Rethinking Security at the Olympics

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The Olympics have become an object of security exceptionalism, wherein perceptions of danger are greater than normal and so the normal means of public security provision are greatly expanded. Because the Games provide a unique opportunity for countries to show their best side to the world and for cities to climb the global hierarchy of importance (Degen 2004; Short et al. 2000; Shoval 2002), most agree that security should equally rise to the occasion. In contrast to the self-evidence with which the urgencies of Olympic threats are normally presented, we seek to denaturalise the claim to exceptionalism and highlight some of the underlying social valuations that contribute to the Olympic state of alarm. Several contributors to this volume address the implications of specific security behaviours. We offer a conceptual framework within which the security mindset can be understood and debated.

We also offer an analytical hypothesis to describe some underlying motivations for the sense of emergency surrounding the Games. We attribute security policies to the macro-societal process through which the Olympics acquire their value, and through that value, their "endangered" status. The disparity between an Olympic security event and normal security measures deployed against threats to equally vulnerable assemblies of people connotes an "Olympic difference:" the social designation of the Olympic Games as a special event that transcends the material parity of that event with other human security vulnerabilities. We view the Games as a *sui generis* object of the claim to security: they provide the state with an opportunity to affirm its modernity and therefore they become *objets protégés* in their own right. Security at

the Games is not only deployed to protect that affirmation, it is also a part of it.

We maintain that membership in the club of Olympic hosts resembles many other élite clubs of nations, including the nuclear club, insomuch as hosting the Olympics becomes a pathway to, or alternatively, an affirmation of, first-class global citizenship. We unpack some of these commonalities to further our argument that the urgency surrounding the Games relates more to their (still real, though largely) symbolic importance to the host nation than it does to concern about the safety of spectators or infrastructure. We do not think that security planners neglect human security or the protection of infrastructure in their planning. Rather, we wish to account for many measures that clearly exceed the exigencies of protection.

Above all, we argue that the departure from rationalised security provision at the Olympics, and the main cause for the state of security exceptionalism, is the value governments place on the opportunity to demonstrate their full modernity to the world. Olympic security measures put human resources, technological sophistication, wealth, and organisational acumen on display in the same way that constructing ostentatious stadia or advanced weapons do. A significant effect of security at the Games is to reinforce this message by demonstrating not only that the Games can be held safely, but that safety can be achieved in the most modern, high-tech, and opulent way. Students of nuclear politics will be familiar with these status markers, and below we further explore that comparison. Those who are capable of hosting the Games must be able to build, compete, transport, and secure — none can be separated from the others and all contribute to the fundamental affirmation of élite status that is

part and parcel of hosting the Games.

The Olympic mindset

There is an entrenched belief that the size of the Olympic platform is directly proportional to terrorists' desire to attack it. Even before September 11, 2001 (hereafter 9/11), fear that big events are likely to become "big killing events" was pervasive in the popular mind (Tulloch 2000: 230). Most scholarship on Olympic security takes the state of Olympic exception for granted. These works mention the post-9/11 "climate of insecurity" (Yu et al. 2009: 392) that affects security panning around the world in the most general sense (Boyle and Haggerty 2009: 257; Johnson 2006: 2; Voulgarakis 2005), and the increased visibility that an attack on the Olympics would bestow upon terrorists (Price 2008) to conclude that the Games are at a higher-than-normal risk of attack, meriting a harder-than-normal security posture. Even critics of the "security and surveillance industrial complex" make this assumption: "Especially in the post 9/11 world, the Olympic Games — as the most important global sports event and mega-media show — naturally cause very high security concerns" (Samatas 2007: 221). That governments place great symbolic importance on the Games — China's Games are the most potent example of this (Xiaobo 2008; Xu 2006) — only increases terrorist temptation, they say. These scholars may criticise the implications of Olympic security provision — outsourcing, corporate gouging, overkill — but not the motivations behind it. They suggest that a deviation from normal is necessary, though many stress the dangers of a disproportionately strong security posture which may not be extinguished with the

torch (Head 2000). Even opponents of the Games agree that the Olympics need to be highly secured; the costs and effects of security operations underwrite their opposition (No 2010 2009).

