

Olympic Security Collaboration

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“Without security guarantees there cannot be a successful Olympic Games, and without security guarantees the national image will be lost.”

- President Hu Jintao

“The absence of a terrorist incident and serious criminal activity will be an.. important measure of the success of these Games.”

- Interpol Secretary-General Ronald Noble

Hosting the 2008 Olympics provides China with an opportunity to demonstrate its unprecedented progress. With that opportunity, however, also comes risk, including increased threats to security. The international spotlight that accompanies the Olympics makes it a high-profile target for domestic and international terrorists, as well as political activists both from China and abroad. China has made immense efforts to ensure that the Olympics are safe and secure, including extensive investments in infrastructure, planning and international cooperation. As the Games rapidly approach, security experts in China and abroad are making last minute preparations and undoubtedly asking themselves whether these investments and preparations are adequate.

Internationally, there is broad confidence that the Olympics will be safe, and any credible threats will be identified and mitigated through the collaborative efforts of the world's intelligence and police communities. However, China and the United States view security threats very differently, posing potential problems for U.S.-China security cooperation for

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the Games. Most glaring is the differing interpretation and identification of the nature of security threats. Chinese security priorities include preventing unauthorized political expression and nonviolent demonstrations as well as violent threats, while U.S. security experts are bound by law and custom to tolerate nonviolent expression and focus on threats to persons and property. Likewise, Chinese officials place a greater emphasis on establishing agreed principles (such as reciprocity) to create a basis for cooperation, while their U.S. counterparts prefer well defined, practical measures that focus on problems and solutions. These different perspectives and resulting approaches potentially limit the effectiveness of collaboration, particularly in terms of the perceived value of U.S. support to Chinese partners.

Chinese organizers bear the ultimate responsibility for the success of the Games, including ensuring its security. The U.S. government, however, also has a deep stake in keeping the Olympics incident-free. U.S. multinational corporations are major sponsors of the Games and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and have genuine commercial interests that the U.S. government is committed to protect. In addition, U.S. Olympic athletes and visiting American journalists and tourists represent a national interest, regardless of their non-governmental status. Importantly, President George Bush has committed to attend the Games, making him perhaps the highest profile security target at the highest profile event of the decade.

The U.S. government's extensive experience collaborating with international organizers of major events shapes their expectations for the Beijing Olympics. The U.S. approach is traditionally comprehensive, extending far beyond a security umbrella around facilities. In 2004, almost 20 U.S. government agencies worked closely with Greek authorities in preparation for the first summer games following the terrorist attacks of 2001. A budget of over US\$35 million for security went to equipment and training for Greek security officials as well as U.S.-Greek military exercises.¹ Planning efforts historically begin early, and include tabletop decision-making simulations as well as responder exercises and dress rehearsals. U.S. security specialists have come to expect a high level of coordination with event organizers and their security services.

China, however, has proven to be a unique case. While international architects designed the great stadiums, the security apparatus and strategy are unmistakably domestic, reflecting a desire on the part of organizers to preserve sovereignty and maintain complete control. An emphasis on self-reliance causes some in the international community to feel that their role is confined. This perception is furthered by extensive Chinese investment in resources that play to its own strengths, including mobilizing large numbers of personnel. This "People's War" approach is particularly reassuring to Chinese leaders, but it does not necessarily match the expectations of U.S. security experts.

While China is a rising economic power, its global reach is limited, along with its experience confronting worldwide security threats. The Olympics is a target for both international terrorists and domestic organizations, such as the East Turkistan Liberation Movement, arguing for closer collaboration and shared efforts to ensure a safe and secure Olympics. The U.S. government's offers of support to China are genuinely intended to fill perceived gaps in Chinese capabilities, not only in the provision of hardware and technology, but also in the sharing of information. Extensive experience in providing security for major events, including three summer and three winter Olympics, coupled with important national interests,

makes U.S. attention to Chinese Olympic security preparations more than a passive concern.

Potential Security Threats

No matter the extent of preparations, the security risks at the Olympics are ever-present. Internationally sponsored terrorism is a distinct threat garnering significant attention from U.S. security experts. Chinese planners are particularly focused on the threat of domestic terrorism and disturbances by those seeking to disrupt the Games. The potential for domestic terrorism extends beyond the well-studied separatist groups and sects such as *Falungong*. Discontented Chinese citizens might resort to violence over a variety of issues, either in Beijing or elsewhere in the country. In the past, mentally unstable or despondent persons have obtained explosives in rural areas and detonated bombs over personal grudges.² Likewise, arson attacks and self-immolation incidents have occurred. Other domestic disturbances could take place, including mass protests over local issues, such as factory layoffs, improper land seizures or corruption. Violent consequences can generally be avoided through proper management by local authorities. Hooliganism and mob violence are not uncommon at sporting events around the world, including China, and must be considered threats in planning scenarios.

