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Winning the Bid: Analyzing the International Olympic Committee's Host City Selections

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Previous scholarship has relied on case study analysis and anecdotal evidence to explain the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Olympic host city selection process. This has resulted in several provocative claims regarding why the IOC selects particular cities to host the Olympics. Large-n analysis can dispel some of these assertions by identifying the systematic tendencies in the IOC's host city choices. After reviewing the selection process and the different influences on the IOC's choice of a host city, rank-ordered conditional logit estimation is applied to data proxies of bid candidate characteristics from 1959 through 2005. The IOC shows a statistical tendency to base its decision on the economic vitality of a bid city's home country and on the need to maintain continental diversity.

KEYWORDS *Olympics, International Olympic Committee, Large-n studies, Rank-ordered Conditional Logit, Olympic Host City*

INTRODUCTION

Hosting the Olympics is important to both national and local governments trying to attract tourist revenues, push the completion of public works projects, and, perhaps most importantly, garner international media exposure (Andranovich et al., 2001, p. 114)¹. Unfortunately, the secretive

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and subjective nature of the selection vote has exposed the motivations of members of the International Olympic Committee (the body in charge of selecting an Olympic host) to speculation (Burroughs, 1999, p. 43). The secrecy has caused most of the existing literature on the IOC's selection process, which has relied solely on anecdotal evidence and case study analysis, to forward highly provocative assertions regarding the IOC's motivations. Consider just one example. In 1993 Beijing, China lost its bid to host the 2000 Summer Olympic Games to Sydney, Australia. With the Tiananmen Square massacre only four years old, the United States, European Union, and Western human rights organizations vigorously opposed the selection of Beijing. According to the account of this vote offered by Huntington (1996), the United States Congress and European Parliament succeeded in showing "Western political clout" by pressuring the IOC to vote against China (Huntington, 1996, pp. 195–197)².

Huntington's account illustrates why scholars should make the effort to compare case studies with large-*n* studies, because only large-*n* studies can identify systematic tendencies. Huntington's explanation for Sydney's selection in 1993 seems plausible, but, assuming Huntington is correct, the selection of Sydney may be an isolated incident of Western political pressure on the IOC. Only a large-*n* study can identify systematic tendencies in the IOC's host city choices; which, in turn, can dispel some of the more extreme claims regarding the IOC's decisionmaking and offer more generalizable explanations for why the IOC chooses particular cities to host the Olympics.

This paper fills a gap in Olympics scholarship by offering the first large-*n* study of IOC Olympic host city selection. The next section provides an overview of the IOC and the host city selection process. The subsequent section explores the various explanatory arguments forwarded by the social science Olympics literature on why the IOC chooses particular hosts. These arguments can be placed into six categories: economic considerations; American corporate dependence; European identity; corruption; presidential preference; and distributive. In the first category, the IOC selects candidates with the economic means to host the games. In the second category, the IOC makes decisions so as not to incite a U.S. boycott. In the third category, the IOC is a European creation and, due to a strong European presence, awards the games predominately to European cities. The fourth and fifth categories claim, respectively, that bribes paid to IOC members and the IOC president's personal interests have the ultimate influence on the IOC's choice. In the sixth category, the IOC seeks to maintain a balance in the global distribution of the Olympic Games.

The last section extends the literature's use of case-study analysis by testing the six categories of arguments using regressions of the best available data proxies. This large-*n* analysis shows the IOC to have a systematic tendency favoring bids that maintain continental diversity in the distribution of the games, and also favoring the bids from countries that have sustained high rates of real G.D.P. per capita growth.

OVERVIEW OF THE IOC AND THE HOST CITY SELECTION PROCESS

To understand the various claims regarding the IOC's host city selection process, it is very important to know how the IOC selects its members, how the IOC is financed, and how the IOC host city voting process operates.

International Olympic Committee Members

IOC members are the individuals comprising the voting body of the IOC, not the countries of the IOC. When the IOC was founded in 1894, it had only 15 voting members (Toohey and Veal, 2000, p. 33). Currently, there are well over 100 voting members. IOC members are selected by the organization itself, not appointed by the governments of the nations from which they originate. Therefore, though not every nation of the Olympic Movement is represented in the IOC's decisionmaking body, the members are ostensibly beholden to the Olympic movement, not the interests of their home countries.

International Olympic Committee Finances

Before the mid-1950s, the IOC's expenses were funded solely through the wealth of its voting members. However, since the first sale of television rights starting in 1959 and the granting of Olympic sponsorships starting in 1985, television rights and official Olympic sponsorships have become the IOC's primary revenue sources.

TELEVISION RIGHTS

The IOC owns the rights to broadcast the Olympics. The rights are awarded several years prior to the Olympics through a sealed-envelope bid, with the winning television network selling advertising time to recoup the cost of the bid. On occasion the IOC has been known to dispense with the open bidding process. For instance, based on the ability of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) to offer the highest bid for the 2000 and 2002 Games, the IOC privately negotiated, for \$2.3 billion, to extend the NBC contract to include the 2004, 2006, and 2008 games.¹

The value of television rights has increased dramatically since implementation in 1960.² The television rights for the Rome Olympics of 1960 were only \$12 million (valued in 1998 dollars); but by the 1968 Mexico Olympics, the value had increased to \$83 million. By 1995, the IOC awarded the rights for the 2000 and 2002 Games to NBC, for \$1.25 billion.³

Two-thirds of revenue from the sale of the rights is passed on to the local organizing committee, while the rest is distributed to the National Olympic Committees (NOCs), via the Olympic Solidarity Program, or retained by the IOC.⁴ The actual amount received by the IOC has increased greatly, while the local Olympic organizing committees have seen their share fall from 60% to 49% (Toohey & Veal, 2000, p. 139).

