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# Sport in Asia: Globalization, Glocalization, Asianization

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## 1. Introduction

Sport is now a truly global cultural institution, one that is no longer the preserve of occidental culture or dominated and organized by Western nations, the growing presence and power of non-occidental culture and individual nations now makes it a truly globalized product and commodity. The insatiable appetite for sport of the enormous Asian markets is redirecting the global flow of sport, with the wider Asia Pacific region now providing massive new audiences for televised sports as the economies of the region continue their growth.

This chapter will consider the process of sport's development in the Asian and the wider Asia Pacific context through the latter phases of the global sportization process (Maguire, 1999). As the locus of the centre of gravity of global geopolitical power is shifting to the Asia Pacific region away from the Euro-Atlantic region the hegemonic sports are now assuming a far more cosmopolitan character and are being reshaped by Asian influences. This has been witnessed in the major football leagues in Europe, particularly the English Premier League and is manifest in the Indian Premier League cricket competition, which has spectacularly changed the face of cricket world-wide through what could be called its 'Bollywoodization' (Rajadhyaskha, 2003). Perhaps this reflects 'advanced' sportization (Maguire, 1999) with the process going beyond the fifth global sportization phase in sport's second globalization with 'Asianization' becoming a major cultural element vying with the previously dominant cultural traditions of Westernization and Americanization? This notion will be discussed in this paper by looking at Asia's impact on the development of sport, through the three related lenses of: sportization; the global sports formation and, the global media-sport complex. Particular reference will be made to the region's engagement with the summer Olympic Games as hosts.

### 1.1 The analysis

This analysis will interrogate the relationship between globalization and Asian sport by analyzing three domains of the sports industry: the commodities - Asian performers and the staging of performances (events) in Asia; the Asian 'market' - both live and the vast television audiences and online users of sporting networks, and Asian 'money' - both from sponsors and in the purchase of sports clubs and in hosting high profile competitions or festivals. How each of these growing domains is impacting upon sport globally will be

discussed. This analysis proposes the notion of an emerging Asian hegemony in global sport with not only the economic power shifting away from its North Atlantic (Occidental) epicentre, but also contend that the nature of the institution itself, specifically its heritage and ethos are being confronted by the pull of the geopolitical power that is consolidating in, and with Asia. The direction of the flows of globalization (Appadurai, 1990), particularly the spread of sport have through history been impacted upon by hegemonic power structures and the associated cultural diffusion of the dominant ideologies; and the effect continues today. Geopolitical, economic and of course, military power have steered the course of global flows and, as it is the very essence of history, axiomatically characterized the nature and the timing of the phases of both globalization as describe by Robertson (1992) and of Maguire's (1999) parallel model of sportization.

The explication of the global cultural system and the examination of globalization theory could be likened to the analysis of the Earth itself and all life-forms that live and have lived on it with the undertaking being so vast and complex. The discussion of globalization, as a seemingly unstoppable agent of the homogenization of global culture, initiated by imperialism and the associated diffusion of the dominant culture, religion, language and governance and now by global patterns of consumption and consumerism and a global economy, remains highly problematic. Similarly, the discussion of an 'Asian' impact, indeed of Asia *per se*, is itself open to debate for, as Philip Bowring so provocatively asked "What is Asia?" (Bowring, 1987) He points out that, "...Asia would have been no more than a geographic concept but for Europeans deciding they were somewhat different" (Ibid.). In strict geographically terms there is in fact no 'Asia' or 'Europe'; the land-mass that embraces 'Asia' actually extends from the Iberian Peninsula to that of Korea and includes the islands of Britain and Japan, indeed it should be referred to as Eurasia. In this discussion the simplistic and 'incorrect' use of the term in reference to a continental mass will not be assumed, nor will it solely favour Said's representation of Asia (the 'Orient' in his terms) as a Western cultural construct, the West's "Other" (Said, 2003). Asia has in reality no common identity and is more divergent geographically, ethnically and culturally than any other land-mass on Earth. Considering the current discussion, as dominant civilizations will always dictate how they are defined, perhaps, as the conglomerate-concept that is 'Asia' rises, the notion of Asia, as Bowring (1987) predicted, "will fade away." This may well be precipitated with the decline of Western economic, cultural and military predominance which is becoming a major dimension of the globalization process of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Discussion of globalization invariably gathers around predictable binaries including, as suggested by Maguire's (1999) description of the "fault-lines regarding homogeneity/heterogeneity, monocausal/multicausal, unidimensional/multidimensional, unity/fragmentation (and) universalism/particularism." A typical example of such discussions is that developed by Tyler Cowen, who reflected that although the advance of globalization does not necessarily mean the absolute homogenization of global culture, it can and does result in the destruction of cultures, albeit "creatively" (Cowen, 2002). However, current globalization theories largely dispute this notion of a singular process with the generally accepted consensus being that globalization is the outcome of the interaction of two contradictory processes; a homogenizing process and another that generates increased levels of differentiation. Thus, as a social or cultural form, such as a sport, is globalized, a growing level of interconnectedness emerges between the sites of its

diffusion. Although the levels of the contrasts diminish at the same time and either subtly or significantly, the number of varieties of the sport increases.

The figuration of sport involves a highly convoluted web of interdependencies involving individuals, sporting bodies and nations. Lim (2004) maintains that Maguire, though basing his conceptualization of sport on an Eliasian framework, has expanded the discussion well-beyond the emergence of sport, characterizing it as a global phenomenon that embraces an increasing intertwining of nations, cultures and people, which, as she points out, “affects a diminishing contrast and increasing variations in social and sporting discourse”. In expanding Elias’s original concept of sportization with the embrace of the Robertson’s ‘minimal phase model’ (Robertson, 1992), Maguire suggested that progressively a ‘global sports formation’ emerged, evolved and continues to do so. In the fourth (1920s-1960s) and fifth global (1960s-1990s) sportization phases, the role and impact of non-Western nations has become ever-increasingly significant. This process, Maguire states, first became evident when “...Non-Western nations began to beat their former colonial masters, especially the English...in a range of sports” (Maguire, 1999) and importantly, considering the theme of this paper:

Anglo/Euro and American control of global sport has also begun to wane off the playing field. The control of the international sports organizations, which had been gained during the fourth global sportization phase, which appropriately parallels Robertson’s ‘struggle for hegemony’ phase, slowly and unevenly, began to slip out of the exclusive hands of the ‘West’ (Ibid.).

Initially, as Maguire points out the conduct of sport was still undertaken on the terms of the Western world, through the medium of Western sports however, as globalization moved on through its phase of ‘uncertainty’ (Robertson’s phase V) characterized by growing numbers of varied global institutions and social and political movements; the global dynamics changed. Humankind, as Maguire (1999) states, became beset by “problems of multiculturalism and polyethnicity” and global sport was a primary site and source of related tensions. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it soon became apparent that, just as the geopolitical power structure of global affairs was shifting away from its Atlantic hub to the Asia Pacific, so too were aspects of the focus and control of global sport. The globalization of sport, as Lim (2004) maintained, revolves around “labour, knowledge and culture migration,” all of which are central to the processes of: the commodification; the commercialization; the media penetration and, politicization of sport (Lim, 2004). The sum of the effect of these processes results in what Maguire calls a “global sports exchange” (Maguire, 1999) and a subsequent wider commingling of cultures, which precipitates a double-bind effect with an apparent level of a diminishing contrast between individuals, groups and nations and, simultaneously, the emergence of a wider variety of cultures and sub-cultures (Maguire, 1999).

A global consideration of such shifts and movements in the power base of sports, particularly those of the hegemonic sports, such as football, cricket, basketball, baseball, tennis, motor-sports, track and field athletics and swimming presents some contentious issues. Can we categorize their development under the banner of a single process such as Maguire’s sportization despite the rejoinder that it supports the notion of ‘increased varieties’? Caution is also implicit in the Hegelian concept of *Aufhebung*, that Markovits and Rensmann (2010) adopted in their discussion of global sports, politics and identities, which implies that a social movement is simultaneously preserving and changing a culture, in this case sports culture, yet eventually it advances or “transcends” (Ibid.).