On another level, an important consequence of rising Chinese nationalism is a reduced tolerance amongst many citizens for perceived slights or affronts to national dignity. A seemingly trivial incident, such as a “bad call” by a referee, a low score by a judge, or a Chinese star injured by an opposing athlete could spark demonstrations and potential violence against property or individuals.³ Growing nationalism and the perception of “victimization” can contribute to the escalation of a minor event to a dangerous flashpoint. International protests, such as the torch relay spectacles in London and Paris, reinforce negative perceptions of the international community’s attitudes towards China, while domestic rhetoric furthers nationalistic sentiments and contributes to cultural isolation or xenophobia. Nationalism injects some uncertainty about how both the population and leadership will react. If officials are perceived to support nationalist public sentiments or contribute to politicizing a sporting incident, it will likely limit the government’s options to defuse the situation for fear of appearing weak or compromising on vaguely defined principles, such as “national dignity.”

International Cooperation

China’s domestic security challenges stem from complex social, economic and political factors that have less to do with the international security environment than the dramatic transformations that have taken place within the country since 1979. This context has shaped Chinese organizers’ thinking about security threats as opposed to the more traditional threats – that are primarily international in nature – and which form the basis of the U.S. event security doctrine. Therefore, in the eyes of Chinese planners, international experts provide specific, though limited, value through collaboration and information sharing.

Since the Games will attract heads of state, senior executives of multinational corporations, other VIPs and athletes, Olympic security preparation requires extensive international coordination. Organizers have therefore actively engaged security organs and governments from around the world, holding regular conferences and consultations, beginning in earnest

in 2006.⁴ The Olympic security command center has created a coordinating committee open to countries participating in the Olympics and built on the security-focused relationships with the 73 countries that have embassies in Beijing.⁵ Additionally, the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG) works closely with the IOC and is believed to have hired security consultants and advisors, though this aspect of BOCOG's work is not widely reported.⁶

Interpol's close working relationship with Chinese authorities predates Olympic preparations, with its Beijing branch, known as the National Central Bureau, located within the Ministry of Public Security's international cooperation department.⁷ Interpol has agreed to provide access to its databases and deploy a "Major Event Support Team" in Beijing prior to the opening ceremony. Interpol's "MIND/FIND"⁸ database includes key information on high-risk individuals including names, fingerprints, photos and more.⁹ The Chinese organizers particularly value access to international intelligence, reflecting a potential gap in their intelligence and assessment capabilities.

In addition to Interpol, China has worked closely with multilateral organizations for Olympic security preparations. In 2005, China signed a declaration with ASEAN countries plus Japan and South Korea to boost cooperation for the Olympics.¹⁰ In 2007, six member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)¹¹ staged a joint anti-terror military exercise in Russia, followed by further exercises in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region and Russia's Chelyabinsk.¹² Furthermore, the SCO member states agreed to share security intelligence related to the Olympics.¹³

Let the Preparations Begin

The Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau was appointed the lead organization for security preparations. In December 2004, the Olympic Security Coordination Group (*xietiao xiaozu*) was formally established and made responsible for all security organization, coordination, command and control. The committee also leads coordination with other domestic and foreign security entities as well as private organizations. Twenty central government ministries and municipal government departments were unified under this committee. Beijing has spent lavishly on security work, though budgets and specific details are considered secret. One official stated in 2007 that the budget was \$300 million, a fraction of what was spent at the Athens games. However, this figure does not take into account the massive security spending that has taken place on other budgets, or the relative difference in purchasing power in China.¹⁴ Whatever the original estimates were, it is also likely that security costs have increased dramatically in 2008, particularly in light of several events, including a bus hijacking incident in Xian with Australian tourists aboard, alleged terrorism incidents involving Xinjiang separatists, as well as intense protests around the world along the Olympic torch relay.

Olympic security will be carried out by a network that is referred to as the "4+1 security force," comprising the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), People's Liberation Army (PLA), People's Armed Police, private security companies (*Bao'an*) and volunteers. While the MPS is the core organization responsible for the most visible aspects of security as well as coordinating the efforts of other departments, it is the MPS along with the other three security branches that together form the security backbone for the Games. Generally, the army is responsible for conventional military situations, such as preventing and responding to a ter-

rorist attack, providing airborne security and logistical support for a response to a major incident. A stated mission of the PLA is to prevent politically motivated disturbances which might be instigated by various groups, including *Falungong*, East Turkestan Liberation Movement or other terrorist groups. According to a government press report, the PLA is also responsible for preventing “disruptions by organizations wanting to pressure the Chinese government during the Games.”¹⁵ However, it is unclear how the PLA is trained or equipped to identify and engage organizations “wanting to pressure” the Chinese government.

