



Islam and the Olympics: seeking a host city in the Muslim world

Islam and
the Olympics

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Abstract

Purpose – Awarding the Olympic Games to a host city in the Muslim world would send a clear indication from member nations of the International Olympic Committee of a desire by the international community to engage with Muslim nations on a level that transcends sport. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to answer the question: will a city in the Muslim world ever become host to the greatest sporting spectacle on Earth, and, if so, which is most likely to receive it, when and why?

Design/methodology/approach – To gauge the potential of cities in the Muslim world hosting the Olympics Games, the approach of the paper is to examine the merits of former host cities and then qualitatively comparing these with member countries of the Organisation of Islamic Conference which have a majority Muslim population.

Findings – The research findings indicate that there are five cities in the Muslim world, at least one of which is likely to be awarded one of the coming six Summer Olympic Games between the years 2020 and 2040.

Research limitations/implications – The broader implications of the study are that, in examining Muslim nations of the world from the point of view of mega-event management on a global scale, their development and advancement capability in the modern world can be probed.

Originality/value – In the absence of any other published study on the subject, this paper would open a discourse that would be of value to scholars and interested parties in diverse fields such as major programme management, Islamic studies, international politics, economics and international development.

Keywords Islam, Muslim, Olympic Games, Mega events, International Olympic Committee, Organization of Islamic Conference, Sporting events, Political science

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Understanding the Islamic world has been regarded from a Western perspective as necessary for varying reasons throughout the last millennium up to the present day. Conquest, governance, exploitation and most recently engagement have been primary motivators (Ramadan, 2007). In modern times, sport, and in particular the Olympic Games, has been one mechanism for promoting engagement (Carroll and Hollinshead, 1993) with politically and ideologically hostile nations from a Western perspective, with communist and fascist regimes being prominent examples. Recently, in a post-9/11 world, with an emphasis by the west on promoting moderation within Muslim societies across the globe (Akhavi, 2003; Esposito, 2005; Rehman, 2005),



it is important that the world soon witnesses an Olympic Games hosted by a city in the Muslim world.

For the host city too, there are potential and lasting social and economic gains to hosting the games, including global marketing opportunities, infrastructure development, travel and tourism, urban regeneration programmes and city re-branding (Berg, 2008; Gold and Gold, 2008).

This paper thus examines the possibility of a Muslim host city for the Olympics for two reasons. First, examining the potential of hosting a global mega-event provides insights on developmental characteristics of a city and nation. An examination into political, historic, cultural, economic and other issues is useful in gauging the progress of the Muslim world in comparison to other developed nations. Second, the awarding of an Olympic Games to a city in the Muslim world sends a clear indication of a desire to engage with it and, in the absence of any published study on the subject, this paper would open a discourse that would be of value to scholars and interested parties in diverse fields such as Islam, international politics, sport, economics, international development and beyond.

2. Historical purpose of the Olympics

In modern times, the Olympic Games, as with other mega-events to lesser degrees, such as the FIFA World Cup football tournament, appear to have been defined by city marketing, the demand for a sustainable legacy, nationalism and political issues, rather than sport. As Berg (2008, p. 15) points out, "sport may be the style of the Olympics, but nationalism and geo-politics are (its) content". It is unclear at what historical point sport did become a sideline issue for the Olympics. Legend has it that the ancient games began with five brother-gods in Olympia who were merely seeking recreation. The eldest brother duly contrived running races with the winner awarded a crown of leaves (Papantoniou, 2008, p. 33), thus introducing the element of competition, often found between brothers of lesser deity. This spirit of recreation and sporting competition, should be, but is certainly not the *raison d'être* of the Olympics today.

The founder of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and instigator of the modern Olympic Games, beginning with the 1896 games, Pierre de Coubertin, clearly articulated the doctrinal vision of universality as the cornerstone of the Olympic movement. Though, on the surface a noble sentiment, in practice, universalism meant that the absence of any form of discrimination and the assumption of universal ethical and moral equivalency, resulted in dictatorial communist and fascist regimes being awarded the games, to whom the success of their bids translated to being a green light to propagate their political agendas on a world stage (Berg, 2008, p. 16). These include, most infamously, Nazi Germany (host city Berlin in, 1936), as well as more recently the Soviet Union (Moscow, 1980) and China (Beijing, 2008). It can be argued that although these nations are representative of objectionable values at the time of hosting the games, their future was altogether different. Germany and Russia are now democratic nations with elected representation of their people. Though a direct link between hosting mega-events and political change is tenuous and cannot be substantiated, the global exposure hosting the Olympics provides can be a contributing factor to the shifting sands of political movement in the longer term (Westerbeek, 2009). Thus, an argument for moderation and liberality within Muslim nations would likely be a covert underlying message to the Muslim world in selecting a host city within it.