OFFICIAL OLYMPIC SPONSORSHIPS

The IOC accumulates additional funds through the sale of Olympic Logo licensing rights, called The Olympic Programme (TOP) or *Olympic Partners* program. TOP, which has only been in existence since 1985, sells worldwide rights to use the Olympic logo in advertising and promotion for the period of an Olympiad (i.e., the four years prior to a summer games). TOP sells these rights to major corporations by negotiating with the individual NOCs to determine which companies are eligible to purchase the rights (e.g., a company may already have a sponsorship deal with the NOC) and what proportion of the TOP funds each NOC will receive. Typically, the NOCs disburse 20% of the funds amongst themselves, while the IOC receives about 10% of the funds. The remaining 70% commonly goes to the summer or winter games themselves (i.e., the host city). Typically, a company must contribute sums in the order of \$40 million to buy these rights. However, this amount can be a combination of cash and “in-kind” transfers (e.g., IBM can also supply the electronic scoring equipment for the games).

The Host City Selection Process

There are several stages in the host city selection process. First, after a country's NOC selects one city to compete against a group of foreign cities for the privilege of hosting the games, the IOC will eliminate those cities without the political or economic stability or, most importantly, public support necessary to host the games. This stage is known as the Candidate Acceptance Procedure Phase and occurs approximately eight to ten years prior to a scheduled Olympiad. Though there are substantial financial barriers to submitting a viable bid (London, for example, spent between \$13 and \$25 million on its bid for the 2012 summer games), since 1947 only nineteen applicants have not been passed through this phase, all of which have been during the past four host selections: 4 in 1999; 6 in 2001; 5 in 2003; and 4 in 2005. This fact is due in large measure to the increased number of applicants for the games.

Next, approximately seven years before the scheduled Olympics, the IOC members, in a private session, vote in successive rounds until one candidate receives a majority of votes. In the first round of voting, if no candidate city achieves a majority of votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is dropped from the running, and the members vote again on the remaining

candidates. This process continues until either one candidate receives the majority of votes in any round or only two candidates remain. At that point, the candidate receiving the most votes wins the bid. Though the overall voting records are available after a voting session, the records offer no indication which IOC member voted for which candidate (Hill, 1996, p. 93).⁵

EXPLANATIONS FOR IOC HOST CITY SELECTION

The explanations found in previous studies for the IOC's choice of a host city will be discussed next and can be divided into six categories: economic considerations; American corporate dependence; European identity; corruption; presidential preference; and distributive.

Economic Considerations Explanations

This category contains three explanations. First, the candidate city, in order to host the Olympics, must possess the monetary wherewithal to construct sporting venues, transportation and media infrastructures, hospitality resources like hotels and dormitories, and provide security. Quite often, and with few exceptions (like that of the Los Angeles Games in 1984), cities cannot afford such a financial endeavor alone. Consequently, the financial guarantees for the games are generally sought and given from the city, regional, and/or national government (Toohey and Veal, 2000, p. 54). One would expect rich countries with large economies to have the financial intermediation, fiscal policy, and private individual donations necessary to finance the games.

Second, as a nation maintains strong economic growth over time, the subsequent accumulation of national income will eventually drive the nation to desire more leisure time and leisure activities (Parkin, 2000, p. 188). This desire for leisure will provoke the nation to construct venues suitable for holding both professional and amateur sporting events.

Third, more populous countries tend to have larger markets from which to draw advertising and attendance revenue, and bigger tax bases to support government investment; thus the IOC would be expected to favor the candidate with the largest population. Along the same lines, one should suspect the IOC to favor larger cities, because larger cities will be more likely to have the venues, infrastructure, and budget to functionally run an Olympic games.⁶ Furthermore, larger cities are more likely to acquire a world reputation, typically a very influential factor in IOC voting.⁷

A case illustrating how economic considerations can impact the IOC's choice of Olympic host is the Olympic candidacy of Berlin in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Starting in 1987, U.S. President Ronald Reagan openly voiced Washington's interest in seeing Berlin chosen to host an Olympic Games. According to Reagan, Berlin's hosting of the games prior to reunification

would be an "important contribution toward peaceful development between East and West" because the two German states might develop unity through the shared event.⁸ Even after the process of reunification had begun in late 1989 and early 1990, the U.S. administration still believed that a Berlin Games would be symbolically useful for marking the end of Cold War hostilities. Yet, when Berlin was finally on the IOC ballot in 1993, it was eliminated in the second of five rounds of IOC voting for the 2000 Olympic host. Though Berlin was a sensible *political* choice, the economic trauma of reunification and the associated worsening of Germany's budgetary position made Berlin an unattractive *economic* choice.

American Corporate Dependence Explanations

According to this category of explanations, even though the sale of broadcasting rights and TOP has enabled the IOC to avoid direct dependence on government contributions, the large presence of American corporations leaves the IOC indirectly dependent on American and Western viewers and consumers (Espy, 1981, p. 61). For example, as much as 80% of IOC broadcasting income originates from the American networks, such as Viacom/CBS, Fox/News Corp., Disney/ABC, or GE/NBC (Slater, 1998, p. 56). Also, the primary buyers of Olympic logo rights have been major U.S.-based multinational corporations.⁹

This dependence means that the IOC, when choosing a host, must be sensitive to the interests of U.S. corporations. The American broadcasting companies are only willing to bid large sums of money for the games if such a purchase will generate significant ratings and revenues. For example, it is possible that this corporate influence may induce the IOC to select bids from cities in time zones conducive to viewers in the prominent U.S. Eastern Time zone (the prime advertising and viewing time zone of the American TV networks); or, at a minimum, the IOC should favor bids originating from any viable city in the North America time zones (Central, Mountain, and Pacific). Furthermore, the IOC's reliance on U.S. corporations and media providers for revenue may induce the IOC to account for the geopolitical preferences of the U.S. government when choosing a host. Specifically, the mere prospect of a U.S. Olympic boycott (and the subsequent loss of revenues) might impel the IOC to only select countries closely aligned to U.S. government preferences.