In spite of the well-known fact that large killings are often sensational for their banality, perceptions of an Olympic difference are unchanged. Nobody can credibly say the Madrid, Mumbai, London, Bali, or Moscow bombings lacked visibility, media attention, or symbolic impact. These attacks preyed on the banal vulnerabilities of everyday life, not the spectacular exceptions of a mega-event. This is not to say that the attackers could not have attacked a more high-profile target, but rather that the impact of their actions was exploded by the constant fear they inspired in people going about otherwise simple activities. By this logic, the constructed importance of the Games would make them less of a target, not more of one.

We know this, but still there is something about the Olympics that radically alters society's representations of danger and the leeway we afford to governments on special occasions to take extraordinary precautions to keep us safe. We argue that this general accord is the result of a securitization (Waever 1995; Buzan et al. 1998): a broad consensus that the Olympics expose host societies to temporary but existential dangers from credible threats, and that the Games deserve to be protected, even if such protection requires the state to transgress the restraints we normally demand of it.

This construction may be widespread but it is not natural. Furthermore, it is far from

certain what the referent object of the Olympic securitization — that thing deemed threatened and in need of protection — is. Accusations of excess and paranoia at the Games, we argue, depend on limited conceptual understandings of security that fail to differentiate between various representations of danger. They fail to ask: "In this case, *what* thing of value is being protected by a given policy? *From what* or *from whom* is that valued object endangered, and *why should we care* if it is?" If we ask these questions, we find that what seems like security exaggeration is only excessive if the referent objects of the Olympic securitization are people and buildings alone. Could there be others?

Defining security

When people talk about security, it is mostly unclear exactly what they mean. In the Olympic usage, security seems to mean all of the military, police, intelligence, and surveillance resources deployed around the host city, with the aim of preventing acts of violence. But even in its most simple formulation, security is about more than protection. We make war on terror, but not on traffic deaths, for example, even though the latter are materially more dangerous (Statistics Canada 2008; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 2008). Though the material consequences (and therefore risks) of automotive accidents are always greater than those of terrorism, automotive fatalities are not considered matters of national security. The state does expend considerable resources to maintain and police roads, to ensure vehicle safety, and to reduce incidents of drunk driving, but a certain degree of risk is

accepted and normalised. This is the realm of normal politics — where risks are known and accepted — not the urgent domain of security (Waever 1995).

Where most authors on Olympic security do not probe the central concept of security, we use the constructivist understandings of security developed by the Copenhagen School of security studies (Buzan 2007; Buzan et al. 1998; Waever 1995) to (re)theorize the motivations and effects of Olympic security operations. The Copenhagen perspective allows a wider definition of what can count as security, providing us with theoretical tools to examine, through security measures, how the Olympics acquire their societal value.

As Buzan (2007: 106) points out, people experience threatening information along a spectrum from complacency to paranoia. Fear and courage emerge from the unconscious mind and only have a loose connection to rational calculations of risk. Where this connection is slow to arrive, the security priorities of the state can work to shape public anxieties in their image. Security and insecurity are emotions emerging from the interplay between threats, corresponding vulnerabilities and, most importantly, the perception of existential danger that results from their convergence (cf. Weldes et al. 1999). Security is thus entirely relational (Weldes 1996) and cannot be provisioned in one or another quantity.

Buzan's constructivism opens pathways to a wider security agenda (cf. Ullman 1983), where representations of danger can be triggered by threats from/on various "sectors" (Buzan et al. 1998), military and non-military, that threaten many potential "referent

objects" other than the state. When we speak about security then, we are speaking about something more than just the probability of death or harm, something more than the cameras and cordons authorities use to militarise urban areas for mega-events. We must look to perceived threats, representations of danger, the thing declared endangered, and the societal consensus that allows governments to take exceptional, emergency action.

Wæver (1995) outlines how constructed representations of insecurity are operationalised through the "securitization" process. Whereas others use "securitization" to mean militarization (for example, see Yu et al. 2009), Wæver endows the term with a very specific nominalist signification. Securitization begins with the speech act, whereby someone announces a threat and tries to persuade the public and other major stakeholders that the threat is real, that it poses an existential risk to society, and that government must pursue a special urgency to remedy the situation and must therefore be temporarily granted the power to exceed the rules by which it is normally constrained. If the speech act is successful, the state escalates the situation by temporarily mobilising its full resources to deal with the urgent matter. If the matter is no longer deemed urgent, de-securitization occurs, and the issue returns to the normal realm of politics.

