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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the role of the International Olympic Committee as an International Organization in the field of interdependent world politics. Contemporary international community is organized on the basis of international organizations that contribute to the cooperation and understanding of the people especially in areas that enjoy human recognition worldwide. These organizations may function as agents of world solidarity and aim directly or indirectly at the promotion of understanding between people and consequently at the establishment of peace. They also carry out activities that aim at influencing national and international politics relevant to their respective goals. In this field, the IOC, as the most important International Non-Governmental Organization in the field of sport, plays a significant role. With an activity spanning more than a century, the IOC has been able to unify nations under the notion of Olympic ideals. This article aims at contributing partly to the theoretical discussion concerning the ability of the IOC to act as an International Non Governmental Organization and fit in the pieces of world governance in terms of structure and activities. More specifically, it examines this ability in relation to the following facts: a) the IOC enjoys international recognition and has a well-established international network, b) it has a dynamic character and c) it has the authority and financial capacity to function on international and national level as the representative of its 202 members, the National Olympic Committees (NOCs).

Key Words: *World politics, Interdependence, International Organizations, Non - Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Olympic Movement, International Olympic Committee (IOC)*

World politics: Internationalism, Globalization and Non-governmental Organizations

Contemporary global governance is a complex phenomenon and a function comprising «governance-related activities, rules and mechanisms, formal and informal, existing at a variety of levels in the world today» (Karns & Mingst, 2004: 4). Nowadays, world politics is characterized by political patterns that involve nation-states and transnational actors linked in transnational and transgovernmental networks. The term «transnational actors» is basically referred to non-governmental organizations, multinational companies and other players of the international political scene (even terrorist groups) (Baylis & Smith, 2005: 3).

Interdependence in world politics as opposed to realism - a theory that assumes that states are the dominant actors in world politics¹ - basically refers to the pattern of relations that has developed between states, international organizations and the private sector. Both interdependence and transnational relations are important in understanding the «extra-state, sub-national and other relationships» (Macintosh & Hawes, 1992: 34) that characterize contemporary world politics.

The new forms of international organization have increased the significance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As a result of globalization, interconnection of societies and economic interdependence have increased the role of non-state actors (Keohane & Nye, 1971), which in some cases may be more important than the role of nation-states. This fact has raised worries about the emerging power of NGOs, worries related to the accountability and responsibilities of transnational actors, whether it's Greenpeace, International Amnesty or IBM. As noted, one of the basic questions is: «to whom are the transnational social movements responsible and democratically accountable?» (Baylis & Smith, 2005: 12).

The appearance of NGOs is closely linked to the emerging power of civil society and, consequently, the increasing

1. About realism, please refer to Baylis & Smith (2005), Jackson & Sorensen (2006), Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff (1992), et al.

participation of citizens in policy-making (Chatzigianni, 2006: 102). NGOs are primarily - but not only - voluntary organizations that bring together individuals or associations with a common target. Generally, they draw their members from different areas of the world and may function as agents for one or more purposes. The majority of them is characterized by the establishment of formal, long-term links among national groups and function as key sources of technical expertise and information (Karns & Mingst, 2004: 11, 12).

Internationalism as a concept was mainly activated in the form of the League of Nations after the end of the First World War (Wallbank et al, 2002) and governs the area of International Relations since the creation of the United Nations in 1945. After the end of World War II, new needs were created in the area of human cooperation as a result of the increasing participation of people in the area of international relations, the strengthening of national sovereignty and technological developments, especially in the field of communications (Roukounas, 1982: 158). Hence, international order uses the appearance of common transnational symbols and the birth of groups of political, ideological, spiritual and economic interests that follows the transnational climate created (Zorgbibe, 1997: 95), as a way to maintain peace and safeguard balance.

Contemporary internationalism is linked to the notion of globalization as a process that affects all spheres of human activity. The process of globalization is defined by transnational interactions that cover «the movement of tangible or intangible items across state boundaries when at least one actor is not an agent of a government or an international organization» (Keohane & Nye, 1971: xii). Global interaction is based on transnational activities in the areas of communications, transport, finance and travel (Keohane & Nye, 1971: xii). When these relationships are formalized into a continuous pursuit of interests through a formal agreement by actors, among which one at least is neither a state nor an international organization actor, a transnational organization (TNO) is born (Archer, 2001: 38).

According to Archer, transnational organizations include Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). In relation to their membership, these organizations are divided into four categories:

- Hybrid, with governmental and non-governmental members;
- Transnational, with governmental actors who «are not controlled by foreign policy organs of their governments» (Keohane & Nye, 1971: iv);
- Business international or multinational enterprises;
- Genuine, with non-governmental representation.

The last one is the case of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) which has ruled the area of international sport relations since the end of the 19th century. The IOC was created in 1894 during the First Sport Conference in Paris. Its basic purpose is «to promote olympism all around the world and serve as guidance to the expansion of the Olympic Movement». The term «olympism» refers to «a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind» (Olympic Charter: Fundamental Principles of Olympism).