Markovits and Rensmann (2010), in their discussion of how sports have “reshaped” global politics and culture, consider the whole process to be “postindustrialization” or the representation of the “second globalization”: And it is suggested in this analysis that in the second globalization the hub of the effect and the source of the flow are now in Asia.

## 2. The emergence of an Asian hegemony of sport

In Norbert Elias’s first discussion of sportization, he outlined the development of English pastimes into codified sports and their subsequent global diffusion where they were exported as cultural icons of the British Empire. Elias used the notion of ‘industrialization’ in the conceptualization of the notion of sportization, in which he described the transformation of English leisure activities into a work-like structure (Elias, 1986). It is the latter phases of this expansion of Elias’s concept that will provide the framework for this discussion. The quest for territory and resources by European nations ahead of and during the Industrial Revolution, especially by and most successfully the British, produced the epoch of colonialism. This period of expansionism precipitated, through invasion, settlement and, the creation of hegemony was an implicit conduit for the diffusion of the cultural artefacts of the European colonizers. The British Empire advanced through Asia, from the sub-continent to Southeast Asia and to the Far East. They also travelled south and settled the Antipodes. In the colonies of the Empire the British established a social and cultural hegemony that supported its military, political and economic rule. Sport and the cult of leisure and recreation were central to the hegemony of the British Empire. In the colonies and dominions of Britain sport proved to be so central that it acted, as Galtung (1982) said, “a carrier of deep culture and structure.” Throughout the Imperial territories in Asia and the Antipodes the associated ideology of muscular Christianity and the cult of Athleticism were central elements of the educational philosophy established by the British and were enlisted to, “control the morals and minds of the ‘native’ in the interests of political stability, religious proselytism and ethnocentric moralism” (Mangan, 2002). Sport proved to be a unifying element of the cement that held the Empire together and, as Kirk-Green (1992) suggests, sport and the English language, are the most enduring aspects of the cultural imposition of the British. Today, in most of the ex-British imperial territories, sport remains as one of the most predominant social institutions and is still viable terrain upon which the allegiances, both past and present, are expressed. This very successful “Spiritual Export” (Mangan, 1992) is still a significant medium for ‘communication’ between the members of the British ‘family’ though the exchanges can at times become a little excessive!

Sport was so embedded in the texture of most British colonies in Asia that when the British along with the various missionaries left the colonies or were forcibly expelled (as in Singapore), sport and Christianity endured. Other colonizing forces and cultures took and used popular culture, including sport, as a central dimension of the soft power-cum-public diplomacy activity during their ‘occupations’. Japan throughout used sport, physical education, fitness activity and military drills as means of enculturation, control and discipline in the wider communities and especially in schools during its imperial rule of Korea and Southern China from latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the late 1930s and of the territories they occupied during World War Two. Ironically, the US as the ‘occupying force’ of Japan after the war also used sport as part of its diplomatic armoury to remediate the



social fabric of the previously tyrannical nation. Massive campaigns and sports programmes were also core to their activity in South Korea (Korea) after World War Two and during and after the hostility of the (still on-going) Korean War.

## 2.1 The US and sport in Asia

American missionaries in Asia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly those working under the mantle of the YMCA embraced the doctrine of muscular Christianity through the enculturation of the 'American' sports of basketball, volleyball and baseball in the programmes of their missions in South East and Eastern Asia during this period. Thus, American sports, were incidentally 'exported' from the USA as an element of its cultural imperialism linked to work of their missionary groups and their proselytization efforts. American sports became established in China, Japan and the Philippines, where glocalized (Robertson, 1995) forms/styles evolved, particularly volleyball in China, baseball in Japan and basketball in the Philippines. These games were enthusiastically promoted in Asia throughout the latter stages of the 'Take-off' phase of sportization and during the fourth phase of sportization (Maguire, 1999) - 1920s to the 1960s - particularly during the period of US 'occupation' in Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines following World War Two and later in Korea after the cessation of the Korean war in the 1950s.

These periods of military occupation and the attendant political, economic and social stewardship of the American forces established a platform for a wider 'Americanization' of popular culture in the region. Though, whether this adds support to the notion of American imperialism as being distinct from the dominant element of the globalization of and subsequent commercialization of sport is a question that remains unanswered. The soft power policies and public diplomacy engagements of the US in the region after World War Two and the Korean War, were very much part of the American response to the threats emanating from the Cold War. Their 'occupation' of Japan with the security pact (The US-Japan Security Treaty, 1951) and the massive aid programmes that supported the rebuilding of Japan's infrastructure, cities and identity were accompanied by a forceful promotion and diffusion of the 'American' sports of baseball, basketball, volleyball and ice hockey, which were also being promoted in other American spheres of influence globally including Europe and South America (Maguire, 1999). In 2010 the US still had a major military presence in Japan, having 85,000 troops and civilian staff accompanied by 43,000 dependents stationed in 85 bases throughout the country ("Field assumes command of U.S. Forces Japan", 2010).

Following the signing of the cease-fire in the Korean War in July 1953, the US military 'presence' on the Korean Peninsula and its sponsorship of South Korea's economic and industrial growth and the support of its drive to the democratization of its governance went on well into the 1990s (See, Woo-Cumings Meredith, 2003). This period represented a period of quasi-occupation by the Americans and they engaged in an extensive campaign of soft power diplomacy in which sport again figured significantly. Baseball, naturally, was a central element in this, even though ironically, as mentioned above, it had been originally introduced by the Japanese during their earlier occupation. The end of World War Two saw the end of Japan's rule in Korea as an imperial power with the subsequent power-vacuum being filled by the US in the guise of patron/protector of South Korea, which had been placed under America's aegis in post-World War Two peace treaty negotiations (See, Millett, 2005). The US led the Allied forces in the Korean War and remained to continue the

development and renewal of infrastructure and the extensive re-urbanization programmes begun after the end of World War Two, which had become all the more necessary following the three harrowing years of the Korean War. In the subsequent six decades the new 'occupying' cultural forces had a ready and profitable context to diffuse its 'culture' including its sporting predilections. The major purveyors of this were the US troops over the 60 years of their deployment on the Korean Peninsula. At the height of the Korean War there were over 300,000 US military in Korea (Huang Zhi-Wei, 2009), whilst in 2010 there were still 28,500 based in Korea (US Department of State, 2010).

### 3. Asia and the Olympic Games in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

At the time of the Tokyo Olympics, October 1964, Japan had already become the world's fifth largest economy following a decade of double digit growth. In 1964 Japan was inducted into the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and was recognized as a GATT Article 9 nation (Cha, 2009). They began the bid for the 1964 Olympic Games in 1957 and were awarded it in May 1959, so the economic recovery and the re-urbanization and infrastructure development programmes had not reached their peaks. Certainly Japan's march back to its status as a world power from what Reischauer and Craig (1978) call, the "dark valley" of their period of imperialist rule over Korea and the territories it occupied in China during the Second Sino-Japanese War, and for its role and conduct in World War Two was based on their single-minded industrious work ethic and the nation's all-absorbing quest to redefine itself following the war. To be once again accepted as a 'worthy' member of the international community, Japan had to be seen to have normalized. The Tokyo Olympics was the exemplar of Japan's 'normalization'. As a state which, undoubtedly, would be to the advantage of the USA, Japan, along with Korea and Taiwan, offering a buffer to Communist China and its allies. The Tokyo Olympics were the exemplar of Japan's 'normalization' and its bid and the associated re-urbanization and infrastructure development were enabled by massive support from the USA.

