which included scheduled trip to China by the Julliard String Quartet as well as a painting exhibition to be presented by the Brooklyn Museum of Art.⁹⁸ The All-China Sports Federation also withdrew from ten American athletic tournaments, most of which were organized as warmups for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games.⁹⁹

The US State Department denied Beijing's allegation of President Reagan's involvement, shouldering full responsibility for the controversial decision.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, *Washington Post* reported that the case was decided 'at the high levels of the administration'. Moreover, according to the *UPI* a conservative fund-raiser named Richard Viguerie claimed that Reagan had said that he himself would 'personally adopt her [Hu] before [he] sen[t] her back'.¹⁰¹ The Chinese government, of course, perceived the assertion as providing corroborating evidence on the matter.¹⁰²

Peng Di, the Washington bureau chief of *Xinhua*, gave an incisive analysis on the episode in an *Observation Post* commentary. Peng pointed out that the asylum granted to Hu, despite Beijing's multiple requests, 'offend[ed] China's national pride'.¹⁰³ Hu Na's reason for defection undoubtedly tarnished the name of the Chinese government and the Communist Party of China (CPC), whose reputations

were already far from the best in the world. The rising East Asian power had largely managed to ignore or refuted doubts about its political system as well as criticisms of its human rights record. However, the fact that its biggest tennis star – a celebrity of high status who the state-run sport program nurtured – spoke out against her home country constituted a huge embarrassment for the Communist regime. That Hu defected to the United States, which was still a rival in political ideology, only made it graver. A *Renmin Ribao* editorial specially defended the CPC, arguing that it was the party that fostered the tennis star and that she wanted to be a member of her own volition.¹⁰⁴

To be fair, the case of Hu Na was not the most serious crisis in a series of incidents that took place during the early stage of Reagan's presidency. The aforementioned concurrent disputes, especially those over Taiwan, all greatly irked the Chinese. However, China's sole major retaliation (the cultural and sport exchange ban) targeted the asylum granted to the young tennis star. The furious reaction of Beijing rendered many people pessimistic about the bilateral ties between the two countries. In a letter to the *Los Angeles Times*, a concerned American citizen named Julian Singer pointed out the irony of Sino-US sporting diplomacy: 'Ping Pong led to a thaw in US-China relations and tennis [was] likely to turn it all around again'.¹⁰⁵

Singer's fear turned out to be misplaced. In fact, all other aspects of Sino-US liaisons continued as usual despite the upheavals. Official visits at high levels remained frequent and projected an overall positive prospect for bilateral ties; commercial relations improved and burgeoning business cooperation continued; cooperation in science and high technology went unaffected; and *unofficial* cultural exchanges went on as arranged.¹⁰⁶

But concern and fear existed in academia for good reason. Although academic exchanges were largely safe from the sanction, American scholars saw growing challenges in their attempts to forge connections between the two nations' academic institutions, and China was abnormally strict in issuing visas to individual scholars for academic visits.¹⁰⁷ As more US scholars feared their exchange programs might be sacrificed, Chinese scholars in the United States worried that their government might lower quota numbers for university students studying abroad.¹⁰⁸

Thanks to communication and cooperation in other fields that remained unimpaired, rapprochement between the US and China continued to progress. In particular, intergovernmental dialogues and high-level visits helped dispel what former US President Richard Nixon called misunderstanding between and misjudgment of the two nations.¹⁰⁹ Soon the Chinese leaders, including Deng and Zhao, spoke optimistically about Sino-US relations.¹¹⁰ US Secretary of Defence Caspar W. Weinberger traveled to China in September of 1983, arranging a visit by President Reagan for the following year; two months later, Chinese Foreign Minister, Wu Xueqian, visited Washington and the three-day-long talks 'produced progress in restoring official cultural exchanges'.¹¹¹

At the turn of year, American and Chinese officials resumed planning art exchanges, which signaled the restoration of the Sino-US cultural ties.¹¹² After Reagan's visit to China in 1984, Beijing and Washington's honeymoon period, after multiple non-critical but substantial crises, finally came into a full-fledged state. Hu