A prominent example of dependence on American corporations possibly influencing the IOC is the choice of Atlanta to host the 1996 summer Olympics.¹⁰ Because 1996 marked the centennial games of the modern Olympics, Athens was the overwhelming favorite. Additionally, another American city, Los Angeles, had just hosted the 1984 games. Yet Atlanta won the bid by 16 votes over Athens in the fifth round of IOC voting. While admitting that funding capacity and facility quality played a definitive role in Atlanta's bid success, Jennings (1996) suggests that the deciding factor may have been that Coca Cola, the Olympics' most generous and consistent sponsor, is headquartered in

Atlanta. Other cynics felt that the IOC's vote was swayed because of Atlanta's location in the U.S. Eastern time zone, thereby making it a prime location for American TV viewers. As Melina Mercouri, a member of the Greek delegation at the IOC's 1987 Tokyo meeting, expressed, "Coca-Cola won over the Parthenon temple" (Jennings, 1996, pp. 133–134).

European Identity Explanations

The Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin organized the first meeting of the International Olympic Committee in 1894; and, given its progenitor, the initial 15 members of the IOC unsurprisingly came primarily from Europe (Toohey and Veal, 2000, p. 32). European dominance of the IOC membership has remained to this day. As recently as 2001, the plurality of members (48%) came from Europe. This percentage is actually an increase from the 41% in 1998 and 42% in 1986, even though European countries only constitute about 20% of the world's countries. Membership from another continent has never been more than 20% (Alexandrakis, 1988; Toohey and Veal, 2000, p. 45). American IOC member Jim Easton in 2003 made explicit mention of the European's voting dominance by stating that though the voting is weighted in favor of the Europeans, there is little that can be done to correct the imbalance: "They [the Europeans] are the ones who started it. It's their thing."¹¹

Such geographic distribution is not inconsequential. Alexandrakis and Krotee (1988) maintain that the geographical representation of groups of countries in the IOC's overall membership determines the balance of IOC power and control (Alexandrakis and Krotee, 1988, p. 334). IOC procedures mandate that members cannot vote if a city from their country is on the ballot. In the post-war era, this rule has excluded U.S. nationals from voting on 16 occasions, more than any other country. In effect, if the European IOC members' interests are aligned, then the Europe countries wield the sole veto on IOC decisions.

An example is found in the selection of Vancouver to host the 2010 Winter Games.¹² During the voting, Salzburg, Austria was surprisingly eliminated in the first round; evidence that the European voting bloc was apparently waiting to vote for the 2012 Summer Olympics host before selecting another European city. As Richard W. Pound, one of three I.O.C. members from Canada, said, "The Europeans voted strategically. A whole bunch of European capitals want it in 2012, so they didn't want to go for it in 2010."¹³

Corruption Explanations

According to the corruption explanation, the IOC's choice of a host city is substantially influenced by the quantity of gifts (both monetary and in-kind)

given to IOC members by persons representing the prospective host city. Bribery pervades a significant portion of Olympic history, with evidence of persuasion bordering on compromised ethics first emerging in 1970.¹⁴ At that time, it was public knowledge that Jean Drapeau, mayor of Montreal, had a "Black Book" listing IOC members' preferences for food, wine, and entertainment. Recent incidents of graft surrounded and perhaps influenced the IOC's choice of Nagano, Japan and Salt Lake City, USA to host, respectively, the 1998 and 2002 Winter Games. Unfortunately, these are only some of the highly publicized incidents of ingratiating IOC members with the intention of influencing their votes. Other attempts have most likely occurred.¹⁵

Presidential Preference Explanations

The IOC elects or reelects its president every eight years. IOC presidents are enormously influential in setting the tone and direction of the IOC and, in recent years, the office has assumed the status of an ambassador or quasi-head of state, with the courtesy title of "his excellency" often used (Toohey and Veal, 2000, p. 41). Given the president's influence, it is possible that he could compel the IOC to select a particular host. For example, when Juan Antonio Samaranch was President of the IOC, his home city, Barcelona, was chosen in 1986 to host the 1992 Summer Olympics over more economically viable candidates such as Paris, Brisbane, Birmingham, and Amsterdam.

Distributive Explanations

According to the distributive explanation, because the Olympics has global appeal and the IOC's goal is world-wide sport promotion, it is a logical to assume the IOC will prefer to maintain geographic diversity when awarding the games. Therefore, the IOC should rotate the Olympics among continents.

IOC president Jacques Rogge discounts the notion of an unofficial rotation, pointing out that the IOC has awarded the games twice in a row to North American cities in the past. Montreal in 1976 was followed by Lake Placid, N.Y., in 1980; and Los Angeles in 1984 was followed by Calgary, Alberta, in 1988.¹⁶ However, these examples pertain to cross comparisons of games (winter to summer). The IOC does not appear to prefer awarding consecutive summer or consecutive winter games to the same continent. Since 1956 there have not been two summer games in a row held on the same continent. Only on two occasions since 1960 have the winter games been held on the same continent two times in a row: 1964/1968 (Innsbruck, Austria and Grenoble, France); 1992/1994 (Albertville, France and Lillehammer, Norway).

Also, the IOC does not appear to prefer holding the winter and summer games of the same Olympiad on the same continent (an Olympiad begins at the end of one Summer Olympics and continues till the end of the following Summer Olympics). Only four Olympiads since 1948 have been

exclusive to one continent: 1948 (Saint Moritz, Switzerland and London, U.K.); 1952 (Oslo, Norway and Helsinki, Finland); 1976 (Denver, USA and Montreal, Canada); 1992 (Albertville, France and Barcelona, Spain).¹⁷

LARGE- N DATA ANALYSIS

Despite the evidence presented in the previous section, only regression analysis can determine the most systematic influences on the IOC's choice of Olympic hosts. When statistically testing IOC host city selection, a candidate must only be compared to its competitors.¹⁸ In other words, the probability of a candidate winning its bid for a particular Olympics depends on the characteristics of the other candidates under consideration for that bid. Statistical testing of IOC host city selection must also account for the fact that some of the rejected candidates are more highly valued by the IOC than others. Specifically, the IOC eliminates the candidate with the least votes in each round of voting. The earlier the IOC eliminates a candidate, the less it prefers that candidate. Rank ordered conditional logit (ROL) estimation can account for this implicit ranking of candidates and ensures that a candidate is only compared to candidates bidding for the same Olympics.