Thus, with the opening of the Tokyo Olympics Japan re-entered the international arena 19 years after it had surrendered in such horrendous circumstances. More importantly sport (the Olympics) gave the Japanese people an opportunity for redemption and a medium through which they were able to reframe the nation. Cha (2009), remarks that "the 1964 Games offered a way to write a new post-war narrative for Japan: Japan was no longer an aberrant actor in the international system but a peace-loving, affluent, and supportive member of the system." Despite these endeavours Japan is still regarded with a good deal of suspicion and mistrust by both Korea and China. Regarding the rebranding of Japan through the Tokyo Olympics, Tagsold (2009) suggests that despite the enthusiastic acclamation of Japan's restoration of national pride via Tokyo 1964, the effort was tainted. The Tokyo Olympic Games of 1964, he believes, was immersed in layers of political action and the "subtle politics" of revisionist conservative neo-nationalism, which was not apparent at the time. The attempts by the Japanese to cast their organization and promotion of the Tokyo Olympics as being apolitically motivated is seen by Tagsold (2009) as being problematic. In the engagement of 'subtle' politics it could be said that the US was complicit as it unquestionably served its own public diplomacy agenda during the Cold War, for, as Hunt (2006) points out, through the 1950s and 60s the US administrations avidly embraced international sporting engagement as an instrument of diplomacy. Typical of the sentiments

expressed at this time of the Cold War came from Attorney General, Robert Kennedy (1964, cited in Hunt, 2009) who maintained that:

...Part of a nation's prestige in the cold war is won in the Olympic Games, ....In this day of international stalemates nations use the scoreboard of sports as a visible measuring stick to prove their superiority over the 'soft and decadent' democratic way of life.

The Seoul Olympics also featured as a central element of the public diplomacy activity of the US during its period of stewardship over Korea in the 1980s. Against all odds and frankly political logic, in 1981 Korea won the bidding contest to host the 1988 Summer Olympic Games. Observers of this period in Korean history have reflected that it is somewhat remarkable that Seoul was actually awarded the Olympics of 1988 so soon after the Kwangju uprising (See, Savada & Shaw, 1990). In 1980 during, in what has been called "Korea's Tiananmen" (Scott-Stokes & Lee Jai Eui, 2001) thousands of demonstrators were arrested, mercilessly beaten and over 200 people, some say thousands, including innocent bystanders including young girls and female office workers were killed as a student pro-democracy rally in Kwangju, in the province of Cholla, was savagely suppressed by Korean martial army troops (Kim, 2000). The actual Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, essentially isolated China from the core of the Olympic community for 12 years until they won the bid to host the 2008 Olympics, whilst the Kwangju atrocity occurred just 15 months before Seoul was awarded the 1988 Games (Pound, 1994). Perhaps, the key for this apparent anomalous decision by the IOC and incidentally the gifting of the host-city role to Tokyo was the fact that both Japan and Korea were on each occasion "firmly under America's dominance" (Collins, 2008). The US, which at the time strode the global scene as the champion superpower of Western democracies, was also not without influence in Olympic circles.

Richard Pound, former vice president of the IOC illustrated the extent to which the US went in its support of Korea's Olympic efforts, and this support went far beyond the Olympic arena. In his discussion of the politics behind the bid for and the preparations and hosting of the Seoul Olympics he suggests that the US government demonstrated its arousal as to any potential threats to the Games by actually setting up "summit meetings between Reagan and Gorbachev" (Pound, 1994) to discuss the possible exigencies considering the catastrophic bombing of the Korean Airlines flight 858 by North Korean sponsored terrorists a year earlier (Cha, 2009). President Reagan also sanctioned the deployment of "significant elements of the Pacific fleet to the Sea of Japan immediately before and during the Games" (Pound, 1994). Pound alluded to the fact that despite the apparent contradictory support of the undemocratic regime of Chun Doo Hwan, the US government did "put enormous pressure on the South Koreans to speed up the process of democratization." He added that he believed, "...It is also fair to say that the administration was in high-level discussions with Chun Doo Hwan and his officials to press for progress in the liberalization of the existing regime."

The most renown of sporting arenas, the Summer Olympic Games, represented a very meaningful element of the US's patronage and 'support' during its post-war stewardship of Japan and Korea. The first two Summer Olympic Games to be held in Asia are oft described in terms of what the Olympic Games, Olympism and sport in general brought to the nations of Japan and Korea in their particular periods of regeneration, redefinition and remediation after traumatic epochs in their history. The associated Olympic legacies, both tangible and intangible, and the subsequent geopolitical advancements gained have been characterized as being direct consequences of the compliant, effective and efficient management of the festival itself. The honour was all theirs (Japan and Korea) so to speak, and both were seen to have emerged or re-emerged in the case of Japan, as worthy members of the global



community of nations. It is a gross understatement to say that both benefited enormously from the opportunities presented by hosting the festival; for both, hosting the Olympic Games was a significant turning point in their history. Conversely, the concomitant direction and development of both these nations changed global geopolitics and global economics irrevocably. It must be stated that as much as hosting an Olympic Games impacted upon Japan and Korea so too did the festivals of 1964 in Tokyo and Seoul in 1988 impact upon all future Olympic Games and many other mega-sports festivals. For Japan and Korea the Games represented very successful major incursions into the upper levels of elite global sport in sport's most prestigious and iconoclastic event, the Summer Olympic Games, and most significantly *both* impacted upon sport in such a way that it would change forever.

### 3.1 Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing and the Olympic discourse

The Tokyo Olympic Games set a new standard in terms of related infrastructure and urbanization spending. It was unquestionably meticulously organized and importantly it was also, up to that time in Olympic history the most profitable Olympic Games ever held (Zarnowski, 1984). Television broadcasts were beamed live around the world via satellite (the first such instance in Olympic history), and in many ways the Tokyo Olympics shifted the manner in which we reflected on the meaning of the Olympic Games. Prior to the Tokyo Olympics, the dominant discourse on the Games, was definitively that of the Western nations, which reflected Western political, economic and cultural domination globally (Close, P. *et al.*, 2007), and this included elite sport and particularly the Olympic Games. Although a part of the Olympic establishment, Japan had to re-establish itself as a credible nation in regard to the Olympic community but even more importantly it had to demonstrate it was ready, once again, to assume its position as a world leader. Their whole Olympic effort as host nation emphatically validated the rejuvenated nation and importantly, as Sandra Collins maintains, they largely achieved this by presenting their propensity to modernize whilst simultaneously foregrounding their ancient cultural traditions by embracing, at all opportune 'media moments', symbols of their "distinctive culture" (Collins, 2008) in all aspects of the Games organization. The Japanese did in fact create a whole new way of handling the raft of Olympic administrative, organizational and particularly the political machinations an Olympic Games organically precipitates and this, recognizing the geopolitical situation of Japan at that time; was a daunting task. The process, characterized by Mannheim (1990) as the "Japanese Experience", also precipitated a distinct discourse and, it is suggested, this is the most important and enduring intangible 'Olympic' legacy to emerge from the 1964 Olympics.

All aspects of the planning, preparation and the conduct of the Tokyo and as a consequence the two subsequent Asian Summer Olympic Games, Seoul in 1988 and Beijing in 2008, reflected this definitive Asian discourse, which Close *et al* (2007) maintain came from:

The Japanese experience of hosting the Games (which) was perceived in terms not just of the country's sporting agendas, aims and achievements *per se*, but also of its underlying social, political and economic (or political economy) and associated internal (or domestic) and external (or international, regional and global) agendas, aims and achievements.

For the two Asian Olympic hosts that were to follow Tokyo, the legacy of the validation of the Asian Olympic discourse bequeathed to them by the first Asian Olympic hosts provided both inspiration and a sense of justification when they faced their own Olympic challenges. For Korea the "Japanese Experience" was the ideal model upon which to base their plans for

Seoul in 1988 (Manheim, 1990). This economically-predisposed, nation and culture confirming 'Asian' Olympic discourse appears now to be the current dominant form, for now all Olympic Games are driven, not only by the host nation's sporting agendas and aspirations, but also by their underlying social, cultural, environmental, economic and political motivations.