Organizers’ reliance on large numbers of professional and volunteer security personnel reflects China’s traditional strengths and ability to bring overwhelming numbers to address any challenge. According to estimates made by the BOCOG, at least 92,500 people are needed to provide direct security, including 40,000 police, 27,500 armed police, 10,000 security guards and 5,000 security volunteers. Up to 150,000 other professional security personnel will be deployed to maintain order in the city, with over 290,000 volunteers patrolling the city limits of Beijing.¹⁶ This saturation security strategy does not rely heavily on international cooperation or coordination, and to some extent international experts bring little to the table when it comes to Chinese capabilities to set up security campaigns and community policing.

Beyond the formal “4+1” formula for security arrangements at the Games, massive resources throughout the country will play an important supporting role in ensuring security. China maintains a robust network of *Weihuwending* offices in every government bureau and department, which are responsible for intelligence collection, prevention and responding to civil unrest incidents that include “group incidents” (*qunti shijian*) and “demonstrations” (*shiwei*). The public is also expected to assist in community-based policing and keeping an eye out for possible signs of disturbance. Beijing has a long history of neighborhood committees, often staffed by female retirees who wear red armbands and act as community managers and informants. While the destruction of the *hutong* communities in Beijing has changed the social landscape, neighborhood-based community leaders and the real estate management companies who service apartment blocks will be on constant lookout for suspicious activities.

Communities and the police have undertaken several key programs to “crack down” on crime, including “Project Moat” and “Action for a Safe Olympiad.”¹⁷ These community-focused policing strategies include stepped up patrols and inspections, emphasizing crime prevention as well as control.¹⁸ As part of this campaign, Beijing has tightened the inspection

of “temporary residence permits” among migrants and foreigners, including restricting the issuance of multiple entry visas. Surveillance and supervision over “suspicious troubled persons” has also increased. Since Jan. 22, 2008, over 3,300 local, community-based police (officers assigned to *paichusuo* precincts) have contacted families, carefully checking for potential problems. Inspections of rental housing have increased, as have detentions of petitioners.¹⁹

Supervision of drug users and petty criminals, such as pick pockets, has also been heightened. Beginning in August 2007, officers from the judiciary have been mobilized to support the police. Legal workers and local law enforcement have contributed to city-wide efforts to increase intelligence about activities at the community level. Parolees have been required to make weekly reports to supervisors while caseworkers are assigned to maintain

It is likely Beijing will spend far more on security than the official \$300 million stated in 2007.

daily contact with persons under supervision in the community. Daily patrols are conducted to further ensure that disputes or grievances do not cause public disturbances, including protests in front of hospitals, factories and other facilities in addition to Olympic venues.²⁰

These indigenous, low-tech efforts are back-stopped by significant investment in high-tech and innovative capabilities, including helicopter units, extensive closed circuit TV systems and specialized units such as canine teams.²¹ In the event that preventative measures fail and a dangerous situation develops, Beijing authorities are not without options to resolve certain tactical situations. There are two main tactical police units in Beijing that can be called on to deal with specific scenarios, the "Snow Leopard Commando Unit" (SLCU) and Beijing Police SWAT. The SLCU, under the Beijing Armed Police Corps Secret Detachment, was established in December 2002 with more than 400 officers aged 18 to 30 years old (with an average age of 24).²² Larger than most SWAT teams in the United States, they also have the capability to handle nuclear-chemical-biological incidents and bomb disposal.²³

These and other units have received extensive training, including participation in numerous exercises and dress rehearsals. However, little is known about the decision-making processes at the very top of the command chain. There is scant information available regarding "tabletop" simulation exercises involving senior leaders, or non-government actors. Tabletop exercises are realistic role-playing games to simulate decision-making processes in response to defined scenarios. Because it is not practical for senior officials to participate, junior or retired officials play the role of senior officials, who explore responses to crises presented by referees. The lessons learned in these sessions are conveyed to senior leaders and used to develop policy and build experience in anticipation of future events. It appears the PLA has engaged in simulations to model situations, such as a Taiwan crisis. However, tabletop exercises are not known to be employed by civilian leadership or think tanks in China, though one tabletop exercise conducted in Beijing involved Chinese officials and U.S. non-governmental experts.²⁴ The lack of experience employing the tabletop exercise method has possibly contributed to the Chinese government's poor track record of crisis management and does not bode well for ensuring security at the Olympics. To date, there have been no reports of international cooperation or participation in tabletop simulations for the Olympics. This is certainly a potential area for collaboration where U.S. experts have considerable expertise. Command and control exercises conducted by military and police commanders have been staged, with first responders and government work units providing public services such as hospice care. While these exercises contribute to the training of personnel, they also provide an opportunity to showcase newly acquired hardware and systems. An element of showmanship in some exercises, such as the use of motorized paragliders in staged hostage rescue demonstrations indicates that the distinction between actual training and public relations is blurred.²⁵ However, the overall impression of Chinese security preparations is one of significant financial outlay and tremendous commitment of personnel.