With ROL estimation each candidate bidding for each Olympic is ranked relative to the other candidates bidding for that Olympic Game and that game only. The candidates are ranked 1 to n , where 1 is the value assigned to the country winning the bid for Olympic t , and n is the number of bids for Olympic t . The earlier in the IOC voting process that a candidate is eliminated, the higher is its rank. ROL treats the IOC as possessing a random utility function, where the IOC ranks the candidate that provides the lowest level of utility of the choices present, then chooses the second least preferred from the remaining choices, and so on until a winner is selected. The IOC would choose candidate 1 over candidate 2 if

$$U(X_{11}, X_{21}, \dots, X_{m1}) > U(X_{12}, X_{22}, \dots, X_{m2}) \quad (1)$$

where $U(\cdot)$ represents the IOC's utility function and $X_{1n} \dots X_{mn}$ are the m number of factors that determine the utility that the IOC has towards candidate n . The random utility specification results in the IOC selecting candidate 1 over candidate 2 if

$$V(X_{11}, X_{21}, \dots, X_{m1}) + \varepsilon_1 > V(X_{12}, X_{22}, \dots, X_{m2}) + \varepsilon_2 \quad (2)$$

where $V(\cdot)$ is the measurable or observable component of utility and is estimated statistically, and ε_m is the unobservable, or random, component.

Regression Model

The regression model can be expressed symbolically as

$$\begin{aligned}
 VOTE_RANK_{ti} = & \beta_1 POLITICAL PROXIMITY_{ti} + \\
 & \beta_2 EUROPEAN BIAS_{ti} + \beta_3 NORTHAMERICAN BIAS_{ti} + \\
 & \beta_4 BRIBE_{ti} + \beta_5 REAL GDP ONE - YEAR GROWTH_{ti} + \\
 & \beta_6 REAL GDP FIVE - YEAR GROWTH_{ti} + \\
 & \beta_7 REAL GDP TEN - YEAR GROWTH_{ti} + \beta_8 REAL GDP PER \\
 & CAPITA_{ti} + \beta_9 POPULATION_{ti} + \beta_{10} CITY POPULATION_{ti} + \\
 & \beta_{11} CONTINENTAL DIVERSITY_{ti} + \varepsilon_1
 \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

where t is the Olympics under consideration, i represents a candidate for Olympic t , and $VOTE_RANK$ represents the IOC's ranking of the candidates for games t . The errors are assumed independent of the explanatory variables, but the variance of errors is not. The six categories of explanations from Section III inform the selection of independent variables.

POLITICAL PROXIMITY tests how a city's national government relations with the United States impacts the success of that city's bid. Political proximity to the United States can be measured using the coincidence of a country's United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voting behavior to that of the U.S.¹⁹ Given the changing nature of international relations (i.e., a U.S. ally today may be its enemy tomorrow) and that the IOC must chose a host several years prior to the planned Olympics, it is reasonable to assume that the IOC will choose the candidate with a historic trend of close political alignment to the U.S., all things being equal. To measure voting coincidence over time, Marin-Bosch (1998) devised the coincidence index (CI), which compares the UNGA votes of any two given states.²⁰ The CI is on a 0 to 1000 scale, with a higher CI score indicating closer political proximity to the United States.²¹ Negative significance indicates that closer proximity to the U.S. will greatly bolster a candidate's chances of winning the bid.

EUROPEAN BIAS is a dummy variable assigned a value of 1 to European candidates, 0 otherwise. Negative significance indicates that European countries are selected, not because they are closely aligned to the U.S. (as tested by *POLITICAL PROXIMITY*), but simply because they are European. *NORTH AMERICAN BIAS* is a dummy variable assigned a value of 1 to North American countries, 0 otherwise. The variable tests whether the IOC has a bias toward candidates in the prime time zones for the American TV networks. Positive significance indicates that the IOC does give preference to cities located in the prime TV viewing North American time zones of the major U.S. networks.

BRIBE is a continuous variable measuring the impact that bribing IOC members by NOC and local Olympic committee officials has on the IOC's choice of Olympic host. This variable uses the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) published by Transparency International.²² The index ranges from 0 to 10, with 10 being a complete lack of perceived government corruption, 0 indicating extremely pervasive government corruption. Measuring perceived government corruption is reasonable because members of local Olympic organizing committees interact closely with local government officials.²³ Negative significance supports the notion that the IOC's choice is systematically influenced by bribery.

Three variables test the influence of market size: real GDP per capita the year of the selection (*REAL GDP PER CAPITA*); the candidate city's home country's population the year of the selection (*COUNTRY POPULATION*); and the candidate city's population the year of the selection (*CITY POPULATION*).²⁴ If market size and potential tax base influence the IOC's choice, then these variables will exhibit negative significance.

A candidate's home country's economic performance is measured using the average growth rate of real GDP per capita the year of the selection, the five years prior to the selection, and ten years prior to the selection (*REAL GDP ONE-YEAR GROWTH*, *REAL GDP FIVE-YEAR GROWTH*, and *REAL GDP TEN-YEAR GROWTH*). Negative significance for any of these variables suggests that the IOC exhibits a bias toward selecting countries with stronger performing economies.