As China advanced to its regional leadership status and, it could be argued, to its position as a 'global' 'superpower', it passed three major milestones. The first two were; China's invitation to join the WTO in 2001 and, the selection of Beijing as the host city for the 2008 Olympics. The third was the realization of the planning, preparation and management of the Beijing Olympic Games itself. At the time, the successful management of the Beijing Olympics may have been regarded as marking the close of this particular chapter China's role in world history. However, before the nation could taste the fruits of the 'victory' the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008-9 intervened, shackling global economic growth and virtually bringing the developed world to its knees. Immediately a fourth epoch-marking milestone in China's history dramatically evolved. The confluence of the staging of the Beijing Olympics and the GFC acted to accelerate China's ascendance to global leadership. Indeed, as Timothy Garton Ash (2009) observed, the catastrophic global economic crisis had actually been "the catalyst" for China's real emergence as a world power. The nation's leaders and the people palpably assumed a level of confidence, fuelled by the nation's economic and political global leadership role during the crisis coupled to the global acclaim of the Beijing Olympics and, not least of all, the outstanding performances of their athletes. Both the acceptance and the granting of this acclaim, if supported by increasing levels of tolerance and a willingness to come to terms with the cultural differences that reside either side of the "fault lines between civilizations" that Huntington (1996) suggested would be the sites of future global political clashes, it may well prove to be the most important intangible legacy that emerged from the Beijing Olympics. It unquestionably facilitated the concretion of China's global integration and its assumption of a position as a world leader in this, the Asian century.

The question as to what extent China's hosting of the Beijing Olympic Games, which was undoubtedly a highly successful manifestation of its soft power diplomacy, has impacted upon its visceral sense and desire for further liberalization and political change remains unanswered. Leading up to and during the Games, as Cha contends, China was faced by "tremendous internal and external pressure" (Cha, 2009) from many groups trying to effect change in Chinese human rights policies, both domestically and with their international engagement in the Sudan and Burma. He maintains that despite a deafening level of protests and campaigns for the governments and athletes from various countries to boycott the Beijing Games, the Chinese were able to disperse the heat of the various protests by using "calibrated changes in policy" to facilitate the conduct of a "successful" Olympic Games. However, the policy changes and the micro-shifts in the human rights policies that were instituted ahead of the Beijing Olympics did, as Cha (2009) points out, "constitute change." Undoubtedly, just as the efforts to sanitize the air and water surrounding Beijing for the duration the Games (holding the 'Green Olympics' being one of China's primary stated ambitions) were patently overt and, amazingly expensive, public-relations exercises, they have actually spawned an apparent shift in environmental policies in China. In the 2011 Five Year Plan, China will be adding greenhouse gas emission goals to its domestic policies (World Resource Industries, 2009). The rhetoric surrounding the legacy to be left following the Beijing Olympics after aspiring to conduct the 'Green Olympics' would, it

seems, have been, if not a definitive catalyst, certainly part of the thrust responsible for the laying-down of a realistic future environmental sustainability policy by China's national government.

However, from the dialogues surrounding the Beijing Olympic Games one wonders to what extent a national conscience has been stirred by more recent dysfunctional manifestations of polity and ideology identified in the management of human rights. China has still to reconcile some embedded issues, such as the annexation of Tibet, the treatment of Muslims in Xinjiang, their relations with Taiwan and, the inordinate economic divide between rural and urban Chinese (Kurlantzick, 2008). All have been portrayed as 'stumbling blocks' preventing an unimpeded advance to a world leadership position. Even in direct association with the Beijing Games, the mismanagement of the Olympic Flame Relay, the early tensions with the international media and the somewhat churlish security attitude in and around Olympic venues all gave traction to the critics' concerns as to China's sincerity in its espoused aspirations, which were heralded so loudly in their Olympic manifesto of "One World, One Dream" (See, BOCOG, 2008). This was a declaration that looked to the Beijing Olympics to achieve global harmony and, of course, their own central role in this process.

It cannot be said that China opened its doors entirely in 2008. Though perhaps as a consequence of the Beijing Olympics, and undoubtedly with the nation's positive (and admittedly very profitable) actions during the GFC of 2008-9, the people have opened their minds (and possibly their hearts) to the rest of the international community. A major and undeniably far more complex task for China will be to reconcile its own domestic human rights issues, including the massive dichotomy between urban and rural communities and the growing numbers of urban-poor, which Kurlantzick (2008) has so emphatically illustrated by pointing out that, "according to the World Bank, over 200 million Chinese earn less than US\$1.25 per day, a near-African wage, and today China's Gini coefficient, the standard measure of inequality, is far higher than that of India."

Using the Summer Olympics Games as a measure by which to judge, only the East Asian nations of Japan and Korea were, prior to the rise of China on its way to Olympic supremacy, could be considered to be called 'all-round' sporting nations with an entrenched sports culture and one that seeks and achieves international sporting success. Not unexpectedly Japan (Tokyo) and Korea (Seoul) achieved their greatest Olympic successes when they hosted the Games. In Tokyo Japan, winning 16 Gold medals, came 3<sup>rd</sup>, Korea in Seoul came 4<sup>th</sup> with 12 Golds and the pinnacle of 'Asian' Olympic achievement was unquestionably China's performance at the Beijing Olympics in 2008. China's performance as host nation was outstanding and as a public relations exercise it was, as veteran journalist Kent Ninomoya (2008) commented the:

...net result is a public relations victory for China that will likely contribute to their already booming economic prosperity. The last impression billions of people around the world have about China is one of awe. Whether the perception matches the reality of China is irrelevant. Image is about perception and China won that battle.

The three Asian Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo, Seoul and Beijing and the two Winter Olympics, both held in Japan (Sapporo - 1972 and Nagano - 1998) all accelerated sport's development in Asia. In the 1990's and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the growing prosperity and the further penetration of elite sport by commercial and media interests had a symbiotic relation that saw both rapidly gain popularity and wealth. China's drive for global sporting success was epitomized by its quest for Olympic supremacy, which they

resoundingly achieved in such a startling manner in 2008. The Beijing Games has been likened to an epoch marking moment in the history of sport. China's invitation to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 marked its emergence as a global economic powerhouse, whilst gaining the hosting rights for 2008 Olympics is widely viewed as ranking, in terms of geopolitical significance, with China's admission to the WTO. (Fan Hong *et al*, 2005 & Xu Xin, 2006)

#### 4. The acceleration of the sportization process

The emerging geopolitical importance of the Asia Pacific region and the predicted shift of the centre of gravity of global geopolitical power, which are being largely driven inexorably by the Asian 'super-economies' of China, Japan and India, all of which ranked in the top four of the world's leading national GDPs (by purchasing-power-parity, PPP), even though the US remains number one (International Monetary Fund, 2010). However, as predicted in the Goldman Sachs Global Economic Report (2010), by 2030 China will be the world's leading economy in terms of both GDP and Equity Market Capitalization. The notion of the emergence of the Asia Pacific as a growing economic, strategic and political power of the nations was muted by Henry Kissinger in 2004. However, he pointed to the shift in the centre of gravity of global politics from the Atlantic to the Pacific with the theatre of influence revolving around Russia, India, China and Japan (Kissinger, 2004). Unlike Dobbs-Higginson, who delimited the Asia Pacific region in terms of the Western Pacific rim plus South Asia (Dobbs-Higginson, 1993), it is suggested that the US should be firmly situated at the eastern extremity of the Asia Pacific as a significant future global geopolitical stability will be defined by the dynamics that will emerge from the region. Thus, as the second globalization advances in the 'Asia Pacific' century China, as an emergent superpower, now assumes the centre-ground of the region, with the US in the (new) 'far east' and India along with the Arab states in the 'near west' the region will assert an increasing influence upon global political, economic, military and cultural dynamics.

Sport exemplifies the changing cultural dynamics that are emerging globally and it could be suggested that the most profound changes to sport during the fifth phase of sportization and beyond are derived from the intersection of sport, the media and the global cultural flows, in what Maguire (1999) refers to as the "Global Media-Sport Complex." Sports, the dominant globalized western forms of course, have long been seductive localized pastimes and spectator activities but once micro-technology and satellite television broadcasting developed and sporting broadcasts could be simultaneously thrust into homes, cafes and bars world-wide, they immediately became, along with news broadcasts, the most valuable of all media commodities.