For democratic nations, Olympic critics focus on political agendas of governments and individuals, with the games being used as a tool to give prominence to their hallmark cities on a world stage. Though long-term economic benefits are questionable, short-term attention-seeking strategies appear to be the main goal (Matheson, 2002). Examples of host cities proclaiming a strategy of long-term economic benefit include the Rome (host of the 1960 games), Munich (1972), Los Angeles (1984) and Barcelona (1992), all of which delivered notably successful infrastructure and urban regeneration programmes (Pitsis *et al.*, 2003); the Sydney games (2000), which emphasised drawing increased future revenue from tourism (Berg, 2008, p. 17; Eager, 1997); and London (2012) which has its accent on urban regeneration and city re-branding (Gold and Gold, 2008, p. 300).

Another feature of the Olympics very pertinent to the Islamic world is that of terrorism and security. The grandiose scale of the Olympic Games in recent years has increasingly attracted two main challenges to its security. The first is as a consequence of public demonstration and the second resulting from the threat of terrorism. The Tlatelolco Massacre, which occurred during a student protest for greater human rights prior to the Mexico City Olympics of 1968, resulted in approximately 300 people being killed (Berg, 2008, p. 17). Demonstrations in the run up to the Beijing Olympics of 2008 included human rights and pro-Tibetan independence protests which marred the Torch Lighting Ceremony in Athens as well as numerous legs of the torch relay around the globe. There were also counter demonstrations from pro-Chinese activists, in addition to demonstrations by the Chinese Muslim Uyghur population in Xinjiang province for greater autonomy and greater religious freedom. Munich saw the first instance of international terrorism at the Olympic Games in the form of hostage taking (Gold and Gold, 2008, p. 305). A pro-Palestinian group took 11 Israeli athletes and officials hostage inside the Olympic Village during the games. In a bungled attempt at rescue by poorly trained West German police, all 11 hostages were killed along with five of the eight hostage takers and one police officer. This incident reflected very badly on Olympic organisers as they were seen to be negligent in preparations for such an eventuality. In the case of the Munich massacre, inaccurate initial reports of all terrorists being killed and all hostages surviving the ordeal only served to exacerbate the harm to the reputation of the organisers.

3. The Olympics and Muslim nations

The mythology surrounding the ancient Olympiad raises controversy and debate amongst Muslims as to its acceptability and relevance from the perspective of Islamic tradition. This is due to the pagan and polytheistic foundation of the tradition which envelops the history of the games coming into conflict with the monotheistic tradition of Islam, which is seen by Muslims as being sacrosanct. Much of the Olympic tradition preserved as part of the ceremony during the Olympics is a reflection of this conflicting tradition which many Muslims find contravene their own beliefs to the extent of negating participation. However, this sentiment is largely articulated on an individualistic level, but there is growing interest amongst the nations of the Muslim world *vis-à-vis* partaking in global sporting events, both as event participants represented through an Olympic team and establishing a National Olympic Committee, as well as aspiring to put forward potential host cities. The general view of the Olympics is therefore participatory and positive, with Muslim nations having a long history

of involvement and, more recently, entering bidding contests to host future games. The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) themselves, also recognising the importance of sport to development, whilst attempting to balance Islamic conservatism preventing female participants from entering other global events or public sporting activities, began a multinational, multi-sport event of its own in Saudi Arabia in 2005, called the Islamic Solidarity Games. The event was envisaged to run every four years, though Iran is due to be the next host in 2010, following a five-year gap. Additionally, Iran continues to host the Women's Islamic Games, with four games having been held since 1993. The popularity of these games has steadily increased, from only ten participating OIC member nations in 1993, to 44 nations in the latest games held in 2005.

4. Methodology

The methodological framework of the research is exploratory and followed a process-based method for shortlisting candidate Muslim cities as shown in Figure 1.

5. Results and analysis

5.1 Organization of Islamic Conference

There are 56 Member States of the OIC, which has its headquarters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Member countries have Muslim populations of a minimum 10 per cent. Table I lists only those countries which have majority Muslim populations