Gaps and Limitations

It is evident that there are clear differences between the Chinese and U.S. approaches to security.²⁶ Overall, China is perceived to be a good environment for ensuring Olympic security, particularly compared to recent Olympic host nations with open borders, close proximity to fragile states or conflict zones and a history of terrorist events. Greece, Italy and the United States all fall into the latter category, with domestic terrorists presenting profound

challenges for security at major events. U.S. security officials expressed concerns about Greek Olympic security preparations in 2004, later attributing its relatively trouble-free Games to a combination of hard work, but also a little luck. The postmortem report on the 1996 Atlanta Olympics security is defined by the bombing which occurred at a gathering place that planners created to provide unrestricted access to the public. This illustrates the dilemma in finding a balance between public access and security. China faces this dilemma on different terms, as there is less call for individual freedoms and access over security.

The United States and international security experts have publicly expressed confidence in Beijing's security preparations. While attending a conference in Hong Kong, the director of Interpol commented favorably on preparations, as did U.S. FBI Director Robert Mueller in January 2008.²⁷ Clearly, U.S.-China security cooperation is happening, with only a fraction publicly reported. Naturally, a degree of engagement involves security precautions necessary for President Bush's appearance at the Games.

The FBI and State Department Diplomatic Security bureau have ample experience working with Olympic host nations at previous Olympics and compare their experience with China by those yardsticks. The FBI deployed between two and three hundred agents to Athens, and over 1,000 agents to Atlanta. The FBI has expressed its interest to share its expertise, offering to deploy 100 agents to

China, though the response has not been positive. One of the FBI's strategic objectives in providing China with support for the Olympics is to further overall cooperative ties with China for the long term. The base for U.S.-China cooperation was significantly furthered in 2002, when the FBI opened a liaison office in Beijing (known as the "Legal Attaché") to facilitate communication with the MPS. Later, the MPS also posted officers in Washington. The exchange of information between the two sides has since developed to the FBI's satisfaction and they have worked closely on major cases, building a basis for ongoing cooperation.²⁸ The two countries have publicly vowed

to strengthen collaboration in law enforcement, anti-terrorism and international crime, including achieving other long-term goals such as a bilateral extradition treaty.²⁹

Security cooperation for the Olympics is not limited to the FBI, State Department and Secret Service. U.S. scientific experts have reportedly made two trips to Beijing to address nuclear material safety with Chinese counterparts. This program is secret for obvious reasons, but we can assume that the agenda includes surveying and monitoring radioactive materials, and, if needed, enhancing security measures or removing materials that pose risk. The U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Agency (NNSA) provided similar support to Greek authorities through the Sandia National Laboratory.³⁰ The U.S. government has offered to donate scientific equipment to China that would help detect radiological or biological attacks.

There are concerns about differences between U.S. and Chinese approaches to security, due largely to different interpretations of what constitutes a security threat. China considers any action that might "harm China's reputation" as a security threat, while U.S. officials limit their taxonomy to "sticks and stones" threats. U.S. security principles seek to manage nonviolent demonstrations rather than subduing or preventing them altogether, so long as property is protected and the security of the public is not endangered. Additionally, U.S.

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observers feel that Chinese security experts have a limited “worldview” that underestimates international threats. This observation was borne out in the response to the Olympic Torch relay in Paris and London, where Chinese organizers were unprepared for demonstrations that became disruptions. The differing definitions of security was illustrated when U.S. security officials were faced with Chinese requests to employ more comprehensive measures to prevent protestors from mobilizing and demonstrating in San Francisco during the Olympic torch run. Reluctant to stifle protests, U.S. organizers were unable to accede to many Chinese requests which inadequately conveyed the “hard security” threat presented by peaceful protesters. However, following the Paris and London legs of the relay, the prospect of physical harm was elevated, confronting San Francisco authorities who were unable to prevent large protests from coalescing, forcing the decision to avoid them altogether by changing the relay route at the last minute.