The character of the International Olympic Committee

A transnational organization (TO) is primarily characterized (Huntington, 1981: 198) by a) being «a relatively large, hierarchically organized, centrally directed bureaucracy», b) performing a «set of relatively limited, specialized, and in some sense, technical functions», c) performing the pre-mentioned «functions across one or more international boundaries and insofar as is possible, in relative disregard of those boundaries», d) «has its own interests which inheres in the organization and its functions, which may or may not be closely related to the interests of national groups», e) «facilitates the pursuit of a single interest within many national units» and f) «requires access to nations». As noted, the IOC possesses all these characteristics of Huntington's definition of a transnational organization: it is a centrally hierarchical body with an established administrative bureaucratic mechanism, its goal is to promote olympism and the staging of the Olympic Games, it has been successful in «transcending national boundaries», it has «its own agenda and pursues a single purpose» and has access to almost all nations due to its 202 members (Macintosh & Hawes, 1992: 35).

Furthermore, the IOC may be considered as an International NGO of genuine character as it consists of representatives of like-minded groups, which are of non-governmental nature (Archer, 2001: 38). These representatives come from 202 different countries or territorial entities². Its members pursue a specific goal of international nature, the promotion of olympism and the expansion of the Olympic movement. Also with their activity, they cover the whole globe, wherever Olympic sport is practiced. Moreover the IOC in terms of structure has the following characteristics:

- It has a permanent character. Its function is based on the Articles of the Olympic Charter.
- It has its own internal structure.
- It has permanent premises in Lausanne.
- It is a non-profit organization.
- Its employees work as international, not national, agents.

The members of the IOC are the National Olympic Committees (NOCs). NOCs act as agents of the Olympic Movement and, consequently, the IOC in their respective countries. They operate according to the Articles of the Olympic Charter. NOCs cooperate with the national authorities in issues related to the Olympic Movement, providing the IOC with the necessary access to internal national politics in terms of sport, and not only. They also act as intermediaries between the Nation-states and the IOC, lobbying on behalf of the one to the other according to specific circumstances. Lobbying is the activity that is carried out by a variety of actors, including representatives of interest groups. It is also an activity that aims at influencing national and/or international legislation (Chatzigianni, 2006a: 89-94). In this sense, the NOC lobbying activity gives them the characteristic of an interest group, whereas the term «interest group» characterizes an organization that seeks to advance a particular cause or interest according to its values through all possible means and tactics (Chatzigianni, 2006a: 94-101).

2. According to Archer, representatives of groups must come from at least two different countries. This is the case of the Soroptimist International, the Salvation Army and the World Council of Churches (Archer, 2001: 39).

The Olympic Charter constitutes the basic institutional framework for the existence and operations of the IOC. The Charter provides the organization with the necessary legitimacy to act as the main sport INGO which, in general terms, controls and coordinates all sport activities throughout the world. It is signed by the 202 NOCs that have the right to participate in the Olympic Games. NOCs are obliged to accept and respect the Olympic regulation, as described by the Charter, if they want to stay part of the Olympic movement. The Charter has a dynamic character (Roukounas, 1982: 68), as it is enriched by Articles whenever it is necessary and according to the contemporary needs of sport reality. As of September 2004, the Charter includes five Chapters and sixty-one Articles that define the international Olympic legal order and it represents «...the only example of Universal constitutional law...» (Pouret, 1980: 173).

The organizational structure of the IOC, which proves the capacity of the organization to function as an INGO of transnational character, comprises:

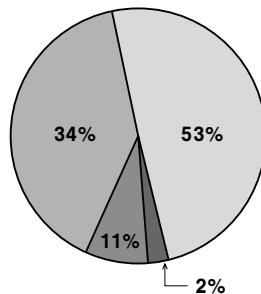
- the President, elected for eight years by the IOC members, with possibility to be re-elected for four more years. He is the permanent IOC representative to all functions of any nature. The current IOC president is Dr. Jacques Rogges (Belgium) who replaced Juan Antonio de Samaranch (Spain) in 2001.
- the IOC Executive Board, elected by the IOC Session for four years. It consists of the President, four Vice-Presidents and ten other members.
- the IOC Members, who meet every year at the IOC Session. The members act as IOC representatives in their respective countries and not as representatives of their own countries. These members provide partly the IOC with the necessary access to the nations where they come from.
- the IOC Commissions, that are specialized in specific domains and make recommendations to the IOC Board about specific issues in areas such as Marketing, Medical, Television, Ethics, Culture, Sport Law etc. In their majority, they have mixed membership as their members are representatives of the IOC, the International Federations, the NOCs, technical experts, athletes, and other specialists.

- the IOC Director General, who is the head of the administration under the authority of the IOC President.
- the IOC Directors, who help the IOC Director General in administration and are heads of small units, specialized in different areas such as International Cooperation, Coordination with NOCs, Legal Affairs etc.