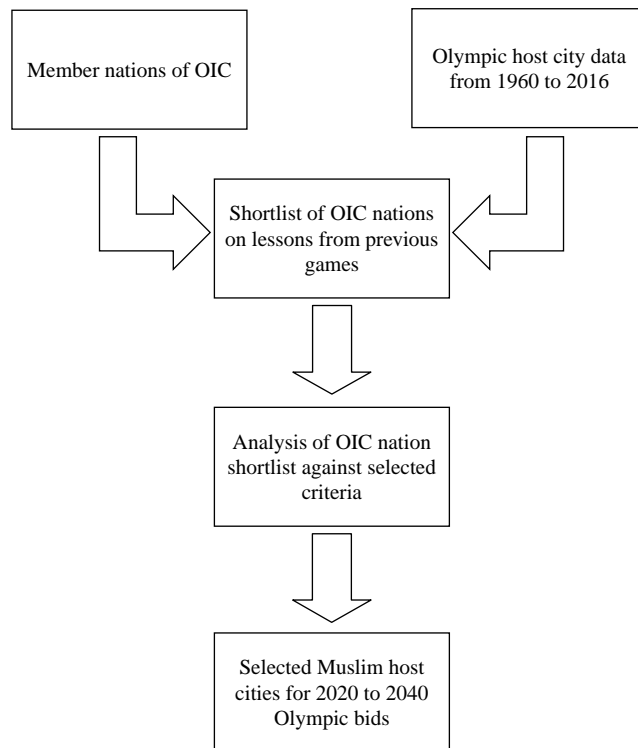


Figure 1.
Process flow diagram for
method of potential host
city selection in the
Muslim world

Country	Total population	Muslim (%)	Religion and state	Type of government
Saudi Arabia	27,601,038	100	Islamic state	Absolute monarchy
Maldives	350,000	100	State religion	Presidential republic
Mauritania	3,124,000	99.99	Islamic state	Military junta
Somalia	9,558,666	99.9	State religion	Coalition government
Turkey	71,517,100	99.8	Secular	Parliamentary democracy
Algeria	33,769,669	99	State religion	Presidential republic
Afghanistan	32,738,376	99	Islamic state	Presidential republic
Morocco	33,723,418	99	State religion	Constitutional monarchy
Yemen	23,013,376	99	Islamic state	Presidential republic
Iran	70,495,782	98	Islamic state	Presidential republic
Tunisia	10,383,577	98	State religion	Presidential republic
Comoros	798,000	98	State religion	Federal republic
Pakistan	172,800,000	97	Islamic state	Semi-presidential republic
Iraq	28,221,181	97	State religion	Parliamentary democracy
Tajikistan	7,215,700	97	Secular	Presidential republic
Libya	6,173,579	97	State religion	Jamahiriya Revolution
Jordan	5,568,565	95	state religion	Constitutional monarchy
Senegal	11,658,000	94	Secular	Semi-presidential republic
Djibouti	496,374	94	Secular	Semi-presidential republic
Azerbaijan	8,676,000	93.4	Secular	Presidential republic
Oman	2,577,000	93	State religion	Absolute monarchy
Egypt	77,100,000	90	State religion	Semi-presidential republic
Syria	19,405,000	90	None	Authoritarian republic
Niger	13,272,679	90	Secular	Parliamentary democracy
Mali	11,995,402	90	Secular	Semi-presidential republic
The Gambia	1,700,000	90	Secular	Presidential republic
Bangladesh	162,221,000	89	State Religion	Parliamentary democracy
Turkmenistan	5,110,023	89	Secular	Parliamentary republic
Uzbekistan	27,372,000	88	Secular	Presidential republic
Indonesia	228,582,000	86.1	None	Presidential republic
Guinea	10,211,437	85	Secular	Military junta
Kuwait	3,399,637	85	State religion	Constitutional monarchy
Bahrain	1,046,814	81	State religion	Constitutional monarchy
Albania	3,170,048	79.9	None	Parliamentary republic
Qatar	744,029	77.5	State religion	Absolute monarchy
United Arab Emirates	5,432,746	76	State religion	Federal constitutional monarchy
Kyrgyzstan	5,356,869	75	Secular	Semi-presidential republic
Sudan	39,379,358	70	None	Authoritarian republic
Brunei	381,371	67	State religion	Absolute monarchy
Malaysia	27,730,000	60.4	State religion	Parliamentary democracy and elective monarchy
Sierra Leone	6,294,774	60	None	Presidential republic
Lebanon	4,196,453	60	None	Parliamentary democracy
Kazakhstan	15,217,711	57	Secular	Presidential republic
Chad	5,041,690	54	Secular	Presidential republic
Nigeria	154,279,000	50	None	Presidential federal republic
Burkina Faso	13,228,000	50	Secular	Semi-presidential republic

Table I.
List of majority Muslim countries (ranked by Muslim population as percentage of total population) which are member states of the OIC

(50 per cent or more) and are member states of the OIC. Population and governance data are also included. Additionally, the Palestinian authority is also a member of the OIC, but Kosovo, which was supported in its independence movement by the OIC, is not yet a member state.