Having earned the moniker of "security" and the full-scale mobilisation of the resources of the state that accompany it, the Olympics have undergone a process of securitization — a broad consensus of their value has been reached — which we seek to present here. The security tag distinguishes the Olympics from "the political,"

those risks like traffic accidents which are deemed acceptable elements of normal life. That the Games marshal the urgency of security prompts us to explore how such great subjective value could be attributed to them, even when the objective risks to the Games are not as grave as one might suspect.

More than enough — risk and response

Regardless of whether events of symbolic, critical violence have increased since then, a post-9/11 consciousness dominates the security policies of advanced nations (Enders and Sandler 2005). The general climate of terrorist anxiety that permeates the fabric of world politics always makes a prominent appearance in the literature on Olympic security, and in statements by Olympic security planners, as a baseline against which the Olympic escalation can be understood. For instance, Voulgarakis (2005: 1), the minister responsible for Olympic security in Athens, describes the impact of the post-9/11 security consciousness on his own planning, and links general fear to the perception of risk at the Games:

> Soon after Greece assumed the responsibility to host an event that has been synonymous with peaceful competition…the ugly head of irrational violence made its appearance as we entered the twenty-first century…. Indeed, the tragic events of 9/11 have turned the page of a new chapter in the history of humanity, and Greece was among the first countries faced with the awesome

> task of staging the world's largest sporting event under the threat of potential violence.

In addition, Voulgarakis shows that although being awarded the Games is a great honour, not all hosts are universally trusted to adequately perform their security duties. Only successful Games can convince the sceptics and fully confirm the host's competence. In fact, Voulgarakis argues that (mostly American) scepticism was unfounded: *anybody* would have been unprepared because no state had adapted mega-event plans to consider a scenario like 9/11. Though he does so retrospectively, Voulgarakis discusses the nature of threats to the Olympics, their credibility and existential essence, and the need for Greece to take overwhelming and abnormal measures to protect the Games, which for obvious reasons that need not be explained, he says, deserved protecting.

Many forget that the post-9/11 security environment does not apply just to mega-events: it is a constant feature of everyday life. By comparison, a recent report by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (2008) prioritises the threat from a "lone-wolf" attacker at the Games. It may be the case that with $1 billion CAD and 15,500 officers on the case, the lone-wolf is the only conceivable scenario with a chance of success. It might weigh on the minds of security planners precisely because it cannot be decisively planned against. But the same is true of the lone-wolf in non-Olympic times, and we still allow other high-profile gatherings and provocative events to take place. We still fly on planes. In purely material terms, the consequences of a successful lone-wolf attack — measured in lives lost and property destroyed — are

exactly the same whether or not the venue is being used for the Olympics. Governments are very successful at protecting people and property in normal times, especially against lone-wolf threats, and at a much lower cost. For $181 million, Canada screens 42 million travellers in 89 airports every year (Duguay 2009: 48; Canadian Air Transport Security Authority 2007: 30) and has succeeded in securing air travel from all forms of explosives, firearms, toothpastes, and tweezers for about $4.40 per passenger. Airport screening is the basic model for ensuring that no weapons get into stadia, but at the Olympics, the same tests cost about $2,579 per person. About 18,651 spectators at a Vancouver Canucks match at General Motors Place merit eleven to thirteen police officers, 20-22 traffic police and 45-50 private security staff to ensure a safe event (Jones 2009), and these events have been kept safe. The same crowd in the same place at the Olympics is protected by a parade of security agencies at much higher costs.

Summer Games depart even further from security normalcy than do winter festivities. Volugarakis deployed over 49,000 public and private security personnel and volunteers to the Athens Games (Johnson 2005: 310; Samatas 2007: 229) — more than 70,000 for the opening ceremonies (Samatas 2007: 224). Athens launched a network of nearly 3,000 video surveillance cameras, three police helicopters, and a surveillance blimp, all connected to the C4I central information security system that could broadcast images and sound in real-time to five main operation centres, streaming surveillance and dataveillance information into a comprehensive, multi-agency interface serving thousands of security officers (Samatas 2007: 224-226). Though C4I was not completed in time for the Games, it was an ambitious, high-tech

element of "the biggest security operation in peacetime Europe" (American Society for Industrial Security, quoted in Samatas 2007: 221). The security effort in Beijing was even more surreal.

