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Introduction

The UN Security Council is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations. The body has significant power. It can authorize military operations as well as establish peacekeeping operations. It is also able to call on UN member states to use measures not involving the use of force to stop or prevent military aggression. These measures can be economic, such as sanctions or boycotting. The UNSC will work together to consider the practice of boycotting the Olympics, which many nations engaged in during the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing.

The History of Olympic Boycotts

The Olympics were first officially boycotted by nations during the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. Though some nations were prohibited from the Olympics in previous years, such as Japan and Germany immediately after World War II, the first political boycotts occurred as a result of growing Cold War tensions. China boycotted because of Taiwan's inclusion in the games, while Switzerland, Spain, and the Netherlands boycotted the games in support of Hungary after the Soviet Union invaded them. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, boycotting remained a popular way to nonviolently make political statements between nations. In 1976, over twenty African countries boycotted the Olympics in protest of racial segregation. In 1980, the largest Olympic boycott of all time was staged when the United States refused to compete in Moscow. Over sixty nations joined the US in protest, though a

number of them still competed. Four years later in Los Angeles, the majority of Warsaw Pact members retaliated by refusing to enter the games. The last full boycott of the Olympics occurred when North Korea and its allies skipped out on 1988's Seoul games. Boycotts remained popular after the Cold War, although not to the same extent. In 2014, several Western world leaders refused to attend the Sochi games' opening ceremony. Most recently, the 2022 Beijing Winter Games sparked diplomatic boycotts from the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK. These nations cited human rights groups' concerns as the main reason for boycotting the games. However, this boycott was not a full boycott, and these nations' athletes were still allowed to compete in the games. Officials from these countries such as Presidents and Prime Ministers did not attend.

The Case for Boycotts

Many people in support of diplomatic boycotts cite the benefits that come from peaceful protest between nations. Several nations have accused the Chinese government of committing genocide against the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities, though China denies this. They have also cited the government's brutal repression of protests in Hong Kong and refusal to recognize Taiwan's independence. In an open letter to world governments, nearly two hundred human rights groups argued that participating in the Beijing Olympic Games would have been turning a blind eye to Beijing's abuse and crack down on basic human rights and freedoms. According to these groups, not only would competing countries be ignoring China's repeated assaults on human rights, but these nations would be "endorsing the Chinese Communist Party's authoritarian rule and blatant disregard for civil and human rights." This endorsement would be of the financial breed- the Olympics bring in massive boosts to host countries' economies. Athletes and spectators who spend their money on hotels, restaurants, shops, and tickets are helping out the government of the country they visit, which is dangerous when that government is funding re-education camps for its minority populations. Human Rights Watch pointed out that the International Olympic Committee had no public strategy to mitigate human rights abuse within supply chains, public health, media restrictions, and mass surveillance during the Beijing games. The IOC has established a standard of human rights to be adhered to during Olympic events, but they did not apply to Beijing in 2022. Human Rights Watch urged the IOC to consider planning on stricter human rights guidelines

during the Beijing games, especially because of China's repeated violations as observed by HRW and other groups. For this reason, proponents of diplomatic or even full boycotts believe that boycotting the Olympic games could prompt the IOC to take a stronger stance against human rights violations by Olympic host countries.