5.2 Olympic host city bid successes since 1960 and OIC shortlist

To examine the possibility of a city from the Muslim world hosting the Olympic Games, I have first examined past history of the modern Olympics, and have researched host cities and criteria by which selection chances are amplified. Thus, by applying key factors for becoming a host city for the Olympic Games to the OIC list of Muslim member countries, nations which are unsuitable can be eliminated from their list. Sufficient development to fund the necessary infrastructural requirements that the Olympic Games demands is first and foremost.

According to the most recent selection process, that for the 2016 games, eventually awarded to Rio de Janeiro, the IOC apply 11 technical criteria to select an Olympic host city, namely, government support; infrastructure; sporting venues; planned Olympic village; environmental conditions and impact; accommodation; transport plan; safety and security; past events experience; finance; and overall project and legacy (IOC, 2009). In terms of the process of selection, host cities wishing to bid, prepare their bids typically a minimum of three years prior to the IOC decision. The decision itself is approximately seven years prior to the games. Thus, a decade or more is committed by a host city in preparing a bid, being award the games, and actually hosting the event (Hasan, 1999).

Table II shows fiscal statistics for host nations of the Summer Olympics from 1960. Though these are all 2008 statistics, they provide a reasonable benchmark of national development and indicate the general level of economic stability (Mules, 2005). Consequently, under-developed and developing nations below historic success thresholds can be eliminated from the OIC list as unsuitable to host the games, as it can be reasonably assumed that financial guarantees demanded by the IOC would not be forthcoming. Based on this, and using the lowest approximate value from previous games, nations with per capita GDP below US\$3,000 (similar to China who hosted

Table II.
List of countries to have hosted the Summer Olympics with corresponding host cities, GDP (nominal) per capita and GDP (nominal) based on IMF and World Bank 2008 statistics

Country	Host city	Olympic year	GDP (PPP) per capita (US\$)	GDP (millions of US\$)
Italy	Rome	1960	38,996	2,313,893
Japan	Tokyo	1964	38,457	4,910,692
Mexico	Mexico City	1968	10,200	1,088,128
Germany	Munich	1972	44,729	3,673,105
Canada	Montreal	1976	45,085	1,499,551
USSR/Russia	Moscow	1980	11,807	1,676,586
USA	Los Angeles, Atlanta	1984, 1996	47,440	14,441,425
South Korea	Seoul	1988	19,136	929,124
Spain	Barcelona	1992	35,117	1,601,964
Australia	Sydney	2000	46,824	1,013,461
Greece	Athens	2004	32,105	357,548
China	Beijing	2008	3,259	4,327,448
Great Britain	London	2012	43,734	2,680,000
Brazil	Rio de Janeiro	2016	8,295	1,572,839

the 2008 games in Beijing) and GDP below US\$350,000 million (similar to Greece (Nixon, 2005) who hosted the 2004 games in Athens), results in 21 member nations from the OIC being removed.

Furthermore, other OIC member nations have been removed due to a variety of other reasons. Iraq has been removed as, due to recent wars, security and poor infrastructure, it will likely take decades to reach standards required. Saudi Arabia is also not shortlisted, as religious conservatism will impede hosting public events with the participation of women and broader media issues would be too restrictive; Syria and Iran both have long-standing political tensions with Israel and USA, particularly on the issues of Palestine, Lebanon, Hezbollah, nuclear proliferation and disputed territories such as the Golan Heights, which will likely negate IOC confidence for the foreseeable future. However, Iran, with a solid history of participation in the Olympics and strong historical and cultural significance, remains in the list for further analysis. Bahrain and Maldives are inadequate in size (665 and 300 km², respectively) to host the games. Though Bahrain has successfully hosted a Formula 1 motor sport race annually since 2004, this global event is a single event with comparatively limited impact. The Maldives, which is topographically the lowest country on the planet, consequently suffers from environmental issues, most widely publicised being the catastrophic Tsunami in 2004. Maldives is thus not a viable host option, though fiscally more stable than others already rejected from the OIC list. The majority of this nation of atolls will likely disappear over the course of this century and the current priority of the government of the Maldives is to actively seek the purchase of land elsewhere, in order to relocate the nation's inhabitants. I have also excluded nations who have no substantive Olympic record, in that they have never won a single medal at the Olympics. These additional nations are Albania, Brunei, Oman, Jordan, Turkmenistan and Libya.