Media sports, with their potential to attract vast audiences world-wide, axiomatically have the power to sell both related merchandise and most importantly advertising time and space. The global flow of mass-media, or the "mediascape" as described by Arjun Appadurai (1990), is not only the indexing medium of the capability of the electronic and print media to produce and disseminate "the images of the world created by these media" it is also the one of Appadurai's five 'scapes', that conveys the images that carry the concepts, beliefs, and values – the ideologies – and, is thus a central conduit for the "ideoscapes" that come, as Appadurai (1996) says, in the "form of chains, terms and images." The intersection and interconnection of these, along with the movement of capital (financescapes), the collision with technologies (technoscapes) and the migration of people (ethnoscapes) in a



series of unpredictable and unplanned movements, is what creates the disjunctures that characterize the dynamics of globalization as described by Appadurai (1990). Despite the unpredictability of the resultant global flows, well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century there existed a “unidirectional” tidal flow to globalization and as Maguire (1999) says the developments tended to move “from the West to the ‘rest’.” As Maguire points out, this added oxygen to the argument that the emanant cultural changes were seen to be having a homogenizing effect. Global culture, including sport, was seen to be ‘Westernizing’ largely under the influence of American popular culture. However, although globalization had the effect of raising the consciousness of the world as being a ‘single place’, there was simultaneously a glocalization process going on (Robertson, 2002) with an ever increasing number varieties of cultural products, including particular sports being formed in response to the demands of the local context. Even the most ‘global’ and comparatively simple of games, football, varies in terms of how it is played, its shape and the nature of the ‘place’ the game occupies culturally, socially, economically and even in terms of gender, class and race in the particular community. As sports were ‘imposed’ or adopted as a result of the effect of the global media-sport complex, they assumed characteristics that made them culturally relative to their ‘local’ context whilst retaining their universal characteristics; hence they emerged as glocalized forms.

## 5. Asian commodities, the Asian market and Asian money

As global geopolitical, economic and industrial powers shift so too does the market potential of the regions. Asia and its market, which potentially embraces over 60% of the world’s population, including a rapidly increasing number with accessible discretionary income and a passion for sport, has become the major focus of the global sports industry. It would be timely to once again reflect upon what is actually implied when using the descriptor ‘Asian’ in reference to sport. In 2010, 45 nations took part in the Asian Games in Guangzhou, these nations came from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea (Lebanon) to those lying in the western reaches of the Pacific Ocean (Japan) and with Indonesia in the South and Mongolia in the North. Including Russia and Turkey, who are not categorized as ‘Asian’ nations, the population of ‘Asia’ is over 4 billion and represents approximately 66% of the World’s population, of which 2.5 billion (approx.) reside in China and India. (CIA, World Fact Book, 2011)

Global sport is still, in the main, under the ‘control’ of Western-led international sports federations, administrators and corporate interests, however, the tide of the flow of the control of global sport is turning with the prime example being the shift in the power-base of world cricket, with the International Cricket Council moving out of Lord’s Ground in London to Dubai in the UAE. As more Asian economies develop, matching the efforts of the four ‘Tiger’ economies of Asia (Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea) and those of the resource-rich Middle East nations, sport will become a more accessible and affordable commodity and with this further shifts in the control of global sport will follow. The impact of the three engines of the sports industry of Asian: the commodities; the market, and the money is so profound that they have become irresistible to the producers of the sporting contests, the international sports federations, and the purveyors of the events, the global multi-media outlets; the following discussion of this sport-media complex will demonstrate how the impact of this interaction has the potential to effect the Asianization of global sport.

### 5.1 Asian athletes and events: units of production

All athletes who train and compete in a sporting contest, whether amateur or professional, are producing and reproducing themselves in order to be part of the production of a contest, be it a game or an individual performance-event such as, a swimming race. A key, internal dialectical production/consumption aspect of competitive sport is that in the completion of this productive activity, they also consume themselves through: energy consumption; extending the corporeal limits of the body; fluid loss, and sometimes through bruising and injury. This aspect is central to sport and the production of a competitive event, be it a one-off match or a two week long Olympic Games, which in themselves all become commodities which, at the elite level have tremendous commercial possibilities in the market-place. The growing preoccupation with media-sports throughout Asia thus opens up not only a market for sports products but also spaces for Asian athletes to profit from their efforts and the commodities they produce.

In this the third of Mangan's three phases of globalization: imperialism, nationalism and consumerism (Mangan, 2002), the global consumer market is demanding more and more sport and, more and more in terms of sating performances from the athletes as units of production. As the Asian market grows it ferociously consumes the television broadcasts of the top flight of media sports, whether from American Major League Baseball or National Basketball Association games, English Premier League football and, particularly on the sub-continent, limited-overs cricket. With the growth of such opportunities in the global market, sport has become a viable career-choice for young athletes, and in Asia, increasing numbers of talented young people are turning to sport as a career.

Ironically, in the People's Republic of China the Soviet-styled sports universities set up in the 1950s, as 'athlete factories' along with the many thousands (over 3000) of government-run sports' schools for students from Kindergarten to year 12 (Hays, 2008) are now geared to producing athletes for the professional sports' industry as well as state-athletes in the traditional Soviet manner. Thus, it can be seen, that under the influence of globalizing forces in this age of global consumerism the two domains of elite sport in China have now converged. An explicit example of what amounts to an exposition of the two systems of China's polity in action was the show-casing of Li Ning at the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games: state athlete at the age of 8, he became the world's leading male gymnast in the 1980s, being labelled the 'prince of gymnasts' after winning 6 of the 7 available individual Gold medals at the World Championships in 1982. In 1990 he founded his sports clothing and footwear company, which was the first Chinese-owned sports goods brand, which now commands over 10% of the domestic market: Li Ning's entrepreneurial activity and the exploitation of his status as a national hero has thus, in true neo-liberal style, made him a multi-millionaire (Mulvenney, 2008).

Governments, by definition, also engage in massive political and economic involvement with elite professional sport, as has been previously illustrated above, with the level of public spending involved with hosting an Olympic Games. Our gaze of the hosting of mega-sports festivals has largely been set at the themes of nationalism and the furtherance of the ideals of Olympism and, despite the current dominance of the Asian discourse on the Olympics, with its heavy emphasis upon underlying social, economic and geo-political aspirations of the hosting city (nation) and the preoccupation with the production of meaningful legacies, including those concerned with profitability and economic efficiency and effectiveness, they have not been heavily geared towards the commercial or the

'business' dimensions. The acquisition of the hosting rights of mega-sports festivals, such as, the Football World Cup, the Rugby World Cup, the Cricket World Cup and all manner of tennis, golf and significantly motor-racing events has now primarily assumed 'commercial' motives as well as the wider politico-economic aspirations. A feature of Asia's growing sporting profile over the past two decades has been a trend towards the profiling of certain Asian cities as dedicated sport event venues, destinations that are exotic tourist destinations in the first instance and sporting event hosts in the second.