And so, the question arises: *what for*? If security operations stand between threats and vulnerabilities to protect something that is deemed valuable, then what are these things? As Samatas (2007) explains with no small irony, the much-lauded C4I system was not delivered on time for the Olympics, but the Games still proceeded without incident. C4I malfunctioned completely, with no security fallout. And if the worry is about terrorism, as declared, many measures seem out of place. The Patriot missile, for example, is primarily used for missile defence – to defend against complex ballistic missile systems which are controlled exclusively by sovereign states at the present time. These weapons could potentially shoot down aircraft if need be, but there are many alternative systems which could perform this same task, in a much more discrete and inexpensive way (cf. Canadian Security Intelligence Service 2008; Voulgarakis 2005). Still, Patriot missile batteries were a visible component of the Athens security strategy. The size of the force deployed to the Beijing Olympics was larger than the combined forces occupying both Iraq and Afghanistan. Was China expecting an invasion?

Some see the extreme reaction as a natural outcome of the security psyche. De Goede (2008) argues that with its self-escalating logic of premeditating disaster, the fundamental characteristics of security planning become extremely unbalanced, causing vulnerabilities to appear even in the absence of threats against them. Critics

are fixed on incongruities between threats, vulnerabilities, and state responses, and as we have seen, objective justifications for some of the more elaborate Olympic measures are lacking. Flashy security measures are either mismatched to the threats prioritised by the intelligence community, or far surpass the already successful security provisions of normal risks. Moving backwards from Buzan's assertion of security being relational, a key question emerges: in response to what credible threat are these escalations intended? This is more than a counter-factual question. Rather, it raises the possibility that the process of material risk assessment goes beyond concerns for the safety of participants and infrastructure. Could it simply be that we are looking to the wrong place, and that these measures could correspond to a threat-vulnerability complex beyond the terrorist-civilian cliché?

The Games as a *sui generis* object of security concern

People and places, though important, may not be the sole referent objects of the Olympic securitization. To fully understand Olympic security, we must look to the "Olympic difference," a subjective process of collective valuation that places a much higher premium on Olympic security than it does on normal assemblies of materially equal size and often greater vulnerability. Where normal operating guidelines would prohibit government from rolling out the big guns to deter instances of burglary or other petty crimes, public accession to a belief in Olympic exceptionalism paves the way for an awe-inspiring demonstration of the state's capabilities. Though the state protects the vibrant Olympic celebration, the means deployed, as we have seen, go far

beyond the imperative to protect. Instead of accusing the state of overkill, we propose a way to make sense of Olympic security by widening the agenda of what counts as security to propose that the Games have become the referent object of a securitization all their own. If the Games are viewed as a venue in which the host nation and host city can affirm themselves and their advancement to the world, Olympic security measures *do* correspond to certain sets of threats and vulnerabilities, which are otherwise unseen.

Obviously, it is impossible to conclusively identify security planners' main concerns. We offer no "smoking gun" empirical evidence in defence of our claim and we do not mean to suggest that Olympic security planners focus on the symbolic at the expense of public safety. Rather, we feel compelled to offer a suggestive alternative to the naturalised self-evidence with which Olympic security is commonly portrayed. What follows is an attempt to map the practicalities of Olympic security measures onto the stakeholder model and process approach of the Copenhagen School, which lead us to hypothesise about an unseen referent object which most commentators miss: the Games as an existentially-salient political device which states use to affirm their prowess.

Where threats and vulnerabilities fail to correspond materially, a second look at the specifics of Olympic security measures can tell us a lot about the Games as a stand alone object of securitization. What emerges is a demonstration that is both spectacular and sensational. Air forces, flotillas, missile batteries, special forces units, security cordons, search without warrant, surveillance technologies galore – none of

these is a stranger at the Olympics. This is not just the kind of security theatre designed to feign complete control over the uncontrollable (Beck 2002: 41) in hopes of reassuring an anxious public about the state's ability to guarantee safety (cf. Boyle and Haggerty 2009), for, as we have seen, these measures go far beyond even the most fanciful of imaginings of danger. What emerges above and beyond the crystal palace is a demonstration of the state's wealth, technological advancement, and organisational acumen. It seems fair to judge security against the same criteria used by the IOC to determine whether a given country can build the stadia, accommodations, transport networks, and communications infrastructures necessary for hosting a successful Olympics. We have long understood that the stadium-monuments and cultural pageantry of the Games demonstrate hosts' modernity and advancement, and ultimately act as proof of their suitability to host the Games. Where many view security separately from other aspects of the Games — a big stick to protect a big prize — it can also be viewed as a co-development of the Olympic project. As with the other demonstrations, Olympic security depends on vast human resources, the most modern technology, substantial riches, and the highest degree of organisational expertise. In the following sections we review how these different factors have served to make visible the security profiles of recent Olympic hosts.