Na, on the other hand, had already debuted on the professional circuit; she participated in her first major at the 1984 US Open.¹¹³ She has visited China several times since 2002, which many consider the result of a change of attitude of the Chinese government towards her defection.¹¹⁴

Welcome to Los Angeles

One American individual was particularly unhappy about the political asylum granted to Hu Na. Peter Ueberroth, president of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee (LAOOC), questioned why an athlete who had traveled to the United States more than once was given shelter simply 'because she happen[ed] to like the country'.¹¹⁵ His concern over the issue was not ungrounded – China had just announced that it had cancelled its plan to send athletes to ten pre-Olympic events in the United States as part of the suspension of cultural exchanges.¹¹⁶ Although he was assured that China would take part in the Los Angeles Games on a trip to Beijing, such moves, along with little discernable rapprochement during the ten days after the asylum decision, raised uncertainties about the near future.¹¹⁷ 'The Olympics are a political event', said Ueberroth. The decision to grant asylum to Hu Na, he said, left the 1984 Games 'vulnerable' to a potential Chinese boycott.¹¹⁸

'Boycotts Should Be Avoided at All Costs'

Given the increasing precedence of Olympic boycotts, Ueberroth, as a *Los Angeles Times* report stated, could only '[hope] that the American boycott [of the 1980 Moscow Games would] not come back to haunt the Los Angeles Games'.¹¹⁹ However, since 1980, the likelihood of a Soviet revenge had loomed over his organization. Vitaly Smirnov and Konstatin Andrianov, two IOC members from the Soviet Union, harshly criticized the fact that the LAOOC was privately owned and operated, and they picked on assurances of policy support from the Reagan administration at IOC meetings.¹²⁰ Also, the USSR Olympic Committee kept finding fault with the preparations being made in Los Angeles; in doing so, they presented new challenges for the organizing committee.¹²¹ With other Eastern Bloc nations routinely following the example of the Soviet Union, Ueberroth could not risk losing China's contingent if the 1984 Los Angeles Games were to be a success.

Ueberroth cabled Beijing to ask for reconsideration of its decision to skip the pre-Olympic events, arguing that the Los Angeles Games and the warm-ups were neither physically attached to nor funded by the US government.¹²² Less than two weeks later, China, seemingly softening its stance and rescinding the massive cancellation policy announced previously, declared that Chinese athletes would participate in the International Diving Championships in Texas and other events that the United States would host.¹²³ Although no detailed comment was made on the cycling and swimming events, a spokesman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry clarified that Beijing would not shun international events, which he said were different from official bilateral exchanges.¹²⁴ It took another eight months, however, before a spokesperson

of the Chinese Olympic Committee officially announced a decision to participate in Los Angeles (as well as in the 1984 Winter Games in Sarajevo).¹²⁵

The reality was, however, that the Chinese government had in all likelihood never seriously considered backing out of the 1984 Olympics. After Hu Na's defection, the Chinese Olympic Committee still sent a three-person delegation, led by its vice president, to the January 1983 Association of National Olympic Committee's General Assembly in Los Angeles.¹²⁶ Unlike his Soviet counterparts, He Zhenliang, a communist party member and former governmental official who became an IOC member in 1981, issued not one criticism against the LAOOC at the IOC Sessions. According to the biography of He penned by his wife, the Chinese 'realized that ... if it [was] not out of absolute necessity, boycotts should be avoided at all costs'.¹²⁷ In addition, a *Renmin Ribao* article reported positively that the Chinese Americans residing in Los Angeles had been preparing to receive the Chinese Olympic delegation.¹²⁸