5.3 Analysis of shortlist candidate cities and final selection

Analysing and deconstructing the technical criteria for selecting a host city by the IOC, listed earlier, can now be done in the context of the remaining Muslim countries and their likely bidding cities. Factors that indicate possible success in bidding include whether or not a potential host city has a past history of bidding, though it is reassuring to some Muslim hosts that have not bid previously, that five out of the last six cities to have hosted the Olympic Games won on their first bid attempt. Other factors are the cultural and historical significance of the host city and/or country; political stability; social stability including religious freedom, racial equality, human rights, equality of women and non-discrimination; security risk based on recent history; the existence of sporting, transportation and hospitality infrastructure upon which a bid can be built; a history of hosting other mega-events, either regional or global and the outcome of them. The final factor included in the list is provision of a public fiscal guarantee. Owing to rising costs of hosting the games, coupled with interest at an international level, the IOC cannot, more than ever, risk failure in the delivery of an Olympic Games. Consequently, the committee decided that governments must act as financial guarantor when a city bids to host the Olympics (Lenskyj, 2004, p. 370). These factors are not exhaustive, but provide indicators as to the likelihood of success by a Muslim nation to bid for one of its cities to host the games in the near future. Applying all the measures and eliminations described, an analysis of all the remaining 14 member nations of the OIC based on the criteria outlined is given in Table III.

Table III.
Selection of potential host nations (cities) for the Olympic Games from majority Muslim countries (ranked by total population) based on key measures

Country (bidding city)	Continent	Past bid as host (city)	Olympic history	History and traditions	Political stability	Security (historical)	Existing infrastructure	Major sporting events held	GDP per capita (millions of US\$)	Potential host
Algeria (Algiers)	Africa	-	11 games 14 medals	Rich in tradition pre and post-Islam, Ottoman and French rule, UNESCO World Heritage sites	Improving since cancelled elections of 1991 led to a decade of unrest	Unrest of 1990s resulted in many athletes resettling in France	Strong economy, low fiscal deficit and good energy sector revenues Fair air, road and rail network, limited but growing hospitality and tourism sector	Mediterranean Games (1975)	6,538	Though IOC expressed wish for African nation for 2020, Algeria still recovering from political and social unrest of 1990s so bid in near future is unrealistic
Azerbaijan (Baku)	Eurasia	2016 (Baku)	4 games 16 medals	Rich in folklore, music, art, architecture and sport	First Muslim world secular democracy 1918 Women's hijab banned in public buildings	Stable since independence from USSR	Sound business infrastructure according to World Bank, economic growth, good transportation and penetration of telecoms	Limited scale - tournaments (Baku, 2008 FIDE Grand Prix)	7,656	Though politically, economically and geographically sound, needs to develop infrastructure and portfolio of sporting venues and events
Egypt (Cairo)	Africa	-	19 games 24 medals	Very rich and diverse history third and fourth dynasties date to around 3000 BC when pyramids were built, Tutankhamen ruled from 1336 BC for nine years, Assyrians (671 BC), Persia (525 BC), Alexander the Great (332 BC), Islam (642), Cairo founded (969), Ottomans (1517), Napoleon (1798), Egyptology from around 1820	Independent since 1953, semi-democratic presidential system, Hosni Mubarak served last five years with Muslim Brotherhood his (332 main opponents BC), Cairo Peasant activism and emergency law (since 1967)	Recent history of terrorist shootings and bombings of tourists around Egypt Most deadly were 62 tourists shot and killed at Luxor (1997) and 88 killed in bombings in Sharm el-Sheikh (2005)	Developing infrastructure, well developed media, growth in telecoms (Etisalat since the and Orascom) Development marred by corruption Transportation infrastructure is dated though functional, Cairo well equipped for tourism, mega-event hosting needs development	No significant event hosted inaugural Mediterranean Games of 1951 in Alexandria	5,491	Cairo currently reviewing its potential to host major sporting events

(continued)

