



## Olympic Games in Beijing (2008) – a promise and a threat for the West

The Beijing Games were exceptional in many ways. The promises made by the Chinese steering committee (at the request of human rights NGOs) have not been respected. The violent repression in Tibet by the Chinese authorities in March 2008 is denounced. Western leaders are boycotting the Games- German chancellor, Polish and Czech presidents, British prime minister.... The slogan adopted for the Chinese Olympic Games «One world, one dream» is a provocation for peace activists and defenders of democracy.

The budget is not being kept. The original budget of US\$1.609 billion is now 42 billion dollars, the highest in Olympic history. The stakes were not only sporting for China. The host country leads the medal standings – surpassing the US and Russia (or USSR) for the first time in modern Olympic history. Chinese athletes had impressed their competitors at the Athens Olympics on more confidential disciplines (diving or synchronized swimming). Beijing confirms the excellence of Chinese athletes in the most important disciplines.

For the French public, the Beijing Games are associated with the threat of boycott by the French president who also holds the presidency of the European Union. The geopolitical message blurs the sports messages.

The emblem of the 2008 Olympic Games (IOC) is entitled "Chinese Seal-Dancing Beijing". It combines the Chinese seal and art of calligraphy with sporting features. The figure evokes the Chinese character "Jing", meaning capital and second character of the Chinese name of Beijing. Four references to Chinese culture, the red colour of China, Beijing welcoming friends from around the world, and the Olympic motto "Citius, Altius, Fortius".

The Beijing Summer Olympics were heralding the 2022 Winter Olympics where the same scenario was repeated. Russia, a great ally of China, in an anti-Western competition not respectful of the Olympic truce, attacks Georgia on August 8, 2008, leaving western democracies in a state of terror. The Russian president is waiting for the end of the winter Olympics in Beijing, in February 2022, to attack Ukraine. The similarity and repetition of situations are quite telling. As with the claims in Tibet, Georgia's only wrong is to want to claim freedom and democracy. For Georgia to join the western camp (European Union). The double talk of the Chinese authorities is edifying - peace and a new world order will be made according to its rules and its «canons» of beauty.

The 2008 Games are even more current. They are heralding a hegemony that the China of Xi Jinping (as vice president then president) intends to lead not only in the field of sport but also in all other areas – economic (Silk Roads), cultural (Confucius institutes , persecution of all minorities as Uigurs), military (in the China Sea with all its neighbors and Taiwan since its origin). Sport can also be a show of strength and a real threat when it is instrumentalized by authoritarian regimes.

- (1) Documentaire de Mickaël Gamrasni « Olympiques ! La France des Jeux », France, diffusé le 16 juillet 2024 sur France 2
- (2) Site officiel du CIO- <https://olympics.com/fr/olympic-games/atlanta-1996/logo-design>
- (3) « JO d'Athènes (2004) : XXV<sup>e</sup> jeux Olympiques d'été » - [https://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/divers/JO\\_dAth%C3%A8nes\\_2004\\_XXV\\_e\\_jeux\\_Olympiques\\_d%C3%A9t%C3%A9/185486](https://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/divers/JO_dAth%C3%A8nes_2004_XXV_e_jeux_Olympiques_d%C3%A9t%C3%A9/185486)

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