Beijing's Three Delegations

In late 1983, Chinese athletes began traveling to the United States for Olympic warm-ups. Meanwhile, the Olympic Arts Festival (OAF) and the China Performing Arts Agency (CPAA), which was affiliated with the Ministry of Culture of China, began to arrange shows by Chinese performing groups even before the ban of official cultural exchanges was lifted. Robert J. Fitzpatrick, vice president of the LAOOC and director of the OAF, visited China by invitation in December 1982 and into the next month.¹²⁹ In the summer of 1983, he then met Wang Zicheng, Minister-Counselor at the Chinese Embassy in Washington, D.C. as well as first secretary Shu Zhang.¹³⁰ Fitzpatrick kept in touch with the CPAA mainly through the two Chinese diplomats from then on.¹³¹ Eventually, more than seventy Chinese artists from performing arts institutions, including the Chengdu Acrobatic Circus and the China Central Ensemble of Music, departed Beijing for Los Angeles on 6 July 1984.¹³² Their debut performance was very well received; a *Los Angeles Times* report described the spectacle as featuring 'breathtaking wonders from China'.¹³³

With regards to athletic competition, Chinese concerns remained, among which Taiwan's participation was primary. In 1981, the Taiwanese NOC changed its name to the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee in a decision that Beijing accepted, and athletes from the mainland and Taiwan competed against each other in IOC-sanctioned sport events on multiple occasions. The Chinese women's softball team even traveled to Taiwan in order to take part in the sport's 1982 World Championships.¹³⁴ However, Beijing wanted more. When a delegation from the Chinese Olympic Committee was visiting Los Angeles before the 1984 Games, a member noticed a painting of 'a child holding the flag of the Republic of China'.¹³⁵ The delegation took it as a 'small', 'unconscious', yet 'unfortunate' 'incident', but 'expressed a desire that the LAOOC prevent spectators from waving the flag of the Republic of China and shouting slogans against the People's Republic of China' during the Olympic Games.¹³⁶ No response from the LAOOC was documented, but it was highly unlikely that the LAOOC had the power or capability to fulfill the Chinese's requests. That said, the LAOOC spent time contemplating what impact the

Eastern Bloc's potential boycott might have on China while, for their part on the issue, the members of the Chinese Olympic Committee anticipated that the LAOOC could coordinate changes in their favor.¹³⁷

The end result was that athletes from the PRC competed in an Olympic Summer Games for the first time in history, with a huge contingent of three hundred and fifty-three individuals, including two hundred and twenty-five athletes.¹³⁸ In addition, the Chinese State Council, after refusing time and again over the preceding five years, finally approved a request by Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley to temporarily loan two pandas to the Los Angeles Zoo in celebration of the special occasion – thanks to the lobbying of Armand Hammer, the CEO of Occidental Petroleum around Deng Xiaoping.¹³⁹ Local Californians as well as Olympic spectators flooded into the zoo when the exhibition started; people waited in an hour-and-a-half line to see the two pandas (named Yun Yun and Ying Xin) close-up for three minutes.¹⁴⁰ Bradley commented that China sent three delegations – namely, more than three hundred sportspersons, approximately seventy artists, and two pandas. These groups, he declared, 'deepened the friendship between the two nations and rendered the Los Angeles Olympics more glamorous'.¹⁴¹

The Twenty-Third Olympic Games commenced on the afternoon of 28 July 1984. On the next day, Xu Haifeng and Zeng Guoqiang won two gold medals in shooting and weightlifting for their country, the former's a historic breakthrough.¹⁴² The Chinese delegation won fifteen gold medals, eight silver medals, and nine bronze medals in total and in doing so stunned the world.¹⁴³ At the same time, the Chinese media positively covered the grand sporting event, commenting highly on the city of Los Angeles and the United States's organization.¹⁴⁴ It might seem dramatic that it had been barely over a year since the defection of a tennis player had threatened to disrupt Sino-US relations.