CONTINENTAL DIVERSITY is the dummy variable assigned a value of 1 if the immediately preceding Olympics were held in the same continent as the candidate, 0 if not.²⁵ If the IOC has a preference for distributing the games across different parts of the world, thereby disfavoring consecutive bids from the same continent, then *CONTINENTAL DIVERSITY* will have a positive sign.²⁶

Constructing the N

All Olympic bids from the June 1959 through the July 2005 selection are used, creating a total of 99 Olympic host candidates. A "candidate" is any location under the IOC's consideration for hosting a particular Olympic game. For instance, Canada has had cities ten times before the IOC as either summer or winter game candidates. These attempts count as 10 candidates, even though Canada is one country. Because the model tests only candidates, the model considers only those countries with NOCs committing one of its cities to compete for an Olympics. Such a commitment is typically predicated on a belief by the NOC that the city has a realistic probability of winning. This feature of the model helps to control for countries like, for example, Botswana or Vietnam, who despite several years of strong economic performance, have never promoted Gaborone or Hanoi for a host bid. Because *POLITICAL PROXIMITY* excludes all bids by the U.S. and Switzerland, thereby reducing the sample size to only 80 candidates, regressions are also run with this variable removed.²⁷

The time period of 1959 through 2005 is chosen for two reasons. First, the selections of Innsbruck and Tokyo in 1959 to host the 1964 Summer and Winter Olympics were the first IOC host city selections under the revised rule 49 of the IOC charter. This revised rule allowed television rights to be negotiated by each organizing committee. This revised rule also enabled the IOC to sell the broadcasting rights for the Rome Olympics of 1960 to the American Broadcasting Commission for \$4 million. Thus, the year 1959 and onward marks the period in which the IOC no longer financed itself through its members, but instead became increasingly reliant upon financing through multinational corporations. Second, the quality of economic data for many countries during the 1940s and early 1950 is unreliable.

The data set of 99 candidates may hide several underlying structural changes and/or patterns. Specifically, the IOC may consider different factors when selecting summer hosts and winter hosts. Therefore, the data is divided into two sets: one for summer bids and one for winter bids. Both data sets are small, but the results are useful to present for comparison purposes. Furthermore, it is possible the IOC's voting behavior changed during the mid-1980s. First, 1985 marks the implementation of the TOP official Olympic sponsor program. Second, 1985 also marked the beginning of the end of the Cold War, as the United States and Soviet Union held its first summit since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. To see if such events altered the IOC's behavior, it would be ideal to conduct statistical testing of the bids from 1959–1981 and from 1986–2005. Unfortunately, this testing is not feasible with only summer or only winter bids, due to the diminutive size of the resulting data samples. Specifically, there are too many parameters relative to the number of observations in the model to reliably estimate the parameters. The only data sample large enough to generate separate results for the 1959–1981 and from 1986–2005 time periods is the data set containing all bids with *POLITICAL PROXIMITY* excluded.

To summarize, regressions are run on all bids from 1959–2005 including *POLITICAL PROXIMITY* and all bids from 1959–2005 excluding *POLITICAL PROXIMITY*. For comparison purposes, regressions are also run on all bids from 1959–1981 excluding *POLITICAL PROXIMITY*, all bids from 1986–2005 excluding *POLITICAL PROXIMITY*, summer bids from 1959–2005 including *POLITICAL PROXIMITY*, summer bids from 1959–2005 excluding *POLITICAL PROXIMITY*, winter bids from 1959–2005 including *POLITICAL PROXIMITY*, and winter bids from 1959–2005 excluding *POLITICAL PROXIMITY*.

Regression Results

The dependent variable, *VOTE_RANK*, is regressed against the independent variables by ROL estimation.²⁸ The data are also divided by IOC presidency to see if IOC Olympic host voting behavior varies by president; but this

calculation does not produce statistically significant results.²⁹ Table 1 presents the results when all bids are tested. Table 2 presents the regression results when testing the difference in IOC host city selection from 1959–1981 and 1986–2005. Table 3 presents the results when summer and winter bids are tested. Because the data sets used to generate the results in Tables 2 and 3 are small (rendering the results they generate questionable), this section will only discuss the results found in Table 1.

When the full data sample is tested (all bids from 1959–2005), continental diversity and the average real GDP per capita growth rates over 5 and 10 years prior to the selection year are significant at or above the 0.90 confidence level. Continental diversity (0.217) and 10-year average real GDP per capita growth (–0.120) have the largest marginal impact on the probability of success among the significant variables. The negative sign on the 10-year average real GDP per capita growth rate indicates that candidates from countries with the highest rates of growth are more likely to receive a lower numerical ranking (which means that they were more preferred by the IOC). The positive sign on continental diversity indicates that if the preceding Olympics were held on the same continent as the candidate, this situation would cause the candidate to receive a higher numerical ranking (meaning it would be eliminated in an earlier round of IOC voting). The positive sign on 5-year average real GDP per capita growth is inconsistent with expectations. However, given its lower marginal effect (0.079), this contradictory result should not be of concern.

The results in Table 1 suggest (though cannot confirm) which of the six categories of explanations offer valid reasons for why the IOC chooses a particular host. First, contrary to the denials of IOC President Jacques Rogge, the IOC exhibits a statistical bias toward distributing the games among a variety of geographic regions, thereby giving validity to the distributive explanation. Second, the IOC appears to favor bids from countries that have sustained high rates of economic growth. This result supports the strong economic performance explanation of the economic considerations category. However, what cannot be answered is whether this favoritism is for reasons of supply (faster growing countries have the capacity to host the games) or demand (faster growing countries are more aggressive in seeking a bid).

Third, the insignificance of both population variables and the real GDP per capita level variable suggests that the economic considerations explanations related to market size and tax base do not influence IOC host city selection. Fourth, explanations related to corporate influence appear unfounded given that both the *POLITICAL PROXIMITY* and *NORTH AMERICAN BIAS* variables are statistically insignificant.