While peaceful protests in China are not considered a direct security threat to U.S. interests, the Chinese leadership takes a different view. This divergent perspective is reflected in public perceptions of China in the West that interpret crackdowns against protesters as violating Western norms of human rights. Consequently, any mishandling of peaceful demonstrations, which could cause peaceful incidents to spiral out of control, would most likely have a negative affect on U.S.-China relations. In the event that unrest is dealt with poorly, U.S. and European leaders might feel the need to respond with rhetoric, potentially raising tensions further by offending the Chinese public and officials’ highly developed sense of sovereignty.

These disparities run much deeper than respective approaches to crowd control. In terms of U.S.-China cooperation for Olympic security preparations, there is a perception that Chinese officials place more emphasis on “face” and “sovereignty” than actual functional objectives. U.S. officials generally feel such principles should take a back seat to close, practical cooperation. U.S. experts have warned that China’s unwillingness to engage international agencies more closely exposes them to unnecessary risk.

Different perceptions of security threats are also evidenced by the offers of international support accepted by Beijing. U.S. experts value their accrued experience, which they are using to tempt their Chinese counterparts to cooperate more closely. For example, the FBI is offering access to a classified database of first-hand investigations of global contemporary terrorist incidents. This database, as well as the seasoned agents, demonstrates the depth of the FBI’s reach.³¹ FBI investigators have been sent to study terrorist incidents around the world since the 1970s. While the FBI cannot extend unrestricted access to U.S. databases, offers to provide supervised access are genuine. Yet, China’s response to these offers has been lukewarm. U.S. and European security agencies have a culture of cooperation which stands in contrast to the level of engagement with China. The example of Scotland Yard being invited by Pakistan to investigate Benazir Bhutto’s assassination is an example of cooperation that could serve as a model for China. According to one expert, “China will be *the* case study if they fail, and it will be entirely their own doing. They want to prove they can do it themselves, so they will have sole responsibility.”³²

Perhaps most disconcerting is the fact that some of China’s security preparations are less

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substantive than they appear on paper. For instance, the official website for the Olympic Security Command Center gives the impression of a propaganda exercise rather than a serious effort to provide information.³³ As of the end of March 2008, much of it had not been updated since mid-2007.³⁴ On close examination, the extent of preparations is not clear. Likewise, there are concerns that many exercises and drills are overly scripted and it appears that organizing officials are most concerned about demonstrating “success” to superiors. This robs organizers and participants the opportunity to learn from and develop the ability to think critically and make rapid decisions at tactical levels.

Another U.S. concern is that China is focused on different threats than the rest of the international community, primarily in relation to Chinese domestic groups. This results in a very parochial focus in security preparations. For instance, there is an over-emphasis on

China's maladroit press management could become a security challenge.

the East Turkistan terrorist threat, and more recently, Tibetan “splittists.” This reflects a lack of realization of “all the other threats out there that want to take a whack at the VIPs from around the world.”³⁵ Moreover, there is suspicion that Chinese security officials have overstated the threat posed by Xinjiang separatists because of a lack of evidence.³⁶ Furthermore, Chinese statements demonstrate

a high degree of politicization of the international threat environment. One reported comment even framed “Taiwan secessionists” as an Olympic security threat.³⁷

Tian Yixiang, director of the PLA Command Team for Beijing Olympic Security Work, told military attaches from 54 countries that, “preventing and fighting terrorist activities are our top priority.” He emphasized that the command team will also keep a close eye on East Turkistan separatist forces, Taiwan secessionists and Tibet “independence” activists and “will use all available resources to ensure the security of the Games.”³⁸ Comments such as these diminish international confidence that Chinese security officials have a clear picture of the international security environment.

A focus on domestic challenges brings a high degree of confidence that China will be able to control indigenous security threats, although there is equal awareness that the Chinese internal security apparatus has limits. Civil unrest regularly spirals out of control and domestic attacks such as hijackings and bombings have occurred, which raises concerns about individuals rather than organized groups with political agendas. The Chinese senior leadership has a poor track record of information and crisis management, with a frequent delay between recognition and reaction. However, despite concerns about the speed of Chinese responses to crises, it is acknowledged that once a problem reaches the politburo level, the Chinese government can commit vast resources, particularly human resources, to a particular problem and handle it well.³⁹ While the time lag is a concern, the Olympics are short, and there is an expectation that most crises can be effectively managed (or even covered up) during the highest profile period.