Country (bidding city)	Continent	Past bid as host (city)	Olympic history	History and traditions	Political stability	Security (historical)	Existing infrastructure	Major sporting events held	GDP per capita (millions of US\$)	Potential host
Indonesia (Jakarta)	Asia	-	13 games 25 medals	Diverse influences of indigenous and foreign settlers Religion covers Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Confucianism Religious and ethnic fusion shapes much of the cultural tradition Chinese and Indian tradition is also strong, e.g. in cuisine	Annexation of East Timor in (1978) and human rights abuses alleged following independence (1999) was condemned internationally Political reform followed 1998 revolution and the resignation of Suharto Founding member of ASEAN	Iemaah Islamiyah and Islamist group (al-Qaeda affiliated) have targeted tourist destinations and Western interests across Indonesia: Jakarta Stock Exchange (2000) 15 dead, Christmas Eve Bombings (2000) 18 dead; Bali (2002) 202 dead; Marriott Hotel Subarto Founding member of (2003) 12 dead; Australian embassy (2004) 9 dead; Bali (2005) 20 dead; Jakarta (2009) 7 dead	Sound tourist and transportation infrastructure Olympic scale development required in areas, such as stadia, but this could form part of a bid	Asian Games, 1962, South East Asian Games, 1987, 1987 Asian Judo Championships (1981)	3,725 511,765	Regional al-Qaeda supported terrorism remains a major obstacle for Indonesia (Schwarz, 2000)
Iran (Tehran)	Asia	Considered bid for 1984 but withdrew	14 games 48 medals	Dates to 4000 BC, a former empire and superpower in the form of Persia, Islamic conquest in the seventh century, a Shi'a majority nation since the sixteenth century, ruled by a Shah from this time until the Islamic revolution of 1979 Iran is best known culturally for its film industry, literature, architecture and cuisine	Issues on nuclear proliferation, Israel persist Uprising following 2009 presidential elections	Accusations of sponsorship of international and regional terrorism against Almedinejad regime from Israel and Western nations Sunni militant groups carry out terrorist attacks within Iran, e.g. Zahedan bombing (2007) which killed 18	Believed Iran withdrew from 1984 bid due to recognition of level of infrastructure expenditure required	Asian Games, 1974; West Asian Games (1997, 2010)	10,624 335,233	In the current climate, a Tehran games would likely result in a return to boycotts (such as in 1980 and 1984) from Western nations, which the IOC would certainly wish to avoid
Kazakhstan (Almaty)	Asia	Almaty bid for 2014 Winter Olympics	4 games 39 medals	Post-Soviet culture developing, with influences from Islam and neighbouring nation of China and Russia	Stable though political rights, religious freedom, independence of the judiciary and civil liberties of inhabitants is criticised	No attacks to date, though Kazak's recent westward leanings is raising the level of perceived threat	Major energy producer Fair transport and telecoms infrastructure Landlocked nation in highly strategic location- Silk Road and O&G pipelines Kazak government investing over \$700 Mn into development for ASIAD 2011	Almaty will host the Asian Winter Games 2011 Asian Judo Championships (2004)	11,086 135,601	With a good summer climate, Kazakhstan could build on its Winter Olympics bid and ASIAD 2011 winter success and consider a bid for a Summer Olympics

(continued)

Table III.

Country (bidding city)	Continent	Past bid as host (city)	Olympic history	History and traditions	Political stability	Security (historical)	Existing infrastructure	Major sporting events held	GDP per capita (millions of US\$)	Potential host	
Kuwait (Kuwait City)	Asia	-	11 games 1 medal	Greek, Ottoman and British have ruled region through history. Kuwait founded in 1705 by Bani Utbah. Independence in 1961. Follows well-documented Gulf Arab tradition (Kennedy, 2004)	Stable constitutional monarchy since 1961 with political parties representative of religious sects within the country	No major incidents since first Gulf War and, in recent years, terrorist plots have been allegedly thwarted against US military interests in Kuwait	Affluent Gulf nation, high standard of development marked by first Persian Gulf Football Olympic Infrastructural development must take high temperatures and humidity into account	West Asian Games (2002) Football tournaments: Gulf Cup of Nations regional (1974, 1990, 2003); Arab Nations Cup (1964, 2002); Asian Cup (1980) Asian Judo Championships (1984, 2007)	39,305	158,089	Good potential
Lebanon (Beirut)	Asia	-	15 games 4 medals	Ottoman rule. Independence from French and British rule since 1941	Though election of Saad Hariri in Nov 2009 officially brings an end to a lengthy period of time with effectively two governments followed by a power vacuum, political tension remains high	A litany of hijacking, terrorism, war and assassinations in recent history	Arab-Israeli tensions have affected Lebanon since the 1967 war, civil war 1975-1990, Israel control of southern Lebanon 1978. Israeli attacks follow and buffer zone set up in 1983. Tensions continue to today with Israeli invasion July 2006	No significant event hosted since the Mediterranean Games of 1959	11,270	27,918	Political instability, Arab-Israeli tension, borders with Syria and Israel, economic impact of civil war and social strife, means Lebanon is not equipped for a major event in the foreseeable future
Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur)	Asia	-	11 games 4 medals	Islamic rule and Portuguese, Dutch and British colonialism have defined Malaysia until independence (1957). Multi-ethnic and multi-religious society	Mohammed's 22 years as Prime Minister (1981-2003) saw a decline in democratic values. Economic decline and subsequent crime and ethnic tensions in recent years	Malaysian Jemaah Islamiyah members believed to be involved in Indonesian attacks on Malaysia in recent years, though warnings persist from Western nations (Goh, 1994)	Vibrant tourist sector and transportation infrastructure is good, backed by sustainable economic growth. Largest stadium by capacity in the Muslim world	Formula 1 Grand Prix; South East Asian Games (1977, 1989, 2001)	13,315	207,116	Good potential