Fifth, overall the IOC appears to adhere to an ethical standard of probity. *BRIBERY* has an insignificant influence on the IOC. This situation suggests either the IOC members who do receive bribes are not numerous enough to influence the overall result; or that the members take the bribes,

TABLE 1 All Bids 1959–2005 Regression Results

	All Bids (1959–2005)			All Bids (1959–2005) w/out Pol. Prox.		
	Coef.	Marg. Eff.	t-stat	Coef.	Marg. Eff.	t-stat
Political Proximity	0.002	0.000	(0.69)	–	–	–
North American Bias	-1.130	-0.216	(-1.38)	-0.971	-0.186	(-1.44)
European Bias	-0.754	-0.144	(-1.45)	-0.37	-0.071	(-0.81)
Bribery	-0.312	-0.060	(-1.62)	-0.182	-0.035	(-1.29)
Continental Diversity	1.134	0.217	(1.86)*	1.02	0.195	(2.23)**
Real GDP per capital growth (1-year average)	-0.051	-0.010	(-0.57)	-0.013	-0.002	(-0.18)
Real GDP per capital growth (5-year average)	0.413	0.079	(2.13)**	0.352	0.067	(2.04)**
Real GDP per capital growth (10-year average)	-0.627	-0.120	(-2.33)**	-0.692	-0.132	(-2.85)***
Country Population	7.33E-05	0.000	(0.95)	8.03E-05	0.000	(1.25)
City Population	1.22E-10	0.000	(0.100)	1.98E-10	0.000	(0.18)
Log-likelihood	-8.79E-08	0.000	(-0.63)	-2.68E-08	0.000	(-0.21)
N:		-49.72			-70.04	
Number of Groups:		80			99	
		24			26	

*Significant at the 0.90 Confidence Level.

**Significant at the 0.95 Confidence Level.

***Significant at the 0.99 Confidence Level.

TABLE 2 All Bids in 1959–1981 and in 1986–2005 Regression Results

	All Bids (1959–1981) w/out Pol. Prox.			All Bids (1986–2005) w/out Pol. Prox.		
	Coef.	Marg. Eff.	t-stat	Coef.	Marg. Eff.	t-stat
Political Proximity	–	–	–	–	–	–
North American Bias	–7.714	–1.673	(–2.31)**	–0.451	–0.074	(–0.05)
European Bias	–4.397	–0.954	(–1.78)*	–0.185	–0.030	(–0.31)
Bribery	0.561	0.122	(–0.96)	–0.318	–0.052	(–1.77)**
Continental Diversity	1.108	0.240	(1.06)	1.175	0.193	(1.66)
Real GDP per capital growth (1-year average)	0.046	0.010	(–0.34)	–0.023	–0.004	(–0.21)
Real GDP per capital growth (5-year average)	1.820	0.395	(2.34)**	0.297	0.049	(1.25)
Real GDP per capital growth (10-year average)	–3.359	–0.729	(–2.46)**	–0.338	–0.056	(–1.14)
Country Population	0.0001	0.000	(0.24)	0.000	0.000	(0.82)
City Population	1.38E-09	0.000	(0.20)	–1.30E-09	0.000	(–0.96)
Log-likelihood	–7.76E-07	–17.625	(–0.77)	–3.40E-08	0.000	(–0.22)
N:		44			–43.68	
Number of Groups:		14			55	
					12	

*Significant at the 0.90 Confidence Level.

**Significant at the 0.95 Confidence Level.

TABLE 3 Summer and Winter Bids Regression Results

	Summer (1959–2005)				Summer (1959–2005) w/out Pol. Prox.				Winter (1959–2003)				Winter (1959–2003) w/out Pol. Prox.			
	Coef.	Marg. Eff.	t-stat		Coef.	Marg. Eff.	t-stat		Coef.	Marg. Eff.	t-stat		Coef.	Marg. Eff.	t-stat	
Political Proximity	-3.00E-04	0.000	(0.07)		-	-	-		0.002	0.000	(0.17)		-	-	-	
North American Bias	-1.299	-0.247	(-1.07)		-1.037	-0.197	(-0.90)		-1.858	-0.353	(-0.68)		0.034	0.006	(-0.03)	
European Bias	-0.318	-0.060	(-0.45)		-0.014	-0.003	(-0.02)		-2.02	-0.384	(-0.85)		-0.036	-0.007	(-0.03)	
Bribery	-0.171	-0.033	(-0.61)		-0.257	-0.049	(-1.20)		-0.242	-0.046	(-0.88)		-0.0387	-0.007	(-0.17)	
Continental Diversity	0.743	0.141	(0.71)		1.329	0.253	(1.45)		2.024	0.384	(1.89)		1.264	0.240	(1.96)*	
Real GDP per capital growth (1-year average)	-0.143	-0.027	(-1.05)		-0.231	-0.044	(-1.92)*		0.088	0.017	(0.48)		0.194	0.037	(1.58)	
Real GDP per capital growth (5-year average)	0.552	0.105	(1.86)*		0.691	0.131	(2.35)**		0.464	0.088	(1.27)		0.259	0.049	(0.95)	
Real GDP per capital growth (10-year average)	-0.789	-0.150	(-1.90)*		-1.074	-0.204	(-2.43)**		-0.766	-0.145	(-1.52)		-0.675	-0.128	(-1.66)	
Real GDP per capital	0.0001	0.000	(0.77)		0.0001	0.000	(1.59)		0.0001	0.000	(0.39)		-0.00002	0.000	(-0.21)	
Country Population	5.02E-10	0.000	(0.31)		1.62E-09	0.000	(1.16)		-8.92E-09	0.000	(-0.31)		5.42E-10	0.000	(0.12)	
City Population	-6.39E-08	0.000	(-0.37)		-3.66E-08	0.000	(-0.23)		2.25E-07	0.000	(0.24)		-1.96E-07	0.000	(-0.26)	
Log-likelihood		-27.593				-33.17				-22.38				-34.67		
N:		44				52				40				51		
Number of Groups:		13				14				12				13		

*Significant at the 0.90 Confidence Level.