U.S. and Chinese security officials also take widely different approaches to media management. The relationship between the Chinese government and the international media has steadily deteriorated since the spring of 2007 coverage of Chinese product safety challenges. International media generally feel that they have been treated with contempt by Chinese authorities and have responded by increasingly negative coverage of China. This has led to accusations by Chinese officials that Western media is “biased,” and the creation of what the Foreign Correspondents Club of China terms a “hostile environment.”⁴⁰ China’s

lack of adroitness in managing the press is a potential detriment to holding a “successful” Olympic Games, and could even become a security challenge under Chinese definitions of threat. Information management within China is very different from how media is managed elsewhere. However, during the Olympics it will be hard to distinctly separate the two. Officials within BOCOG responsible for communications are more experienced (and comfortable) with the Chinese system of propaganda management than external communications disciplines. U.S. security officials highlight their experience in information management and media liaison and have offered to collaborate with Chinese authorities.

China’s tactical and technical security preparations are generally perceived to be sufficient by U.S. observers. However, concerns remain. For example, while U.S. experts have a high regard for China’s tactical police units, there are distinct differences in terms of what skills are most important. While Chinese units are superbly armed and equipped, they are comparably young and inexperienced. According to the *Beijing Review*, the average age of the “Snow Leopard Commando Unit” is 24. U.S. SWAT teams are generally much older, averaging around 35 to 40 years of age.⁴¹ While Chinese SWAT members are clearly athletic and described by one U.S. expert as “real war-fighters,” they do not have the years of policing experience U.S. counterparts have before joining elite units. In the eyes of the United States, experience is a critical qualification, as evidenced by one expert who worries “about a 22 year old guy who thinks he is superhuman making a decision.” The U.S. experience has determined that tactical decision-making cannot realistically take place in the rear by veteran officers or political leaders. Likewise, while training is important, athletic skills and hand-to-hand combat moves are rarely a factor in determining a positive outcome from an incident. These differences contribute to unease amongst U.S. observers. Without more extensive collaboration and substantive cooperation, a general lack of appreciation and understanding of Chinese preparations will persist.

China is the first non-NATO, non-U.S. military ally to hold an Olympics since 1980. Since then, U.S. military involvement, including pre-Games joint military exercises and paramilitary training between the U.S. and host countries, has taken place. Knowing that cooperation occurs with both military and civilian agencies brings assurance on the part of U.S. authorities. However, for the Beijing Olympics, U.S.-China preparations have not included a military component. The U.S. Department of Defense has stated that China has declined offers for military support prior to the Games.⁴² It is unclear if China’s unwillingness to accept support from the U.S. military will have an affect on Olympic security, particularly because China’s geostrategic situation and location is very different from Sydney, Athens and Torino. For example, China has relatively secure borders and strict visa requirements for foreign visitors, while Greece and Italy are Schengen Agreement countries with lenient entry policies. Moreover, the cool relationship between U.S. and Chinese militaries as well as the U.S. legal restrictions that constrain U.S.-China military cooperation contribute to mutual misperceptions.

Opportunities Abound

Overall, China has made extensive investments and preparations for ensuring security at the Beijing Games. The adequacy of those preparations will ultimately be judged by the absence of terrorist events, or a rapid and humane response to any adverse man-made, technical or natural disaster that occurs. Even though fundamental differences in security

approaches and strategy exist between the Chinese organizers and U.S. security experts, numerous opportunities exist to improve cooperation and increase the likelihood that the Games go trouble free.

The most significant opportunities would require Chinese organizers to capitalize on outside human resources as well as material support. While China has welcomed the “hardware” contributions, making use of international offers to provide experienced manpower should be seriously considered. Absorbing personnel from others ensures that China can fully utilize experience in crisis management, including gaining access to restricted databases and critical knowledge. Additionally, U.S. government experts can assist in liaison with international media and broader information management.

U.S. government and non-government experts can collaborate with Chinese officials to improve decision-making and crisis management performance by increasing capacity to conduct scenario simulations. While Chinese political leaders have previously participated in U.S.-designed simulations on economic security crises, the concept of tabletop simulations has not yet gained wide acceptance as a critical planning tool within China. Furthermore, working more closely with Chinese counterparts would improve understanding of Chinese decision-making principles and organizational practices. Potential simulation themes for joint tabletop exercises could include a security threat to future major events such as the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai, an infectious disease outbreak, or more ambitiously perhaps, a military issue, such as a collision at sea between U.S. and Chinese navy vessels. Closer Sino-U.S. cooperation through joint simulation exercises between political leaders would have the added benefit of reducing the risk of miscalculation, building confidence and mutual understanding to better handle future crises beyond the Olympics.