The Case Against Boycotts

Despite strong evidence that the People's Republic of China has committed atrocities, many people are strongly against boycotts, whether they are full or diplomatic. Opponents claim that an Olympic boycott would be ineffective at truly persuading the Chinese Communist Party- or any other host country that has prompted talks of boycotts- to change its ways. National Olympic committees tend to work separately from their country's government. They are private committees whose work mostly deals with sports and putting together an athletic team. Those who are involved with the Olympics see it as a peaceful endeavor that brings countries together. IOC head Thomas Bach criticized the diplomatic boycott of the 2022 games, claiming that "Sport can only contribute to the development of peace if it's not used as a stage for political dissent." The Olympics were designed to assist in world peace and create understanding between nations, not as a stage for increased diplomatic tensions between superpowers. The Olympics are usually accompanied by cultural and artistic festivals that encourage and prompt unity between different athletes, all of whom have worked extremely hard to compete in the Olympics. In a full boycott, the people who are arguably most harmed are the athletes from the boycotting nations. If a government refuses to allow its citizens to compete in the games, it is denying opportunities and expecting sacrifices from hardworking athletes, something that breeds discontent. Governments that boycott and negatively impact athletes often face a lot of distaste and anger from their citizens. Boycotts are rarely popularly supported. In 1980, Joe Biden, then US Senator from Delaware, argued against boycotting the Olympics, noting that "We cannot have a foreign policy that does not have overwhelming American public support and expect that foreign policy to succeed." National morale and patriotism may be boosted much more through victories on the international stage; after all, international sports have long been a forum for nations to showcase their prowess and power to rival countries. In addition to all of these considerations, people have pointed out that inviting journalists into a country such as the PRC will invite investigation

into the same human rights issues that Human Rights Watch and other groups called out; others remain anxious that journalists will be put in danger if given an opportunity to report within a country known for its suppression of the press. Many remain adamant that a boycott will simply not work, and that the main people being negatively impacted by boycotts are athletes and citizens, not the host country's government.

The Fear of Retaliation

One of the most massive security concerns regarding Olympic boycotts is the possibility of Chinese retaliation against the 2022 boycott. The 2028 Olympic games will be held in Los Angeles, and a Chinese boycott of the games in the US is likely. A Chinese military spokesman named Zhao Lihan has spoken out against the 2022 boycott and the "political manipulation" it has come with. However, the official did not mention what types of retaliatory efforts the Chinese government may attempt. The Chinese government could possibly suspend certain diplomatic summits and discussions with the Western governments that boycotted its games. Sanctions may also be imposed, something that could drastically impact Western industry due to the massive consumer base that China, the world's most populous country, has.

The United Nations Stance

The United Nations has re-affirmed sports as an "important enabler" of sustainable development in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UN has called on nations to observe the "Olympic truce" and has not publicly supported any boycotts. The UN has affirmed the message of the IOC that the games should not be used as staging grounds for political discourse. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres attended the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics amidst the diplomatic boycott. He claimed that this was a strictly nonpolitical move to further the Olympics' mission of peace and cultural connection. This move was vastly criticized by human rights proponents, who have even gone so far as to call it shameful and profess that the UN has failed to protect and advocate for human rights. The UN maintains that its decision to promote the Olympics was in line with UN goals.

Questions to Consider

1. Did my country boycott the 2022 Olympics? Does my country have a history of boycotting Olympics, and for what reasons?
2. Are there large groups of human rights advocates within my country, and have these groups spoken out against the IOC for its decisions regarding human rights at the Beijing Olympics?
3. Does my country condemn the United Nations for its support of the Olympics in 2022?
4. How could Olympic boycotts further or hinder peacemaking?
5. Are there any alternatives to Olympic boycotts that may achieve the Olympic boycotts' goals in a more effective way?
6. What type of security risks or negative retaliation could occur due to the boycotts?

Possible Solutions

Some possible solutions would be:

- *Relocation.* Some lawmakers in the United States, the United Kingdom, and several EU countries have called for the 2022 Olympics to be moved to another country if China does not stop persecuting Uyghurs. Experts say the IOC is unlikely to consider a relocation, which would probably require a postponement at this late date.
- *IOC abandoning its mandate* of depoliticizing the Olympics. This mandate essentially causes the IOC to work with the Chinese to encourage some token concessions (e.g., allowing foreign journalists unfettered internet access), has never put pressure on corporate sponsors to be socially responsible, and has not leveraged the Olympics to promote real political change. Measures to lessen or reverse (though, unlikely) this mandate may be a solution worth considering.

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