Assessing the Sporting and Political Parallels in Sino-Soviet Relations

From 1980 to 1984, the trajectory of Sino-US sporting exchanges basically paralleled the broader governmental relations between the two countries. Soon after the establishment of diplomatic ties, the Chinese attended the 1980 Olympic Winter Games at Lake Placid, New York. Beijing soon thereafter boycotted the Summer Games in Moscow alongside the leader of the Western World. The boycott enabled a series of alternative events in individual sports, where sporting exchanges took place that brought the US and China yet closer. Yet, given the domestic political structures in both nations as well as the political strings that both attached to the sporting exchanges, relatively small issues could threaten to undo years of progress. Granting asylum to an ordinary Chinese citizen could be easily ignored. But Hu was not ordinary. PRC leaders as a result perceived her defection as very much an act of mutiny. In granting an asylum to the tennis star, the Reagan administration was moreover seen by PRC leaders as violating their country's sovereignty through a deliberate intervention on an internal Chinese matter.

Fortunately, trips by high-level governmental officials, economic cooperation, scientific and academic exchanges, and unofficial cultural exchanges continued

relatively unabated. After Peter Ueberroth's pleas, Chinese athletes participated in a number of pre-Olympic events and the country sent a full contingent to the 1984 Summer Games in Los Angeles. It is no accident that over the ensuing five years, the US and China would enjoy a relatively warm, stable relationship. Some might interpret this as a laudable contribution by sport broader world peace while others might see the matter as a cynical manipulation of sport by politicians for reasons of national and/or self-interest. Either way, it is undeniable that sport played an important role in the political relationship between Beijing and Washington during this period.

Notes

1. The Chinese Olympic Committee was recognized once in 1954 as the All China Sport Federation (ACSF), but Beijing withdrew the ACSF from the Olympic Movement because of its fierce opposition of the dual recognition of both Chinese committees based in Beijing and Taipei.
2. Lowell Dittmer, 'The Strategic Triangle: An Elementary Game-Theoretical Analysis', *World Politics* 33, no. 4 (1981): 498–506.
3. Yuxiang Hao, 'The International Olympic Committee Faced with Political Interference: Winning the Battle between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China, 1952-1979' (Master's Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2015).
4. On the notion of 'government-to-public exchanges' above, it is perhaps useful to note that the enabler of the interactions in sport was, on the Chinese side, mainly the Chinese government; on the US side, the American public played the key role, with the US government playing an important role at certain points. For the sport systems and elite sport development models in China and the United States, see Fan Hong, 'China', in *Comparative Elite Sport Development: Systems, Structures and Public Policy*, ed. Barrie Houlihan and Mick Green (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2008), 27–52; and Emily Sparvero, Laurence Chalip, and B. Christine Green, 'United States', in *Comparative Elite Sport Development*, ed. Houlihan and Green, 243–71.
5. For a perceptive historiographical review of the literature on sport and diplomacy, see Heather L. Dichter, 'Sport History and Diplomatic History', H-Diplo Essay No. 122 (December 17, 2014), <https://networks.h-net.org/system/files/contributed-files/e122.pdf>. Major historical works on in the field include: Barbara Keys, *Globalizing Sport* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch: Jimmy Carter, the Olympic Boycott, and the Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 2010); Thomas M. Hunt, *Drug Games: The International Olympic Committee and the Politics of Doping, 1960-2008* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2011); Damion Thomas, *Globetrotting: African American Athletes and Cold War Politics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Dichter and Andrew L. Johns, eds., *Diplomatic Games: Sport, Statecraft, and International Relations since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014); Toby C. Rider, *Cold War Games: Propaganda, the Olympics, and US Foreign Policy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016); and Rider and Kevin Witherspoon, eds., *Defending the American Way of Life: Sport, Culture, and the Cold War* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2018). See also the notable forthcoming title Brad Congelio, *Reagan's Games: American Politics and Culture at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics* (University of Tennessee Press).
6. For China's rise in international sports, see Susan Brownell, *Beijing's Games: What the Olympics Mean to China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008); Xu Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams: China & Sports, 1895-2008* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Fan Hong and Lu Zhouxiang, *The Politicisation of Sport in Modern China: Communists and Champions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); examples of studies on single events are Ying Wushanley, 'Waltzing on Ice: Lake Placid, the Carter Doctrine, and