Successful management of the Games will contribute to meeting the Chinese leadership’s objective of showcasing China’s economic development to the world. The quality of security preparations and the absence of a major incident will be a vital component. Guaranteeing security will entail close international collaboration and deliberate approaches to global and domestic threats. Increased cooperation will not only influence how authorities manage peaceful demonstrations but importantly shape perceptions of China. International understanding of Chinese protocols intended to manage demonstrations deftly and with political acuity is vital, particularly since political sensitivities are not purchased with hardware packages.

The stakes for China are particularly high. The Chinese leadership seeks to gain its legitimacy from domestic public perception, which is shaped by government management of the economy and security environment. Moreover, international reaction to the Games will likely influence Chinese public opinion towards the rest of the world, affecting future Chinese and U.S. foreign policies. Negative sentiments driven by both international and domestic opinions shaped by the tenor of the Games could present undesirable outcomes for China’s future international relations. However, a successfully managed Olympics will ensure China’s continued willingness to open its markets to the outside world and follow a progressive, constructive foreign policy. Even though some U.S. experts engaging the Chinese may feel that the level of collaboration with Chinese counterparts does not compare favorably with previous event organizers, there are no indications that the Beijing Games will not be safe. A positive Beijing Games outcome would ultimately benefit all global citizens in keeping with the Olympic spirit. 🌍

Notes

- ¹ United States Government Accountability Office Report to Congressional Requesters, "Olympic Security - U.S. Support to Athens Games Provides Lessons for Future Olympics," May 2005, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05547.pdf>.
- ² "Lone-wolf" bombings are a periodic occurrence, with some attracting broad media attention. Often, authorities describe the bomber as a mentally unstable person, a disaffected petitioner or a jilted lover carrying a grudge. Well-publicized cases include the 2008 hijacking of 10 Australian tourists on a bus in Xian and a suicide bombing in Tiananmen Square in 2000. In 2003, a man claiming to have a bomb took hostages in the Beijing office of Reuters during the National People's Congress to protest government corruption. See "Bomb blast in Tiananmen Square," *BBC*, Feb. 15, 2000; "Beijing police arrest 'bomber'," *BBC*, Mar. 12, 2003; "Mayor says Xi'an safe for tourists after hostage incident," *Xinhua*, Mar. 9, 2008.
- ³ See, for e.g., "Chinese riot after Japan win final," *CNN*, Aug. 8, 2004; "Chinese football fans riot over penalty," *BBC*, Mar. 25, 2002.
- ⁴ "Olympic security planning 'on track,'" *China Daily*, Feb. 11, 2007.
- ⁵ "News Release on Security Work for Olympic Venue Construction," *BOCOG*, Apr. 20, 2007.
- ⁶ Interviews, Beijing. See also, "Beijing playing it safe ahead of Games," *China Daily*, Mar. 30, 2007.
- ⁷ Interview, Washington, DC.
- ⁸ MIND/FIND is a database of passports, identity cards and visas reported as stolen or lost by countries all over the world known as the stolen and lost travel documents (SLTD) database operated by Interpol. MIND – Mobile Interpol Network Database (off-line, accessed locally); FIND – Fixed Interpol Network Database (on-line, real time access to Interpol General Secretariat).
- ⁹ "INTERPOL sends assistant group to support Beijing Olympic security," *Chongqing Municipal Government*, Sept. 11, 2007. See also, Interpol, "International Conference on Security Cooperation for 2008 Beijing Olympic Games," September 2007.
- ¹⁰ "ASEAN+3 capital city police seek teamwork," *People's Daily*, Aug. 17, 2005.
- ¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "2008 Beijing Olympic international cooperation conference led to Joint Declaration," <http://www.nyconsulate.prchina.org/chn/xw/t361412.htm>.
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- ¹³ "SCO vows to make Games a success," *China Daily*, Aug. 23, 2007.
- ¹⁴ "Beijing Olympic security plan to be tried out in 2007," *People's Daily*, Mar. 11, 2007. See also, "The Soaring Cost of Security," *Finance World*, Mar. 27, 2008.
- ¹⁵ "Chinese military preparing for Beijing Olympic security," *Xinhua*, June 29, 2007.
- ¹⁶ Sina.com/blogdetailingOlympicvolunteerprocesses, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b8bd14501008i10s.html.
- ¹⁷ "Safe Olympic Action, Olympic security in real battle period," *Sina.com Sports Page*, Feb. 29, 2008.
- ¹⁸ "It is the entire society's duty to safeguard the Olympic Games," *BOCOG*, Mar. 5, 2007.
- ¹⁹ Guangqin Zhang, "Do not let one suspect get away, huge crowd strategy (or human wave tactics) for the Olympic Games," *Phoenix Weekly*, Feb. 29, 2008.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ "Ready for the show," *China Daily*, Mar. 7, 2007.
- ²² "Armed force safeguard the Olympic Games," *Changjiang Daily*, Nov. 13, 2007. See also, "People's Armed Police Beijing General Corps," *Sinodefense.com*, Apr. 14, 2008.
- ²³ "Chinese Armed Police evaluates special weapons in Sino-Russia Drill," *china-military.blogspot.com*. See also, "China's Answer to Bond," *Beijing Review*, Jan. 13, 2008.
- ²⁴ Michael D. Swaine, Tousheng Zhang and Danielle F. S. Cohen, *Managing Sino-American Crises: Case Studies And Analysis*, (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006.) See also, Michael Swaine, "Taiwan's Defense Reforms and Military Modernization Program: Objective, Achievements, and Obstacles," Book chapter in *Dangerous Strait: The U.S.--Taiwan--China Crisis* By Nancy Bernkopf (Tucker, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
- ²⁵ "Successful harbour installation security exercise," *Xinhua*, Nov. 1, 2007. See also, "Rescue and anti-terrorism drill in Nanjing," *China Daily*, June 14, 2007.
- ²⁶ Except where noted, this section is derived largely from interviews with specialists conducted in Washington, DC in 2008.