Boots on the ground

Beijing's security operations were by far the most stunning on record, in no small part due to a massive human deployment. Force estimates vary, but official statements from Beijing organisers listed 92,500 people as being involved in the direct security

of the Games. That figure does not include an additional 100,000 regular soldiers and 290,000 civilian security volunteers. This "saturation security strategy" (Thompson 2008: 50) allowed authorities to erect a security cordon around the entire city, search incoming cars for about 20 minutes each, and set up checkpoints at major junctions throughout the city (Yu et al. 2009: 393).

In Vancouver, the Integrated Security Unit coordinated more than 15,500 police officers, soldiers, and private security contractors (Thomas 2010). The Vancouver security contingent swelled so far beyond original estimates that organisers were forced to hire three commercial cruise liners to billet them all.

Modern technology

We have already discussed the degree to which Greek authorities centred their security demonstration around high-visibility high technology. This included Patriot missile batteries borrowed from the US, and, of course, the C4I interactive surveillance and information-sharing system. Evidently, the failure of C4I had no impact on safety, but it was a massive security failure to the degree that the flash of the Olympics could only be met by the low-tech thud of soldiers' boots. Further, most of the high-tech security in Athens, especially military hardware, was borrowed from the US . or NATO (Brianas 2004; Lynch and Cuccia 2006 54-8). Though Greek officials were in charge, the technological demonstration was lacklustre. It mirrored poor performance on stadium construction and the like and was a blemish on the reputation of Greece and the organising committee.

Chinese authorities assigned air force units to their Games and deployed anti-aircraft missile batteries in the Olympic Park. China's commitment to make theirs the "high-tech Olympics" included installing approximately 265,000 new surveillance cameras covering more than 50% of Beijing, and even inserting RFID chips into tickets to provide security screeners with the bearer's name, address, e-mail address, telephone number, and passport information. China also worked with Interpol to screen airline passengers against a world-wide database of over 14 million stolen document records and an even larger registry of suspicious persons.

Though Canada's military equipment is aging, it was on full display for the 2010 Games. Air force pilots flew CF-18 Hornets over the Games area, in support of Aurora strategic surveillance aircraft, Buffalo search and rescue aircraft, Griffon tactical helicopters, Cormorant and Sea King search-and-rescue helicopters, and RCMP helicopters. At least two frigates, two coastal defence vessels and several smaller craft patrolled the harbour, conducting surveillance and interdiction operations (Green 2009). The Navy also provided unique services such as underwater explosive ordinance disposal (Kitchen 2009).

Wealth

It goes without saying that security costs consume increasingly large portions of the Olympic budget. Where $300 million was deemed obscenely large at Salt Lake City,

Vancouver spent approximately $1 billion on security. Of course, the Olympic demonstration is as much about opulence as it is anything else. No stadium is too magnificent, and no security measure is too expensive for the Games. To host an Olympics without Ares (the Olympian god of warfare) would be to miss the point, no matter how much he may charge.

Organisational acumen

The sheer number of people, agencies, machines, and dollars allocated to Olympic security requires an impressive display of organisational acumen. Keeping this smorgasbord in order is no small feat. At Salt Lake City, the Secret Service directed security personnel from upwards of 30 discrete agencies through a consolidated command structure. Since then, the IOC (2004) has made the (legal and administrative) ability to develop a consolidated command structure a requirement of the Olympic bidding process. Another major organisational task is the creation of security cordons. Disrupting the flow of complex, highly-used spaces to reorganise whole cities for security purposes is a monumental task (cf. Klauser 2009).