**Significant at the 0.95 Confidence Level.

***Significant at the 0.99 Confidence Level.

but don't vote for the candidate anyway. However, anyone looking at these results hoping to suggest that the IOC disband its Ethics Commission as unnecessary, should at least take note of the significance of *BRIBERY* at the 0.90 confidence level in the 1986–2005 model (Table 2). Though this result is questionable due to the small sample size, it should, at a minimum, suggest that explanations focused on bribery are not completely off-base and that further study into this category of explanation may be required.

Finally, despite the IOC being a European institution with a plurality of members originating from European countries, the *EUROPEAN BIAS* variable is statistically insignificant. It might be possible to argue that this result cannot completely invalidate the merit of the European bias explanation, because most of the bids originate from European countries. However, despite 48% of the summer bids and 61% of the winter bids originating from Europe, only 46% of the summer and 46% of the winter bids are awarded to a European city. Therefore, it appears the IOC does not statistically favor European candidates over other candidates and, particularly with the winter games, may actually prefer to award the games to non-European candidates whenever possible.

CONCLUSION

In the past, case study analysis and anecdotal examples have been the primary methods used to study the IOC's choice of a host city. By dividing the explanations drawn from such studies into six categories (economic considerations, American corporate dependence, European identity, corruption, presidential preference, and distributive), this paper presents some of the more provocative assertions regarding the IOC's choice of a host city: IOC decisionmaking is the product of multinational corporate interests; the IOC would dare not select cities that could provoke an American boycott; the IOC has a European bias; and the IOC's selection process is susceptible to bribery.

However, regression analysis with the best available data refutes many of these assertions. Specifically, the regression analysis performed in this study suggests that the IOC's only systematic tendencies when selecting a host city are to maintain continental diversity in hosts and to take into consideration the economic performance of the candidate country. In particular, the IOC has a bias to select cities from countries that have sustained high rates of real GDP per capita growth over the ten years prior to the selection year. Moreover, the acceptance of bribes by IOC members, the disproportionate European membership of the IOC, and international politics are insignificant influences on the IOC's host city choice. Surprisingly, market size, whether measured as the city or the country, also has an insignificant influence.

In short, this paper shows how a large- n study can dispel some of the more alarming claims gleaned from case study analysis and anecdotal examples. Though this is an important point for all scholars of international politics and economics to keep in mind, given the importance many governments place on bidding for and obtaining the Olympics, it is particularly vital that scholars of and policymakers in the Olympic bidding process have a basis upon which to predict a candidate's success or failure that is more definitive than relying upon conclusions derived from case study analysis alone.

There are three questions that future research should seek to address. First, this study was unable to discern if the IOC's preference for faster growing candidates is due to reasons of supply or demand. Supply-side arguments hold that the IOC prefers cities from countries that demonstrate an ability to sustain high rates of economic growth. A demand-side argument maintains that countries sustaining high rates of economic growth desire to display their countries through one of their more prominent cities and that, consequently, these countries aggressively seek to acquire the Olympics. Second, it is quite possible that as future bids are added to the sample, some of the tested variables, particularly those just below the significance threshold as measured by t -statistics, will become significant. For example, when testing all bids, it is possible that the addition of observations will cause bribery to become significant. Third, the addition of observations will make the results generated from testing sub-samples such as summer-only and winter-only bids more meaningful. In sum, continued research should focus on adding future bids to this paper's data set and exploring more deeply the reasons particular candidates decide to pursue the games.

CONTRIBUTOR

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NOTES

1. For a selection of studies testing the validity of these various motivations, see Chalkley and Essex (1999), Berman (2000), Lybbert and Thilmary (2000), and Whitelegg (2000), and Badde and Matheson (2003).

2. Two seminal works on the influence of international politics in the Olympic Movement are Espy (1981) and Kanin (1981).

3. "Media Groups on Starting Blocks for Olympic Race." *The Financial Times* (London), 6/4/03.

4. Unless otherwise cited, the majority of the information regarding broadcasting rights and TOP come from Toohey and Veal (2000), pp. 107–108.

5. Also in 1998 dollars.

6. Unless otherwise cited, the majority of the information regarding broadcasting rights and TOP come from Toohey and Veal (2000), pp. 107–108

7. Since 1999, the IOC has attempted to better inform the public of its selection standards by publishing, for instance, a set of criteria such as transportation and communication infrastructure, housing accommodations, existing and planned sports venues, and financial backing from the central/national government. For a complete list of these factors please refer to www.olympics.org/uk/organisation/misions/cities_uk.asp Also, see Toohey and Veal (2000), p. 53.

8. There are other technical reasons for focusing on city size. First, the quality of quantifiable data offered in city bid documents only became thorough in the mid-to-late 1960s. This fact can be seen by comparing the following bid documents (listed by city, Olympic year, and year of bid document publication): Oslo, 1952, 1947; Calgary, 1964, 1959; Lahti, 1968, 1962; and Montreal, 1976, 1969. Copies of bid documents were provided upon request from the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles (AAFLA). Second, budget and financing proposals are a relatively new inclusion into bid documents, because only after the financial failure of the Montreal Games in 1976 did the IOC become more insistent on good financial planning (information from e-mail correspondence with Kevin Wamsley, Director of the International Centre for Olympic Studies at the University of Western Ontario, 7/31/03). The lack of useable city-specific data from earlier bids leaves two options for longer-term testing of bid cities. First, one has the option to test only those years in which more detailed bid-specific data is available. However, this option would eliminate 46 observations from the sample (a drastic reduction given the limited number of Olympics). The second option (the option applied here) is to maintain the sample size and account for the variances in cities by testing data that is uniformly measured across cities, across countries, and across time.

9. "Vancouver Wins 2010 Winter Olympics by 3-Vote Margin." *The New York Times*, 7/3/2003.

10. "Reagan Talks of German Reunification." *Associated Press News Wire*, 11/11/1987.