In November 2010 Singapore was voted the 'world's best sports city' at the International Sports Event Management (ISEM) Awards annual conference (6<sup>th</sup> International Sport Event Management Conference, 2011). But, what has this to do with their athletic potential as a nation? The event was organized by a private company the Informa Sport Group (ISG), thus it is very much a self-serving event and the attendees are interested in 'event management' including such conferences rather than 'sport' *per se*. Singapore is not known as a 'sporting' nation in terms of elite success on the world stage and, upon receiving the award the Singapore Sports Council's (SSC) director of sports business, David Voth affirmed this, in his response illustrated the way in which the government sees sport in Singapore, he said, "...Our strategy is simple – to position Singapore as the premier venue for international sports events...Winning this award is a firm validation of our strategy and efforts in leveraging on the resulting business opportunities" (Tay, 2010). At the ceremony, sporting success for Singapore in 2010 was characterized by the CEO of the SSC, Said Oon Jin Teik, with a list of the major events the nation hosted that year: the inaugural Youth Olympic Games; the Formula 1 SingTel Singapore Grand Prix and the Standard Chartered Bank Marathon. A core criteria upon which Singapore was judged to be the 'world's best sports city' was, not surprisingly, "the level of support and commitment made by a municipality in terms of funding and resource, legislation and planning as well as marketing and promotion" (Tay, 2010). Athletic excellence, sports participation and the notion of the 'contest' are all obfuscated by the commercial jargon as the description of the significance of the awards, as Tay (2010) suggests, indicates that:

An ISEM Award brings with it the status of global recognition as a current market leader, placing the winning company or individual firmly in the international sports event industry through extensive media coverage and professional recognition from industry peers and colleagues.

As concerning as this is, this is now the world of elite sport, it is the world of mediasport and mega-events and Asian 'hosts' are eagerly accruing a grand portfolio of prime international mega-events that purvey this notion of sport.

## 5.2 The Asian market: Ready and waiting

From the earliest phases of the sportization process to the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century professional sport (Western hegemonic sport that is, Sumo wrestling has been professional sport since the 14<sup>th</sup> century [Khoo Choy Lee, 1995]) had been dominated "politically, economically, technologically (and) culturally... by the West" (Rowe, 2008). As we approached the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the previously established Western media-sports markets lost their potency and became, as Rowe and Gilmour (2010) suggested, "saturated". At this time the world's sporting gaze was firmly fixed on Beijing and China's preparation for the 2008 Olympic Games. Yet, as the Beijing Games opened an uninvited 'guest' arrived on the scene; the GFC of 2008-9. Despite the looming collapse of

world's financial markets the Games continued, as is their want, China's athletes were supreme and the Beijing Olympic Games received global, albeit politely reserved, acclaim with matters of human rights and governance in China still remaining vexatious. However, needs must and the 'stumbling blocks' were obfuscated, subsumed by the horrors of the GFC. The initial salvos of the GFC were met in the main by the fiscal stimulation and the strength of China's massive capital reserves and their manipulation of their large exposure to US debt. Whilst for resource producing nations, particularly Australia, the on-going insatiable demands of China's manufacturing industry proved to be a saviour.

India's economic development and increasing levels of personal wealth and related levels of disposable income are still very unevenly distributed across its massive population. High levels of consumerism are being seen in expected sectors of the community; the urban upper middle classes, in particular the under-25 year olds, who are avidly seeking a more cosmopolitan lifestyle. Major sports organizations that sell their product globally, such as, the EPL, the NBA and the US National Hockey League (ice hockey) are frustrated that they cannot develop any meaningful footholds in the Indian domestic television network. Even though ESPN Star successfully covered the FIFA World Cup in 2010 they have shied away from purchasing the rights to televise the EPL or UEFA Champions League ("2011 will be a challenging year for Indian sports Channel", 2011).

In a market research report of India's sport retailing industry, Mukharjee *et al* state that only 1% of the Indian population are actively engaged in sport (Mukharjee *et al*, 2010), and it is most disconcerting to deduce from Mukharjee *et al*'s analysis that of the 770 million people below the age of 35 years in India only 50 million have access to organized games and sports facilities. This pales to insignificance when compared to the 480 million from the same age group in China. Perhaps the most disturbing of Mukharjee *et al*'s data are those that expose the parlous state of school sport in India, it is indicated that only 50% of Indian schools have sporting facilities and only 30 million of the 220 million school children and college students have access to physical education, sport and games in their curriculums (Mukharjee *et al*, 2010). Physical education and school sport in China are much more entrenched with most school and college students receiving daily physical activity programmes, though on-going adherence is problematic as is the case in developed nations.

Mukharjee *et al* (2010) rationalize this low figure by reflecting upon the Italian population (the Italian Trade Commission being joint sponsors of the research project) saying that 1% of the Indian population would equate to 30% of the Italian, which is a spurious comment, if the position was reverse and we were looking at the Italian population and had recorded that only 1% were engaged in regular physical activity it would precipitate a national inquiry. They have effectively othered themselves by reaffirming the stereotypical view of developing nations. The authors of the report should themselves have met this finding with outrage rather than with the platitudinous response they made. However, in terms of the current argument the only way to go from 1% is up and the point they should have made is that if the level of participation can rise even by 1% it would have a massive impact upon the overall sports economy of the nation. This would also have further stimulated the sports industry through the growth of discretionary spending in the upper and middle sectors of the population. Despite the fact that of all the Emerging Market Economies (EMEs) India's discretionary spending in 2010 was projected to be the lowest per capita spending amongst all EMEs at US\$690 (Euromonitor International, 2020). Ironically, the impact of these gargantuan markets is significant despite the fact that



although China, along with India, are amongst the lowest per capita spending nations amongst the EMEs, yet in 2010 China simultaneously had the largest volume of consumer spending of all EMEs, accounting for 23.2% of the total spending in the major 25 EMEs. India, with the worst per capita spending, was placed 3<sup>rd</sup>. Asia thus, occupies both ends of the spectrum of spending on consumer goods and services amongst the EMEs, as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) continued its position as having the highest per capita consumer expenditure of the EMEs at US\$22,728.

China's reported level of physical leisure activity in 2005 was 24.5% of the population of adults between 35 -74 years (Muntner *et al.*, 2005), however, this figure was drawn from the combination of rural and urban figures with the urban component being only 7.9% and the rural 28.5%. However, it is suggested that post-Beijing Olympic Games and with 5 subsequent years of urban drift in China these figures may well now be very different. By comparison 31% of US adults reported that they engage in regular leisure-time physical activity but disconcertingly approximately 40% of adults reported no leisure-time physical activity at all (National Center for Health Statistics, *Chartbook on Trends in the Health of Americans*, 2008). Evidently, in the US market there must be a quite small number, comparatively speaking, that have far more disposable income which they choose to delegate to sport, leisure, fitness and recreation in general, including, of course, incidental spending on the many direct linkages to other markets such as, travel, accommodation and the 'essentials' - electrical appliances (televisions) and cable fees.

As countries such as India, China and all other 'developing' nations in Asia advance, they will organically increase spending on sport: sectors of the population will gain more purchasing power; luxury items (as sport is viewed in many, if not most, developing nations) will become less exclusive to the wealthy and more widely accessible and governments, as their nations develop, will also be able to invest more in sport being less pre-occupied with the establishment of basic infrastructures such as, transport systems, roads, water and sanitation, health programmes and education systems. Perhaps this is most graphically illustrated in the case of the city-nation of Singapore. India will soon have much more than 1% actively engaged in sport and physical activity and active recreation particularly as the trend is already apparent that there is an increase in the percentage of affluent and educated middle-class young Indians with disposable incomes and ever-increasing levels of IT and media access. Soon India's 1% will be swamped. Though the figures for active engagement in physical activity in the urban areas of China are very low at 7.9% these too will soon blow-out, for with life in the cities of China, particularly for the post-university age generation of young professionals, consumption, in all senses of the word, will increase as will the people's expectations and aspirations.

It has been estimated that China's sport's industry has a market potential of RMB2 trillion or approximately US\$303 billion (China Market Research Reports, 2010). Surprisingly, this still lags behind the US sports industry which in 2010 was estimated to be worth US\$414 Billion ("Sport Industry Overview", 2010). Prior to the Beijing Olympics the sports product market of the US (equipment, apparel, footwear and accessories) represented one-third of the global industry whilst Asia even with the gigantic populations of India, China and Indonesia, plus the highly buoyant sports markets of Japan and South Korea only commanded 25% of the global market. The disproportionate weighting can be rationalized simplistically by invoking the argument of developed against developing nations, however, it is perhaps

more pertinent to consider the levels of participation in active leisure and sport against the sport industry activity of the nations involved.