Olympus: the peak atop the mushroom cloud

Rather than separate security from the Games it is said to protect, we can instead understand security as a manifestation of the greater affirmation that hosting the Olympics can be ostensibly reduced to. In terms of their cost, labour requirements, opulence, technological sophistication, and bureaucratic co-ordination, big security

and big building projects start to look quite similar. As with infrastructure, demonstrating to the world that the state *can* draw on the finest modern security resources is an affirmation of first-class global citizenship. To this end, the difference between normal security and Olympic security lies in the prestige of the Games and the opportunity they provide for the host nation to affirm itself domestically and internationally. When security is included in this demonstration, it paradoxically serves to defend itself, existing as it does at the very heart of the affirmative process.

With such a wealth of material, human, economic, and bureaucratic resources behind them, it should come as no surprise that hosting the Games remains the de facto privilege of precious few countries. Behind the G8 and the nine nuclear states, the 22 nations deemed capable of hosting the Olympics with due fanfare and competency come a close third. Though they would derive no material benefit from hosting the Games — the cost alone would probably cripple them — even poor cities in poor countries are lining up to join the list, which will not expand until 2016, when Rio de Janeiro hosts the Summer Games. Just before being selected, officials in Rio launched an international media campaign highlighting the international political benefits that a successful bid would bring. As Barrionuevo (2009) put it: “Winning the Olympics would be a transformational moment for Brazil, an affirmation of its rising global importance.”

Hosting the Games remains desirable even though the “national interest,” in material or rationally calculable terms, is not clearly served by doing so. Several economists have attempted to discern whether the Games have a positive economic impact on

host cities (Coates and Humphreys 2003; Owen 2005; Preuss 2004). Some believe they do and others believe they do not, but the long list of debtor hosts at least indicates that hosting the Games is not guaranteed to be materially beneficial, especially when the state shoulders most of the non-redeemable costs like security while private investors finance more lucrative projects like property development. Still, enthusiasm is hardly waning. As with other super-élite clubs in which status considerations often trump material arguments, the Olympic affirmation seems to transcend concerns of cost and debt. Consequently, it is telling to compare the Olympic affirmation to another kind of affirmation that defies material rationale: nuclear proliferation.

Like the Olympics, the net benefits of nuclear proliferation are uncertain. Though deterrence is still a popular argument (Joseph and Reichart 1998), a substantial literature now argues that nuclear weapons actually detract from state security. This is especially true during development: "Given the fears that new nuclear capabilities among neighbours create, there will be a temptation to destroy them by pre-emptive strikes while they are still small and vulnerable…[Aspirant nuclear states] may have to pass through a dangerous 'valley of vulnerability'" (Nye 1986: 90; cf. Goldstein 2003). Furthermore, there is an argument to be made that missile-based weapons are less effective and more expensive than a well-equipped air force (Fetter 1991). Therefore, many nuclear-capable states have foregone proliferation (Paul 2000).

Costs are also an issue. Between 1940 and 1996, the nearly $5,500 billion America spent on nuclear arms and related programmes surpassed government expenditure on

health, education, the environment, space research, and law enforcement *combined* (Bidwai and Vanaik 2000: 154). Even while users' return on investment is unclear, some states — even poor ones — persist in their desire to obtain nuclear weapons. With these overwhelming obstacles in mind, Hymans (2006: 8) has stopped wondering why there are so few nuclear states, posing another question instead: "Why are there *any* at all?" (italics original).

Apart from deterrence, Sagan (1996) identifies two other reasons why states develop nuclear weapons. In the "domestic politics model," nuclear weapons become "political tools used to advance parochial domestic and bureaucratic interests" (55). Like the task of playing host to the Games, splitting the atom requires the full mobilisation of all the resources a state could possibly call upon. Industry, government, the military, the scientific community, construction and engineering professionals, lay labour, and of course, tax payers, must be brought on board. With the possible exceptions of waging war, sending people into space, and hosting the Olympics, no other activity of the state requires such a broad coalition of stakeholders. In the Olympic case, we have seen how municipal politicians, property developers, infrastructure conglomerates, and security companies form a powerful stake-holding coalition underwriting the state's Olympic aspirations (Shaw 2008).