- China's Return to the Olympics' (paper presented at Pathways: Critiques and Discourse in Olympic Research, Ninth International Symposium for Olympic Research, Beijing, China, August 5–7, 2008), 138; Derick L. Hulme, Jr., *The Political Olympics: Moscow, Afghanistan, and the 1980 US Boycott* (New York: Praeger, 1990), 65–6.
7. AP, 'LPOOC Ready to Implement New Adopted China Policy', *The Journal*, November 27, 1979.
 8. 'The Establishment of Sino-US Diplomatic Relations and Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping's visit to the United States', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18007.shtml.
 9. Fox Butterfield, 'US Plans to Sell a Satellite Ground Station to China', *New York Times*, January 9, 1980.
 10. Xinhua, 'Canjia zai Meiguo Pulaixide Hu Juxing de Dongji Aoyunhui Woguo Tiyu Daibiaotuan Zucheng', *Renmin Ribao*, January 18, 1980.
 11. Xinhua, 'Wo Canjia Dongji Aoyunhui de Duifu Yi zai Jing Zhijiu', *Renmin Ribao*, January 22, 1980.
 12. Xinhua, 'Pulaixide Hupan Wuxinghongqi Yingfeng Piaoyang, Zhongguo Bingxue Jianer Keku Xunlian Tigao Shuiping', *Renmin Ribao*, February 5, 1980.
 13. Ibid. *Renmin Ribao's* report on Maud Russell describes her as a 'septuagenarian', but in fact she was already 86 years old.
 14. Xinhua, 'Dongji Aoyunhui Huoju zai Xila Dianran, Wo Tiyu Daibiaotuan Di Pulaixide Hu', *Renmin Ribao*, February 1, 1980.
 15. The 1979 Nagoya Resolution mandated that Taiwan only compete in the Olympic Games under the team name 'Chinese Taipei'. Barbara Basler, 'Chinese Upstate for Their First Winter Olympics', *New York Times*, January 31, 1980.
 16. Ibid.
 17. Xinhua, 'Pulaixide Hupan Wuxinghongqi Yingfeng Piaoyang, Zhongguo Bingxue Jianer Keku Xunlian Tigao Shuiping', *Renmin Ribao*, February 5, 1980.
 18. According to a *Xinhua* report, the vice chair's last name was Rice or a similar pronunciation. Xinhua, 'Chuxi Lianhuan zai Pulaixide Hu', *Renmin Ribao*, February 18, 1980.
 19. Ibid.
 20. Ibid.
 21. Ibid.
 22. Xinhua, 'Pulaixide Hupan Wuxinghongqi Yingfeng Piaoyang, Zhongguo Bingxue Jianer Keku Xunlian Tigao Shuiping', *Renmin Ribao*, February 5, 1980.
 23. Xinhua, 'Chuxi Lianhuan zai Pulaixide Hu', *Renmin Ribao*, February 18, 1980.
 24. Tsan-Kuo Chang, Jian Wang, and Chih-Hsien Chen, 'News as Social Knowledge in China: The Changing Worldview of Chinese National Media', *Journal of Communication* 44, no. 3 (1994): 52–69.
 25. Xinhua, 'Dishisan Jie Dongji Aoyunhui Shengli Bimu', *Renmin Ribao*, February 26, 1980; Robert D. MacFadden, 'Cheers Resound Across the Nation', *New York Times*, February 23, 1980.
 26. Barbara Basler, 'New York Judge Rules Taiwan Can Use Flag It Prefers at Olympics', *New York Times*, February 8, 1980.
 27. Barbara Basler, 'Court Ruling on Taiwan Is Appealed', *New York Times*, February 9, 1980.
 28. Ibid.; Joyce Purnick, 'Taiwan Is Set Back as Appellate Court Reverses Decision', *New York Times*, February 12, 1980.
 29. Joyce Purnick, 'Taiwan Is Set Back as Appellate Court Reverses Decision', *New York Times*, February 12, 1980.
 30. Xinhua, 'Meiguo Sifabu Fabiao Shengming', *Renmin Ribao*, February 17, 1980.
 31. 72 A.D.2d 439; 424 N.Y.S.2d 535; 1980 N.Y. App. Div. LEXIS 9699, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic (accessed May 21, 2017).