11. See Hill, 1996, pp. 80–89; Jennings, 1996, pp. 47–54; Toohey and Veal, 2000, p. 108; and Senn, 1999, pp. 17–18. From 1997 through 2000, nine of the top eleven purchasers of Olympic logo rights were American-based corporations. For a more recent account see the comments of IOC member Patrick Hickey of Ireland in an article by Liz Robbin, "New York Named a Finalist to Host 2012 Olympics." *The New York Times*, 5/18/2004.

12. Additional case studies include the vote between Beijing and Sydney for the 2000 Summer Games [see Huntington (1996), pp. 195–197; the IOC's decision to allow a joint German team for the 1964 games [see Espy (1981), pp. 77–78 and Houlihan (1994), p. 73]; and the impact on the IOC from the U.S. boycott of the 1980 Moscow summer games.

13. "New York Remains Viable Bid." *The New York Times*, 7/18/03.

14. More examples of voting by blocs can be found by Espy (1981). Espy provides the Western nations-versus-Soviet Union debate surrounding South African participation in the IOC as exemplifying the impact of these blocs (Espy, 1981, pp. 50, 71).

15. "Vancouver Wins 2010 Winter Olympics Bid by 3-Vote Margin." *The New York Times*, 7/03/03.

16. All information in this paragraph, unless otherwise cited, is from "How Money Made All the Running." *The Guardian* (London), 1/25/1999.

17. For example, there is much speculation that Stockholm, Sweden attempted to bribe IOC members in order to secure the 2004 Summer Olympics.

18. "Vancouver Wins 2010 Winter Olympics by 3-Vote Margin." *The New York Times*, 7/03/2003.

19. However, though Denver was selected to host the 1976 games, because Colorado voters rejected a 1972 bond issue, the games were immediately switched to Innsbruck, Austria.

20. Taking the log of each of these three variables will indicate the increase in the probability of bid success that occurs due to a 100% increase in each variable. Because testing this factor did not alter the results, it was not included in the final model.

21. For justification of U.N. voting data as a suitable proxy for political alignment, see Thacker (1999), pp. 52–53.

22. Another reliable and widely used indicator of international political alignment with the U.S. is the U.S. State Department's *Report to Congress on Voting Practices in the United Nations*. This series of reports measures voting patterns of UNGA members relative to U.S. preferences. Unfortunately, these State Department reports only begin in 1985. The limited time frame of the State Department reports necessitates consideration of alternative voting coincidence measures.

23. To compute a CI, Marin-Bosch begins by eliminating those UNGA votes in which one (or both) of the countries being compared is (are) absent. He then adds all instances in which the two states vote the same: Yes/Yes, No/No, or Abstention/Abstention. To each of those “coinciding” or identical votes, Marin-Bosch assigns a value of two. In order to differentiate between a Yes/No and a Yes/Abstention or a No/Abstention, he assigns to the latter a value of one. This assignment gives him the following simple formula:

$$CI = \frac{2(\text{total identical votes}) + (\text{total Abstention/Yes} + \text{Abstention/No})}{2(\text{total resolutions both voted})}$$

In essence, each 100 points on the scale represents ten (10) percentage points of coincidence. For example, a score of 700 for country X means country X votes the same as the U.S. in the UNGA 70% of the time. Since 1946, 191 countries have voted in the UNGA. Upon request, Marin-Bosch provided an overall ranking from 1946–1999 of all UNGA countries according to their CI with the U.S. (Marin-Bosch, 1998, 118).

24. To observe Transparency International’s archive of CPI and bribe-payers surveys, see www.transparency.org/cpi/ Another measure, Transparency International’s Bribe Payers Index, which measures the pervasiveness of bribery throughout the country, only began taking measurements in 1999.

25. The CPI provides historic estimates of the perceived level of government corruption in a country from 1980 onwards. Unlike U.N. voting coincidence scores, no other reliable and available data exist for periods earlier than 1980. Therefore, for all candidates prior to 1980, the 1980 CPI score is assigned.

26. Country population data are from the U.S. Census Bureau International Data Base (www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbnew.html). City population data are from *The World Gazetteer* population database by Stephan Helders (<http://www.world-gazetteer.com/>). Real GDP per capita data are compiled from the World Bank’s Macro-time-series 2001 data set. This same Real GDP data is used to compute 1-, 5-, and 10-year Real GDP per capita growth rates. Please note the following sources for the 2005 economic data: One-year growth rate data and Real GDP per capita level are from the Economist Intelligence Unit. Five-year Real GDP per capita growth rate is 1999–2003 (4 years) data from United Nations Commission on Trade and Development Handbook of Statistics. Ten-year Real GDP per capita growth rate is 1995–2003 (8 years) data from United Nations Commission on Trade and Development Handbook of Statistics.

27. The candidate bids for either a summer or a winter Olympic Games. The Olympiad preceding the one the candidate is bidding for refers to the following: If the U.S. is a summer games candidate and the previous summer games were held in Canada, then *CONT* receives a value of one. However, this variable would be zero if it had been the previous winter games, not the summer games, that had been in Canada.

28. The candidate bids for either a summer or a winter Olympic Games. The Olympiad preceding the one the candidate is bidding on refers to the following: If the U.S. is a summer games candidate and the previous summer games were held in Canada, then *CONT* receives a value of one. However, this variable would be zero if it had been the previous winter games, not summer games, that had been in Canada.

29. Switzerland did not join the U.N. until 2002.

30. All regressions performed with STATA Version 8. Given the possibility that European countries are of closer political proximity to the U.S. than non-European countries, particularly during the Cold War period, a correlation matrix with *CIUS* and *EURO* is computed prior to testing. Weak correlation was found between *EURO* and *CIUS*, suggesting that being a European country need not necessitate close political alignment to the U.S. These results are available from the author upon request.

31. This is also true of the summer- and winter-only regressions divided by IOC presidency (which, admittedly, had very small sample sizes when running these particular tests). Output from these tests are available upon request from the author.

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