Most important to our discussion is Sagan's "norms model" (1996: 73-85). Security constitutes an increasingly large share of what it means to be a modern state. Affirming oneself as a member of the nuclear club is an endeavour to be pursued irrespective of cost-benefit considerations: "Military organizations and their weapons

can therefore be envisioned as serving functions similar to those of flags, airlines, and Olympic teams: they are part of what modern states believe they have to possess to be legitimate, modern states" (74). Irrespective of the material resources invested for little or no knowable benefit, O'Neill (2006) reminds us that "states often forgo their direct interests for the sake of prestige, investing in projects that display their modernity, engaging in conflicts over symbols of prestige, or building grand but impractical weapons."

Of course, forbidden fruit taste sweetest of all. Strings of normative regimes have emerged to limit full access to the premier advances of humankind to all but a few nations. The nuclear desire to acquire is foremost among the struggles to level this hierarchy. Even a cursory glance at the speeches of Iranian president Ahmadinejad on the subject of nuclear weapons leaves no doubt that the country's nuclear programme is mobilised through the language of equality and affirmation. When powerful nations unfairly deny these advancements to those who merit them, they "impose a nuclear apartheid" (Ahmadinejad 2005). The non-proliferation regime only strengthens the hierarchy: a managed system of deterrence on the one hand and a coercively-enforced system of abstinence on the other (Walker 2000) facilitate a stable order that prevents the perils of rapid nuclear armament among great powers (Joseph and Reichart 1998), but prevents lesser-powers from joining their ranks.

The Olympics provide a similar mechanism for the formalisation of élite security relationships. Though not nearly as serious in tenor, arguments about who deserves to host the Olympics largely resemble those about who deserves to bear nuclear arms.

The success of China's Games went a long way to silencing that nation's critics, showing that China was every bit the modern, advanced state it claims to be, making it worthy of first-class global status. Many feared that Greece would be unable to successfully secure the Olympics, and so Greece initially relied on a coterie of advanced countries to advise them on their security preparations for the Games and to provide substantial material assistance (Brianas 2004: 33-35; Voulgarakis 2005; Government Accountability Office 2005: 3; Lynch and Cuccia 2006: 57). But in spite of these initial concerns, Greek officials were then invited to advise China on their Games in turn. Chinese ascension to Olympus facilitated a quick reconstruction of their international security relationships. Though the US . Congress nearly passed a bill condemning the awarding of the Games to China, American officials participated in tactical and intelligence sharing exercises in support of the Chinese effort.

In such clubs of states, even ostensibly athletic clubs, it should come as no surprise that security demonstrations feature front-and-centre. Architecture, arsenals, and athletes cannot be separated. All three are demonstrative of the broad coalition that only the most competent states can marshal successfully. For its part in affirming claims to membership among the élite club of first-class global citizens, Olympic security cannot be viewed merely as an exaggerated response to credible threats. It must be understood as a parallel manifestation of the excellence and competence that the act of hosting the Games works so hard to demonstrate.

CONCLUSION

We have argued that material rationalisations for Olympic security provisions exceed the risk rationales through which they are supposedly derived. The Olympics are now hosted in a state of security exceptionalism, and we have attempted to denaturalise that claim to security, to show that the differences between normal security provisions and those at the Olympics are born of the stature which host nations garner from the Games. As a security manifestation of the greater Olympic project, deployments of force at the Games demonstrate claims to modernity, technological advancement, wealth, and bureaucratic expertise in the same way that impressive works of engineering or pageantry do. In addition, bold displays of statehood work to carry the positive imagery of Olympic excellence into the political realm. The state's claim to first-class global citizenship is confirmed by its capacity to marshal vast resources to its priorities. This is not to say that the provision of security at the Olympics is wasteful or excessive, but rather that some protected objects are unseen. The Games and the symbolism of prestige are things of great value necessitating a state of exception far greater than that provoked by concerns for human safety or the protection of property, both of which are adequately addressed by the security provisions of normal life.

Still, the Olympics in general remain an enigma. The standards, practices, and judgements of the IOC are largely conducted in secret, and the details of Olympic security, escalated as it is to a state of emergency, remain largely classified. For an event that commemorates universal equality and celebrates the honesty, fraternity, and respect with which we hope that our politics will one day be conducted, the veil of secrecy that envelops the Games is quite tragic. We can only hope that the

Olympics, as with all securitizations that have run their course, will at some point return to the realm of the political. We can police them responsibly and celebrate them with the most jubilant vitality, if only the harmonious ethos that was meant for the Games could sneak through the security cordon that surrounds them.

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