32. 49 N.Y.2d 771; 403 N.E.2d 178; 426 N.Y.S.2d 473; 1980 N.Y. LEXIS 2134, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic (accessed May 21, 2017).
33. 'Court Denies Appeal by Taiwan Athletes', *New York Times*, February 12, 1980.
34. Jim Murray, 'Olympics Non-Political? That's Bull—in China's Shop', *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1980.
35. Ibid.
36. Red Smith, 'State of Affairs', *New York Times*, February 10, 1980.
37. Ibid.
38. AP, 'Taiwan Is Leaving the Games', *New York Times*, February 14, 1980.
39. It is perhaps helpful to know that the much larger scale of summer as compared to winter Olympics made the former much more meaningful politically.
40. Regarding the US boycott, see Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch*; and Hulme, Jr., *Political Olympics*.
41. Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch*, 227.
42. Bernard Gwertzman, 'Carter Bids Heads of 100 Governments Back Olympic Stand', *New York Times*, January 21, 1980.
43. Ibid.
44. David Bird, 'Australia and New Zealand Back US on Olympics', *New York Times*, January 23, 1980.
45. Xinhua, 'Li Menghua Tuanzhang Qianze Sulian Ruqin Afuhan, Wo Aowehui Jiang Tong Duoshu Guojia Caiyu Yizhi Lichang', *Renmin Ribao*, January 26, 1980.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Barbara Bsler, 'Chinese Upstate for Their First Winter Olympics', *New York Times*, January 31, 1980.
49. Ibid.
50. Wushanley, 'Waltzing on Ice', 138.
51. Telegram 958 from Beijing, February 1, National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy File, P900105-0512.
52. Joseph B. Treaster, 'China Joins Boycott of Moscow Olympics', *New York Times*, February 2, 1980.
53. Ma was a world champion gymnast, Chen a world champion diver, and Wang a star volleyball player. Xinhua, 'Wo Tiyu Gongzuozhe Jianjue Yonghu Waijiaobu Fayanren Tanhua, Yaoqiu Gaibian Aoyunhui Didian Weihu Aolinpike Jingshen', *Renmin Ribao*, February 2, 1980.
54. Ibid.
55. Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch*, 166–213.
56. IOC, 'Games of the XXIIInd Olympiad in Moscow' (Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Board, Lake Placid, 1980), 7.
57. Carter's threats included revocation of the USOC's tax-exempt status, removal of USOC facilities from federal land, and roadblocks to corporate sponsorship. See Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch*, 180–95.
58. Ibid., 108–9.
59. Xinhua, 'Meiguo Aowehui Zhichi Kate Dizhi Aoyunhui Jinayi', *Renmin Ribao*, January 28, 1980.
60. Zhu Shida, 'Jiechu de Meiguo Youyong Jian'er', *Renmin Ribao*, August 29, 1980; Frank Litsky, 'US Swimmers Agree: Olympic Trials not Real Thing', *New York Times*, August 4, 1980.
61. Four-time Olympic discus champion Al Oerter called it 'rubbing salt in the wound'; Litsky, 'Canadian Woman Is Victor in Pentathlon', *New York Times*, July 17, 1980.
62. Ibid.; Xinhua, 'Tong Mosike Aoyunhui Chang Duitai, Liangxiang Guoji Bisai Jiang zai Meiguo Juxing', *Renmin Ribao*, July 12, 1980.
63. Xinhua, 'Shubai Ming Dizhi Mosike Aoyunhui de Youxiu Yundongyuan Yunji Feicheng', *Renmin Ribao*, July 18, 1980.