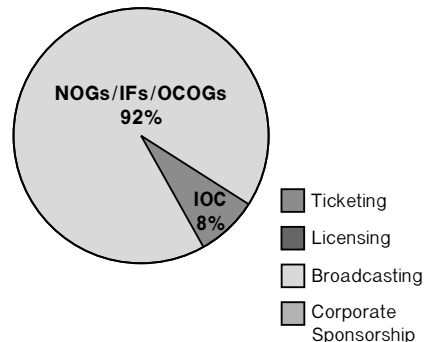
The NOCs and the Organizing Committees of the Olympic Games (OCOGs) are two of the most important structural partners of the IOC to which the organization of the Olympic Games is entrusted. An OCOG is comprised of representatives of the IOC, the national NOC, and the host country (including government and public authorities' representatives). Once the OCOG is formed, it operates under the IOC guidance.

As an International Organization, the IOC has recognized specific organizations for their worldwide activities, such as the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), the International Paralympics Committee, the International Committee for Fair Play, the International Olympic Truce Foundation and the World Anti-Doping Agency as Olympic Movement Partners. It is also in close cooperation with other international organizations that serve similar causes and/or may contribute to the expansion of the Olympic Movement, including the Council of Europe, the United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank Group, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and others.

Olympic Marketing Revenues
2001-2004



Distribution of Olympic
Marketing Revenue



Source: www.olympic.org

The Olympic Movement budget comes mainly from the organization of the Olympic Games and five major revenue programmes: broadcasting, TOP sponsors, national sponsors, ticketing and licensing. The three latter lie in the area of responsibility of each OCOG (refer to table).

The IOC as an International Non Governmental Organization

Given the above analysis, it is basically clear that this IOC has the necessary structure to operate as an international organization representing sport in the area of world politics. This is not an assumption but a reality proven by its past and present activity. It has also been able to deal with difficulties related to the complexity of world politics and survive political problems, such as the super-powers boycotts of the Olympic Games in 1980 (Moscow) and 1984 (Los Angeles), the South Korean hosting of the Games in 1988 through acknowledgement of the fact that sport issues cannot be dealt separately from world politics (Macintosh & Hawes, 1992: 38). It has also tried to contribute to the promotion of peace in volatile areas of the world, such as Serajevo and Iraq, when its Presidents acted as international agents of world peace (Chatzigianni, 2006b: 156).

Also, the IOC is classified as an International Organization due to the following:

- The IOC budget provides the organization with the necessary financial background to safeguard its independence versus national states and may play a significant role in establishing IOC in the future as a major player in world politics.
- The need for specialization and thorough examination of the different complex issues that arise in the area of world sport is encountered by the operation of the IOC Commissions, whose function and role is similar to the epistemic committees and other working groups of the European Union mechanism. The creation of these commissions proves the ability of the IOC to take into account and adapt to the contemporary needs of international organization mechanisms, keep track of changes occurred

The IOC as an international organization

and develop according to the norms that demand for specialization and complexity in the structure of all organizations that aim at playing an important role in any area of world politics, including sport politics.

- INGO democratic accountability which has been questioned in the case of IOC, has been successfully dealt with. More specifically, doubts related to the legitimacy of IOC to operate as the only recognized sport agent in the area of world sport have been expressed in the past, especially after the corruption scandals of the Salt Lake Olympic Games (2002). In this case, the IOC was democratically accountable to the people all around the world who were informed of the illegitimate activities through the press and reacted accordingly. As a response to public allegations worldwide, the previous IOC President, Juan Antonio de Samaranch, promoted a modernization plan for the organization. The plan included the adoption of more transparent procedures in the IOC decision-making process, especially in the area of financial activities and the fight against doping (Chatzigianni, 2006b:152). In practical terms, it introduced the participation of fifteen active athletes (Athletes' Committee), elected by their co-athletes in the IOC Assembly, the creation of the World-AntiDoping Organization (WADA), the permission to journalists to observe the IOC Assemblies and the publication of IOC financial reports. This immediate response of IOC authorities represents a very good example of how an organization may overcome this kind of difficulties, change according to new social and political data and regain public trust on an international level.

The dynamic character of the IOC as an international organization and its capacity to develop and fit as an INGO in the framework of international relations has protected the organization from dissolution and safeguarded its endurance and universal status. In the contemporary world of interdependence, the operation of international organizations that represent and express a universal ideological consensus and have established their own international and national network reduces the dangers of international conflict. World politics is no more just about power and states; it also involves non-state actors, specialized in different issues, such as the IOC. Each one of these actors act as a sepa-

rate group and operate and lobby on world level on behalf of their members, in the name of the ideal or interests they represent. The case of the IOC proves that when an organization is structurally able to fit in the arena of world politics, when it can adapt to the changing international environment and when it strongly supports and promotes the ideals it represents, it may acquire its own position not only in the agenda of world interdependent politics but also, and maybe most importantly, in the hearts and minds of people.

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