The potential market for sports apparel, equipment and shoes in China and India is massive but for the most important stakeholders, the international media companies that deliver the product that links all aspects of the sports industry to the consumers the key for success will be a more comprehensive share of and access to the vast and immensely lucrative television audiences in India and China. Considering the potential size of the Asian sports media market, audiences there are really untapped and certainly nowhere near 'saturated'! The extent of India's sport spectatorship potential is indicated by the level of support for the Indian Premiership (cricket) League, which offers the 'Bollywood' form of Twenty/20 cricket. This competition is played by teams owned by franchisees and made up of top-class players from around the world that have been 'bought' by the franchises at auctions, reminiscent of thoroughbred horse sales. This highly TV-friendly truncated form of cricket is played at a frenetic pace over a mere three hours and is accompanied by live music between overs and incessant pyrotechnic displays after 'maximums' (sixes) are scored. It is not, however, just the new upwardly-mobile and increasingly affluent 20-30 year olds that are courted by this shortened form, for the game globally is very much the domain of working-class supporters and this is nowhere more so than on the sub-continent. Significantly, it attracts a sizeable female audience even in the more patriarchal societies of southern Asia.

China's potentially massive television audiences continue to be difficult for all the major football leagues of Europe to penetrate meaningfully. There has been an on-off relationship between the EPL and China's state controlled and private pay-TV outlets for the past two decades. The EPL sold the broadcasting rights to the pay-TV company Win TV (China) group but poor management, high fees and limited rural coverage resulted in them becoming bankrupt. China Central TV (CCTV) the national television provider has just a single sports channel CCTV-5 and carries some coverage of matches from various other European leagues such as, the German *Bundesliga*, and the *La Liga* from Spain. Various cable networks do carry sport from overseas, but audiences are surprisingly modest compared with the population. CCTV 5 is the state-run all-sport channel and it covers all major domestic and international sporting events, such as the Olympic Games and the Football World Cup. It has been estimated that it carries 80% of all sport advertising on Chinese television and not surprisingly has the biggest viewing audiences, which prior to the Beijing Olympics was estimated to have been 100 million people per day (Jennings, R., 2006). It is presumed that this level has increased and would obviously have peaked for the Olympics. The biggest single day's audience for the Beijing Olympics (August, 2008) was 675 million, whilst the total audience for the whole period of the Games was 1.102 billion people or 80% of the country's entire mainland population (BOCOG, website, 2008). Such figures, even though they do represent, what must be viewed as a 'one-off' market response, do little to assuage the sense of frustration the major global media sports providers, such as the EPL feel, as they struggle to get a firm purchase on the Chinese markets.

### 5.3 Asian money, Asian hegemony?

The growing presence and potential of Asian athletes when mobilized has long been apparent in niche sports, such as table tennis, badminton and martial arts, though trends

are beginning to emerge showing that Asian athletes are beginning to more consistently dominate traditional hegemonic sports such as, golf and cricket. In the ultimate arena of elite sporting endeavour, the summer Olympic Games, the three Asian hosts have not only, as previously mentioned, morphed the manner and scope of the preparation, organization and conduct of the festival and reconceptualised the discourse on the Games, their athletes and coaches performed magnificently. In this analysis discussion of China's market and investment potential it must always be remembered that China is still considered as a developing nation and economy, yet very importantly it is also currently the world's second largest economy and, as has been predicted for nearly a decade, it will soon be the largest (Goldman Sachs, 2003).

Over the past decade the growing penetration of global sport by Asian capital has become increasingly apparent. The direct investment in major sports clubs and in the quite literal sense, the 'purchasing' of major sports events in order to host them, which axiomatically provides the hosts with massive roll-on commercial opportunities from linked activities associated with inbound tourism opportunities. The economic development of cities such as, Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Dubai and Doha has allowed their governments (and rulers) to provide financial and political support to such projects by building the required sporting facilities, be they: race tracks for Formula 1 or horse racing; golf courses; football stadiums; indoor tennis stadiums; athletics tracks, and even cricket pitches along with necessary infrastructure for their hosting aspirations.

The hosting of major sports festivals such as, Olympic Games and the Football World Cup have historically been the preserve of nations with elite and long-standing heritages in the particular sport or movement (for example, Olympism and that of the Commonwealth or Asian Games). Though, the selection of the host city (nation?) for an Olympic Games is often, if not always, veiled in political intrigues. Recently a major shift in philosophy was apparent with the selection of Qatar as host for the 2022 World Cup. Qatar is ranked 90<sup>th</sup> in the FIFA world rankings list and 10<sup>th</sup> in the Asian rankings (FIFA, 2011) and with a population of 1.45 million and a modest land mass questions were obviously asked as to why they were awarded the 2022 World Cup. Conjecture will not be made here as to the possibility of any intrigue, however, football critics globally are still waging campaigns vilifying the decision, its motivation and the decision makers (Jennings, A., 2011). The shift in philosophy, as suggested above, is to do with both the desire and willingness on the part of the Qatari rulers to support the bid 'enthusiastically' using their not insignificant wealth and (still) absolute power to acquire both a market position and a high-status position in the hierarchy of world football. Recent economic data serves to illustrate the basis for the decision made by FIFA: Qatar's predicted percentage GDP growth for 2011 is 18.6%; its per capita GDP for 2010 was US\$74,473 compared to the figure for the US was US\$47, 312 (*Global Financial Magazine*, 2011).

It goes without saying that the 'world game' has massive appeal throughout Asia and, as has been noted above, is a central feature of the potential the Asian market offers the global sports industry, it is also a very attractive 'target' for Asian investors at all levels; individual entrepreneurs and national government investment bodies from major Asian economies have in recent years made or have attempted to make ownership bids of some of the most prestigious football clubs in the world. In 2008 an Indian consortium, headed by poultry and poultry products producers, Venkateshwara Hatcheries Pvt. Ltd. or as they know globally 'Venky's', took over EPL club Blackburn Rovers, who were facing bankruptcy, for £23

million, in what must be viewed as a modest sum, for Blackburn Rovers that was established in 1875 and was a foundation member of the English Football League in 1888 has a tremendous tradition and following. Venky's, who are no doubt supporters of the game, view this move in clinical financial terms and unlike other acquisitions of football clubs is not driven by masculine sublimation. The company is run by Anuradha Desai, who succeeded her father BV Rao as chairperson and, from her initial comments, she appears to be parsimonious and committed to making the take-over profitable, though she admits, she does not expect miracles. Desai responded to questions regarding the purchase of new high-profile players, using a rather 'un-football' like expression saying that, the new administration does "not need to buy expensive players, we can always lease them." (*The Economic Times -Times of India*, 2010)

Other Asian business-houses and individuals have made incursions into, what is one of the most popular sporting competitions in the world and certainly one of the world's biggest earning football league. The ex-Prime Minister of Thailand Thaksin Sinawatra, who owned Manchester City for two years before selling it to the a member of the ruling family of the United Arab Emirates, Sheik Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Sheik Mansoor has since spent many millions of pounds in an attempt to unseat Manchester rivals, Manchester United, from the throne as the EPL's leading club. In 2009 Hong Kong businessman Yeung Ka Sing (Carsen Yeung as he is known in Europe) took over Birmingham City Football Club through the parent company of his various businesses, Birmingham International Holdings. Yeung, who previously owned a football club in Hong Kong, said he would like to break into the massive Chinese football market by signing "the best Chinese talent he can find" (Harris, 2010). Yeung's ambition to take China's best players to Birmingham City would definitely serve to promote Chinese football talent but, and perhaps more importantly in business terms, it would attract a host of Chinese supporters to Birmingham's cause and incidentally to the advertising of the ambush-marketing related to match-broadcasts, if and when their matches are ever broadcast in China.