64. Chen Kejing, 'Tiantan Shenghui—Xie zai Beijing Tianjing Guoji Yaoqing Sai zhiqian', *Renmin Ribao*, September 25, 1980.
65. Xinhua, 'Wan Li Huijian Guojia Tianlian Fuzeren he Canjia Tianjing Yaoqing Sai de Ge Daibiaotuan Tuanzhang', *Renmin Ribao*, September 27, 1980.
66. Luo Zisu, Cang Lide, and Wang Xinmin, 'Duibi he Lianxiang—Xie zai Beijing Guoji Tianjing Yaoqing Sai zhihou', *Renmin Ribao*, October 3, 1980.
67. Larry Eldridge, 'No Olympics, But World Gymnasts Test Skills in US Meet', *Christian Science Monitor*, August 21, 1980.
68. Xinhua, 'Meiguo Hatefude Guoji Ticao Yaoqing Sai Kaimu', *Renmin Ribao*, August 23, 1980.
69. Xinhua, 'Zai Meiguo Hatefude Guoji Ticao Yaoqing Sai zhong, Wo Nandui Sheng Riben Nandui Huo Tuanti Guanjun', *Renmin Ribao*, August 23, 1980; Eldridge, 'No Olympics'.
70. Despite the boycott, the National Championships, which were also Olympic trials, still took place. Yu Bin and Tan Feng, 'Meiguo Youyong Dui zai Beijing', *Renmin Ribao*, August 12, 1980.
71. Litsky, 'US Swimmers Agree'.
72. Linda Mathews, 'Beijing: The Next Best Thing to Moscow', *Los Angeles Times*, August 14, 1980.
73. Yu Bin and Tan Feng, 'Meiguo Youyong Dui zai Beijing', *Renmin Ribao*, August 12, 1980.
74. Ibid.
75. International Swimming Hall of Fame, 'China and the Olympic Games', <http://www.ishof.org/assets/china-and-the-olympic-games.pdf>.
76. Xinhua, 'Zhong Mei Tiaoshui Dui zai Fuzhou Jinxing Shouchang Bisai', *Renmin Ribao*, September 1, 1980; Xinhua, 'Zai Fuzhou Juxing de Zhong Mei Tiaoshui Bisai Jieshu', *Renmin Ribao*, September 6, 1980.
77. Celia, Herron, 'Chinese Divers Have Come on Strong in a Hurry', *Christian Science Monitor*, June 24, 1981.
78. Ibid.
79. Sean Burke, 'China Holds off 5 Match Pointes to Beat US', *Washington Post*, April 10, 1982.
80. Zhang Xiaolan, 'Zhongguo Nvpai Chuzhan Meiguo Ji', *Tiyu Bao*, April 23, 1982.
81. Federation Cup (women's) and Davis Cup (men's) were and still are the most prominent global team tennis tournaments, but their political significance was much lower than that of the Asian Games.
82. Liang Xuan, 'Dangshiren Yanzhong de 'Hu Na Shijian' Shimo', *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao*, December 7, 2014.
83. Ibid.
84. Since tennis was not an Olympic sport, achievements on the tennis court could not be counted towards the Olympic medal count. In addition, year-round traveling and prize money was involved in professional tennis, which the Chinese considered a threat to managing their athletes. It was not until the mid- and late 2000s did the Chinese tennis players achieve breakthroughs on professional circuit. Only then did the Chinese realize that victories at the professional tournaments were related to national pride as well.
85. Sun Haiguang, "'Liu" Mei Zhe Hu Na de Wangqiu Rensheng', *Xinjing Bao*, October 10, 2011.
86. AP, 'Chinese Tennis Star Applies for Asylum in US', *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 1982; Charles P. Wallace, 'China Demands Return of Tennis Player', *Los Angeles Times*, July 28, 1982.
87. Wallace, 'China Demands Return of Tennis Player'.
88. Ibid.; Butterfield, 'Chinese Tennis Star Still in Seclusion', *New York Times*, August 7, 1982.