(continued)

Country (bidding city)	Continent	Past bid as host (city)	Olympic history	History and traditions	Political stability	Security (historical)	Existing infrastructure	Major sporting events held	GDP per capita (millions of US\$)	Potential host
Morocco (Rabat)	Africa	–	12 games 21 medals	Berber, Roman, Islamic rule, French and Spanish protectorate, independence 1956	Stable constitutional monarchy	Casablanca has seen suicide bombings in 2003 (33 killed) and 2007 (one killed in three separate incidents) Madrid bombings of 2004 which killed 191 linked to same terror group	Popular tourist destination with good related infrastructure	Mediterranean Games (1983 in Casablanca)	4,076	88,879 Expected to bid for 2020. IOC expressed wish for African nation for 2020. Security remains a problem
Qatar (Doha)	Asia	2016 (Doha)	7 games 2 medals	Ruled by Ottomans, Safavid Iran, Bahrain and Oman, British protectorate post First World War, independence in 1971	Stable absolute monarchy, with comparatively liberal society within a Gulf context	Underlying threat, one suicide attack in 2005 killed one expatriate resident within resident	Excellent transportation and hospitality infrastructure including easy international passage	Asian Games 2006; West Asian Games (2005)	80,870	102,302 Strong candidate with history of bidding, stable liberal society, strong economy and excellent infrastructure. Considering to bid for 2020 (Doha). Climate is the only major issue
Tunisia (Tunis)	Africa	–	12 games 7 medals	Roman, Islamic/Ottoman and French rule, independence 1956	Presidential democracy with state law banning Islamic political parties. Secularism is protected vigorously, women for example are not allowed to wear the hijab in public buildings. Media/internet is censored, public criticism of authoritarian regime restricted	Al-Qaeda sponsored suicide bombing of synagogue (2002) killed 21, including 14 German tourists	Economically sound, highly self-sufficient, with strong growth especially during 1990s, good urban development, real estate boom and effective poverty reduction measures taken. Good transportation system. Football-loving nation with three 50,000+ seater stadia	Games (1987, 2001)	7,473	40,348 Potential future candidate

(continued)

Table III.

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Country (bidding city)	Continent	Past bid as host (city)	Olympic history	History and traditions	Political stability	Security (historical)	Existing infrastructure	Major sporting events held	GDP (PPP) per capita (US\$)	GDP (millions of US\$)	Potential host
Turkey (Istanbul)	Eurasia	2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012 games (Istanbul)	2004, 20 games and 82 medals	Turkey is on the Anatolian Peninsula, Persian Empire, fell to Alexander the Great in 334 BC, later Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire from Constantine I (324 CE)	Parliamentary democracy with close ties to the West, member of NATO with military bases, Empire bidding for EU membership	Terrorist attacks and bombings (1998, 2003, 2004 and 2008, 94 civilian deaths)	Economically strong, high growth in recent years and diversified industry	Formula 1 Grand Prix; Mediterranean Games (1971 in Izmir)	12,888	729,983	Expected to bid for 2020 Strongest bidding and participation history of Olympics from the Muslim world Terrorism remains a major obstacle for Turkey to be awarded the Olympics Resolution of Cyprus issue and EU membership will strengthen Turkey in the medium term

(continued)

Country (bidding city)	Continent	Past bid as host (city)	Olympic history	History and traditions	Political stability	Security (historical)	Existing infrastructure	Major sporting events held	GDP (PPP) per capita (millions of US\$)	Potential host
United Arab Emirates (Dubai)	Asia		7 games 1 medal	Formerly known as the Trucial States through agreement with the British in the nineteenth century Independent federation established in 1971 Highly dependent on expatriate workforce which accounts for over 70 per cent of the nation's population UAE is historically charitable, supporting relief efforts after natural disasters, support for Palestine and African development projects in all estimated at around \$40 Bn in foreign aid and soft loans since 1971	Operates as a federation of seven emirates under a constitutional monarchy Highly tolerant, liberal and religiously inclusive society by Gulf standards, compared to neighbours Iran and Saudi Arabia	UAE has cooperated since the 1991 Gulf War Financial dealings of al-Qaeda in the UAE to fund 9/11 hijackers brought criticism of money laundering, which the UAE has clamped down on	IMF classifies UAE as a high income developing economy, with fourth largest oil reserves in the world UAE and Dubai in particular are ambitious Largest infrastructure expenditure in the Gulf region in recent years (Randersee and Chaudhry, 2007) Significant expenditure on transport infrastructure, 20th busy airport in the world, Dubai Metro recently opened, boasts the tallest building, tallest hotel in the world, huge offshore real estate projects Growth tempered by global recession in 2008/2009	Formula 1 Grand Prix (Abu Dhabi) The International Cricket Council moved from Lord's Cricket ground to Dubai in 2005	37,293 262,150	Expected to bid for 2020 (Dubai) Ambitions development of "Dubailand" and Dubai Sport City as well as continued infrastructure development in real estate, travel and tourism markets makes Dubai a strong competitor for Olympic success Dubai, as with other Gulf bidding cities, has a very hot and humid climate in the summer months which is a concern for the Olympics, though the UAE plans to counteract this with temperature controlled venues as far as possible and perhaps, hosting the games later in the year