²⁷ "Interpol satisfied with Olympics security preparations," *The Straits Times*, Mar. 5, 2008.

²⁸ Interviews. Washington, DC. See also, "The U.S. sends experts from FBI to support Beijing Olympic security," *World News*, Feb. 6 2008.

²⁹ Interviews. See also, "FBI helps nation combat terrorism," *China Daily*, June 14, 2007.

³⁰ Sue Bailey and Jim Bronskill, "U.S. nuclear experts help clear Olympic sites in top-secret Beijing visits," *The Canadian Press*, Mar. 5, 2008.

³¹ Such as the findings from an FBI investigation of the terrorist siege of the NordOst Theater in Moscow in 2002, which includes the experience of observers who consulted with Russian counterparts during the siege.

³² Seeking to assuage concerns, U.S. security agencies, including national laboratories, FBI, State Department and Secret Service are not looking to promote their involvement and "steal thunder" from the Chinese government. Officials are certain the Chinese government will get credit for successful and problem-free events, so there should be no concern that the USG will claim credit or otherwise seek to undermine Chinese government efforts. The USG offices do need to demonstrate that they are involved in preparations and justify resources, so preparations will not be absolutely secret, but public messaging would be subdued, and interactions with congress would be limited because the budgets are relatively small and U.S. authorities do not want to violate existing U.S. regulations prohibiting security cooperation with China. Numerous U.S. laws prevent U.S. officials from providing military or security aid to China, though the interpretation of these laws are shifting perceptively to allow for greater cooperation on issues such as terrorism.

³³ The website for the Security Command Center is <http://www.bjayab.cn/webapp/ayabweb/chinesegb/index.do>.

³⁴ Some subsections (such as "International Exchange") only contain as many articles in the section as are needed to fill the corresponding section on the front page of the website. See, Security Command Center, <http://www.bjayab.cn/>.

³⁵ Interview with security expert in Beijing.

³⁶ Daniel Schearf, "U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation Seeks Further Cooperation with China," *Voice of America*, June 13, 2007.

³⁷ "PLA helps ensure security for Games," *China Daily*, June 29, 2007.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ It can be argued that authorities responded quickly to the Sichuan earthquake in May 2008, contrasted with the January 2008 snow storms. However, critics have pointed out that officials underestimated the magnitude of the earthquake's devastation and did not call up enough troops or equipment to adequately meet the needs.

⁴⁰ "The Final Countdown: 100 Days Ahead of the Beijing Olympics, Foreign Correspondents Club of China Concerned about Deteriorating Reporting Conditions," *Foreign Correspondents Club of China*, Apr. 30, 2008.

⁴¹ Interviews. To qualify for the FBI Hostage Rescue Team ("HRT") a Special Agent must have a minimum of two years experience, and at least three years of law enforcement or military tactical experience. The minimum age to be a special agent is 23 and the average age is 28. For an example of a metropolitan police SWAT team, the average age of the Columbus Ohio SWAT unit is 48. See: James J. Scanlon, "The Columbus Ohio Police S.W.A.T. Platoon 29th Anniversary," self published.

⁴² Shirley A. Kan, "U.S.-China Counterterrorism Cooperation: Issues for U.S. Policy," *Congressional Research Service*, Oct. 10, 2007.