89. Phillip Taubman, 'China Tells US Not to Give Asylum to Tennis Star', *New York Times*, August 4, 1982.
90. Stuart Taylor Jr., 'Tennis Defector Divides US Aides', *New York Times*, March 31, 1983.
91. Ibid.
92. There was also voice of dissent among the American public as well. After the asylum was granted in April 1984, criticism arose: Charlotte Furth, a history professor at the California State University at Long Beach, lamented that the Reagan administration, 'by labeling [Hu Na a political refugee with maximum publicity]', 'once again push[ed] [the US] foreign policy back into the frozen postures of the Cold War'. William Hutton from San Gabriel, California, sarcastically commented that 'the job opportunities for tennis instructors in El Salvador' would see a 'noticeable increase'. Charlotte Furth, William Hutton, and Julian Singer, 'Political Asylum for Tennis Star', *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1983.
93. Gwertzman, 'Schultz Foresees Closer China Ties', *New York Times*, February 6, 1983; Joseph Kraft, 'Playing Catch-up: George Schultz's First Year at State', *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1983.
94. Michael Parks, 'O'Neill, in China, Stresses Good Relations', *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 1983; Xi Linsheng, 'Yi Mu Zhengzhi Chouju: Meiguo Jiyu Hu Na Zhengzhi Pihu de Qianqianhouhou', *Renmin Ribao*, April 8, 1983.
95. Gwertzman, 'Schultz Foresees Closer China Ties', *New York Times*, February 6, 1983.
96. Butterfield, 'Stakes High, Chinese Tennis Defector Speaks Out', *New York Times*, March 21, 1983.
97. Taylor Jr., 'China Tennis Player Gets Asylum in US; Beijing Aide Protests', *New York Times*, April 5, 1983; Xinhua, 'Wo Waijiaobu Zhaohui Meiguo Zhuhua Dashiguan, Qianglie Kangyi Meifang Xuyi Zhizao Hu Na Shijian', *Renmin Ribao*, April 7, 1983; Xinhua, 'Meiguo Zhizao Hu Na Shijian Weibei Zhongmei Wenhua Xieding Zongzhi, Woguo Tingzhi Zhixing Zhongmei Wenhua Jiaoliu Xiangmu', *Renmin Ribao*, April 7, 1983.
98. AP, '19 Events with US Cancelled by China', *New York Times*, April 8, 1983; Parks, 'China Cancels US Cultural, Sports Exchanges', *Los Angeles Times*, April 8, 1983.
99. Ibid.
100. AP, 'US Denies China Charges on Defector', April 12, 1983.
101. Don Oberdorfer, 'Tennis Star, Hu Na, Given Asylum', *Washington Post*, April 5, 1983; E. Michael Myers, 'The Reagan administration said Thursday it considers China's cancellation ...', *UPI.com*, April 7, 1983, <http://www.upi.com/Archives/1983/04/07/The-Reagan-administration-said-Thursday-it-considers-Chinas-cancellation/3850418539600/>.
102. Zhang Wen, 'Yiyudaopo', *Renmin Ribao*, April 10, 1983.
103. Parks, 'Peking Disillusioned Over US Ties', *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1983.
104. Xi Linsheng, 'Yi Mu Zhengzhi Chouju: Meiguo Jiyu Hu Na Zhengzhi Pihu de Qianqianhouhou', *Renmin Ribao*, April 8, 1983.
105. Furth, Hutton, and Singer, 'Political Asylum for Tennis Star'.
106. UPI, 'China Affirms Open Policy', *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 1983; Christopher Wren, 'US and China Sign 4 More Scientific Accords', *New York Times*, May 12, 1983; Parks, 'US-China Ties Suffer Serious Setback', *Los Angeles Times*, April 8, 1983; AP, 'A Texas Orchestra Begins China Tour', *New York Times*, April 9, 1983.
107. Lanie Jones, 'Scholars Worried over Ramifications of Chinese Exchange Cutoff', *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1983.
108. Ibid.
109. 'Early China Talks Proposed by Nixon', *New York Times*, June 2, 1983.
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