Table III.

Former bidding cities from the Muslim world are limited. Notably, Istanbul with four bids has had the greatest number of unsuccessful bids in Olympic history. It is possible that the unsuccessful bids of Baku and Doha for the 2016 Olympic Games may have been intended purely for exposure and the establishment of a bidding history before embarking on serious attempts in the future, rather than a serious expectation of award. However, Istanbul and Doha once again, together with Dubai and Rabat, are all developing bids for the 2020 games, a decision on which is expected in 2013. The IOC has indicated a desire for an African host city in that year and, should they add the nations of the Arabian Peninsula, the stakes could not be higher.

From the analysis detailed in Table III, ten cities have a favourable chance of success in the next six bidding contests to host the Olympic Games (though others may emerge in time). These are the three Persian Gulf (Asian) cities of Doha, Kuwait City and Dubai; the three African cities of Cairo, Rabat and Tunis; the two (further) Asian cities of Almaty and Kuala Lumpur and the two Eurasian cities of Baku and Istanbul.

Five of these cities show the strongest evidence of potential success. Istanbul potentially is the most promising host city for the Olympics. Its major drawbacks are terrorism, the geo-politics of a divided Cyprus and, to comparatively lesser degrees, infrastructure and finance (Nielson, 1992). The strength of Turkey's participation in earlier Olympic Games, coupled with Istanbul's long bidding history, means the IOC may wish to prioritise Turkey and wait for them to alleviate their problems and obtain EU membership before awarding them the first games in the Muslim world. If, however, the IOC is not inclined to wait, a Persian Gulf city is the next likely recipient in the Muslim world, based on this analysis, of hosting the games. Doha, which bid to host the 2016 games, failed, in part, due to it wishing to host the event in late October (Doha 2016 Olympic Bid Committee, 2008), as opposed to the traditional summer months, as its summertime temperatures can soar to up to 50°C. Though the bidding committee for Doha emphasised that hosting the games later in the year is not without precedent, with Melbourne (1956), Tokyo (1964) and Mexico City (1968) all hosting their games between October and December, these games pre-date the times when television rights and global audiences became of paramount importance. It is, along with Dubai, likely to bid for the 2020 games, with an assurance for holding the games during the more traditional summer months, with promises of temperature-controlled venues. Both cities, being very similar in terms of climate, are more than capable of delivering such venues due to their economic wealth as well as experience in infrastructure development, but the recent emphasis on greener games may hamper such bids. Events, such as the marathon, a signature event at the Olympics, would also remain adversely affected by high summer temperatures and high humidity. Finally, Kuala Lumpur and Cairo show potential. Kuala Lumpur is currently not targeting hosting the games, with the Olympic Council of Malaysia making no reference to competing to host the games in their last three annual general meetings (Olympic Council of Malaysia, 2009). Cairo is still in the infancy of developing a bid.

6. Conclusion

Recently, as through the history of the modern Olympics, the economic and political value of hosting a global mega-event is viewed very optimistically. Whether or not the reality is positive or not is a source of debate. However, from the politics in Berlin in 1936,

Moscow in 1980 and Beijing in 2008 to the economics of profitability and tourism in Los Angeles in 1984 and Sydney in 2000, to city recognition and infrastructural improvements that signified Barcelona in 1992; there is ample evidence of the long-term value of the games if one looks for it. This paper can act as catalyst for member nations of the OIC to recognise that from a comparable viewpoint, it is potentially in their long-term geo-political and socio-economic interests for a member nation to host the Olympics. This paper sets out factors upon which the member nations of the OIC may contemplate developing an approach for securing an Olympic Games in the Muslim world, and developing an agenda for its legacy of engagement with the rest of the world. From the perspective of the broader international community, engagement with the Muslim world could not be more necessary or timely than at present, and sport has historically been demonstrated as an effective tool in achieving similar goals.

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