Yeung's gambling interests are almost certainly driving his motivation for trying to break into the Chinese market. Gambling is a fundamental aspect of Chinese culture and sport provides it with a perfect medium and Yeung, described as an "obscure casino millionaire" (Chen, 2007), gained most of his wealth from shrewd investments in the stock market in Hong Kong and Macau, where he is part-owner of a chain of casinos. An indication of Carsen Yeung's cross-business interests and perhaps his motivation can be gleaned from an analysis of the major advertisements displayed on the computer generated pitch-side advertising hoardings during Birmingham City's home fixtures. For example, throughout Birmingham City's home match against city rivals West Bromwich Albion played on the 5th March, 2011, and broadcast live around the world, there were fifteen major advertisements that appeared in rotation throughout the match, seven of which were advertising gambling outlets while three others were for finance houses, including two banks and Yeung's own investment business.

In 2009 there was a series of, as of yet, unsubstantiated reports, in the British press suggesting that a Chinese consortium had made some initial moves to take over Manchester United. The club is arguably the highest profiled EPL club and the third biggest-earning football club in world football: In the 2009-10 season it earned €350 million (Deloitte, 2011). In December, 2009 it was reported that a "group of Far East billionaires" was engineering a takeover bid for Manchester United, "masterminded out of Beijing" (Ashton, 2009). However, no further reports have surface regarding this bid by



the Chinese, though in 2010 it was reported that the China Investment Corporation (CIC) China's overseas investment corporation, was brokering a deal to support Chinese sport tycoon Kenny Huang's £300-350 million bid to buy Liverpool City FC (Power & Evans, 2010). Though, again no response came from the club's owner. However, it would be no surprise that if in the future the Chinese, with the support of the CIC, were to make a successful bid for an EPL club.

An investment in such a high profile 'business' as an EPL club, particularly one that is as successful and profitable as Manchester United would represent not only 'good business' for CIC, it would undoubtedly be a significant diplomatic coup for Chinese government. Manchester United has also been the target of the enormous wealth of the Qatari royal family who are looking at purchasing the English club in order to set up a direct confrontation with arch-rival, Sheik Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates' ruling family, who now owns Manchester City (Green, 2011). The frequency and size of such offers from the extremities, ideologically and geographically speaking, of the Asian money 'market' are indicative of the potential impact Asian 'money' will have on the world-game and consequently upon the future global sports industry *per se*. The sport-related political power the Arab states hold was further demonstrated when on the 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2011 Mohamed Bin Hammam, the President of the Asia Football Federation announced his decision to run for the FIFA presidency at the annual congress in meeting of FIFA in Zurich on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2011. When he announced his bid he indicated that he wanted to challenge the current president, Sepp Blatter with the aim of bringing "transparency" to the leadership of FIFA (Scott, 2011). Leaving his reasons and their validity aside, his proposed announcement is indicative of an emerging shift of the locus of the hub of the power-base of world football, which mirrors the well-publicised move of the executive hub of cricket from its spiritual home, Lord's Ground in London to Dubai in the heart of the Middle East.

The move of cricket's headquarters to Dubai is another graphic illustration of the raw impact of the weight of Asian (mainly Indian) money in global sport. Taking the control of world cricket out of the hands and the home of its custodians the English Test cricket authorities along with the Marylebone Cricket Club and establishing its new base in Dubai was achieved without a whimper of protest. The move was both economically savvy and, in terms, of the new realpolitik of world cricket, was very pragmatic. As Raja (2005) noted the shift was, "a move reflecting the game's changing financial epicenter and one that is aimed at taking advantage of the tax-free status of the emirate." In moving to Dubai the ICC was able to save millions in tax, for being based in the UK meant it had to pay 30% of its revenue in tax. The geographical aspect of the relocation to Dubai also had economic implications as it embraced an implicit redirection of interest and emphasis, with 70c of every dollar made in world cricket being made in/from India (Linnell, 2008). Thus, the ICC's gaze is now very much towards the east from Dubai to the sub-continent.

The epitome of this change in attitude, if not the game's values, is the emergence of the IPL, and not just its Bollywood choreography, but the fundamental premiss upon which the annual league contests are based: These are 'performances' which could be categorized as 'sport-a-tainment'. Television rights are sold world-wide with the Sony/World Sport Group (Singapore) paying US\$1.89 billion for a 10 year contract to broadcast to the domestic Indian audience (*Cricinfo*, 2008). In 2008 India's biggest property developer the DLF Group paid US\$50 million for a three year deal to be the championship's title sponsor (Singh, 2009). In 2010 the IPL's overall value was estimated to be US\$4 billion (Gill, 2010). As the IPL is aligned with the Board of Cricket Control of India (BCCI) it will contribute at least US\$1.5

billion over the next 5 to 10 competitions to the BCCI's coffers. Not surprisingly the IPL concept and its underlying motivation are avidly supported by the ICC. The BCCI, which as has been noted above, controls 70% of all cricket income globally is a major force on the Executive Board of the ICC and, with the Chief Executive Officer, Haroon Lariat a South African of Indian heritage and the president Shavard Pataw, an ex-Minister of Defence from India, it also has considerable senior executive 'clout.' The ICC Executive Board has ten members and with four coming from the sub-continent (ICC, 2011) the region is also micro-politically very powerful. As Garry Linnell (2008) most adroitly remarked, when closing his reflection upon this shift in power in world cricket:

"...World cricket has a new master. And its new servants had better get used to it."

## 6. Epilogue

It is apparent that Western or Anglo-American sport, in all its guises and with a variety of underpinning motivations was a significant element of the cultural diffusion of imperialism through the actions and intentions of colonizers and missionaries. Indeed, it has been stated that sport and particularly the Olympic Games acted as a major accelerant in, what Robertson (1992) termed, the 'take-off' phase of globalization (1870 -1920). And a century before, from the middle of the eighteenth century sport and sporting leisure had been cast wide by British imperialism. In the colonies and territories of the British Empire the traditional English games were inculcated and taken-up and played to varying degrees by the local people. Cricket spread more widely than Rugby football and Association football on the sub-continent and whilst Rugby took root in parts of Australia, an invented Australian form dominated in the southern and western colonies (now states). Games, such as cricket, baseball and football, although played under the same rules globally, developed idiosyncratically or were creolized because of climate, ground conditions and social, cultural and ethnic configuration of those playing the game (Hannerz, 1992).

It has been demonstrated that now in the 'advanced' phases of the global sportization process the sport industry of Asia is now regarded as an emerging superpower: the impact of the three economic 'engines' of the Asian sports industry have rapidly accelerated the development of sport in Asia to such an extent that Asia is beginning to wrest the leadership, certainly on economic terms from the Euro-American hub, and it is evident that hegemonic sports are now assuming a far more cosmopolitan character and are even being reshaped by Asian influences. This emerging trend mirrors the already established shift of the locus of the centre of gravity of global geopolitical and economic power in general. This may well be a tangible reflection of the advent of 'advanced' sportization with the process continuing in sport's second globalization with Asianization becoming a major cultural element vying with the previously dominant cultural traditions of Westernization and Americanization. Though the Asianization of Western culture was always a reciprocal feature of imperial expansion and exploration, the process of the Asianization of Western popular culture accelerated after World War Two. Ironically, the growing wealth of Asian nations, particularly Japan, precipitated an increase in the process of Asianization of popular culture to "suit Asian tastes" (Befu, 2003) whilst at the same time retaining its Euro-American essence. Befu (2003) noted that this may well stem from the "common implicit yearning of Asians for Western culture." This definitively applies definitively to the growing engagement of the Asian market with sport, though now, as has been illustrated in this analysis, the geopolitical characteristics of the major stakeholders are changing. In this

chapter it was proposed that there is an emerging Asian hegemony in global sport, which is a corollary of the shift of the global economic power away from its North Atlantic (Occidental) epicentre to Asia. However, this reconfiguration of the power-base of global sport is viewed as being problematic, and to an extent is considered with an element of trepidation, for if the ascendancy of 'economy' - the commodities, market and money - leads to the demise, even the diminution, of the effect of 'ecology' - its heritage, traditions and ethos, then there is a very real possibility that the meaning and essence of sport will be eroded beyond repair.

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