Introduction
Since the Chinese Communists won the battle against the nationalist Chinese on the Chinese Mainland, and drove them to relocate to Taiwan in 1949, both regimes across the Taiwan Strait have experienced different phases and forms of tensions until today. Beijing’s successful bid to host the 2008 Olympics in 2001, undoubtedly, has given some Taiwan-related actors new momentum and an opportunity to advance their interests and sound their voices.

This crux of this presentation lies in exploring the political activism of those who are related to Taiwan and at the same time oppose the 2008 Olympic Games. Practically speaking, the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) decision to let China stage the Olympics has been set and it is fairly unlikely to change. The point of my discussion is hence not too much on how these actors can actually boycott the Beijing Olympics, but rather about how these actors perceive and capitalize on such symbolic event to advance their respective political interests. I examine the macro-structural factors that have prompted their coming into being as well as analyze their campaign strategies.

As many observers in China-Taiwan relations could have expected, Taiwan’s role in such kind of campaign is trivial and the impact of such campaign is minimal. Its limits or failure, nevertheless, makes it interesting and worthy of study. This is because social movement scholars have tended to study the causes of “successful campaigns” by solely looking at successful cases. This case study on the anti-Olympics campaign reveals the stumbling blocks for an effective mobilization, and for a successful international coalition of campaign. It provides lessons for practitioners for their future contemplation for mobilization strategies.

Background and Actors
The dealing of the Beijing Olympics issue occurred mostly during the time when the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was in power, and the DPP administration had held an ambivalent and somewhat neutral stance towards the Beijing Olympics. The Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee (TPENOC), an international non-governmental organization (INGO) stationed in Taipei, is a member of the worldwide Olympic Movement, seeking to facilitate and promote Taiwan’s participation in Olympic events. In 2007, representatives of TPENOC negotiated with representatives of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG) on whether the Olympic torch should pass through Taiwan and how. Information exchange between TPENOC and the Taiwan government exist, but TPENOC, not the Taiwan government acts as the chief contact point for discussing Olympic matters (Figure 1).
While TPENOC seeks to advance the Olympic Movement, three types of actors have tried to boycott or at least have expressed their skepticism towards the Beijing Olympics. The first type includes Taiwan-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs), political parties and individuals. Regarding NGOs, Taiwan Friends of Tibet and the Taiwan branch of the aforementioned CIPFG have salient positions against the Beijing Olympics and have mobilized to sound their voices (e.g. organize protests, conferences). Taiwan Friends of Tibet has a clear political stance on supporting both Taiwan and Tibet’s independent sovereignty. CIPFG-Taiwan calls upon supporters from different political backgrounds to attend to the suppression on Falun Gong members in China. Other human rights NGOs, such as Taiwan Association for Human Rights (TAHR), Deng Liberty Foundation, Taiwan AIDS Foundation (TAF) also support the anti-Beijing Olympics cause, but do not play leading roles.

Regarding political parties, the pro-independence Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) is the only party explicitly expresses its anti-Beijing Olympics opposition. The current spokesperson of the TSU Chou Mei-Li is simultaneously the President of Taiwan Friends of Tibet.

At the individual levels, few legislators and well-known lawyers have also used their influences to express concerns on the Beijing Olympics. DPP Legislator Lai Ching-Te, for instance, is the President of the Asia Chapter of CIPFG. Kenneth Chiu, a senior human rights advocate and lawyer has also been speaking up for CIPFG’s cause.

The second type of actors is generally run by overseas Taiwanese and their second generations, with salient pro-Taiwan self-determination positions, such as the Formosa Association for Public Affairs (FAPA) in the United States (US) and in Europe.

The third type includes other general international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) with a much broader political agenda in addition to their interests in the Taiwan issue. Olympic Watch (also
called “the Committee for the 2008 Olympic Games in a Free and Democratic Country”) is a Prague-based NGO that advocates the improvement of China’s human rights situation before its hosting of the 2008 Olympics. Cross-strait relations and the Tibet issue are also on Olympic Watch’s agenda.

Albeit different, these actors share certain interests, in general more critical of the Chinese regime. Such common interests create a basis for potential cooperation. The task of the following analysis therefore lies in exploring three questions: firstly, under what circumstances do these actors come to pick up the anti-Olympic stance, and in certain cases even cooperate to advance their causes? Secondly, how do these actors “frame” their agenda individually and cooperatively? Thirdly, what are the strategies used in their individual and cooperative operations? As these actors are located in different corners of the globe, it is also interesting to observe the pattern and degree of international cooperation/or exchange that they have fostered. These three questions are linked to three analytical frameworks that are of interests to social movement scholars, namely the frameworks of political opportunities, framing processes and mobilizing structures. These frameworks serve as the backbone of my analysis.

Political Opportunities

1. Domestic Opportunity Structures
In Taiwan, recent democratization has given different societal actors relatively open domestic opportunity structure to operate. Societal actors have the space to take “protest-oriented” actions (e.g. demonstrations, rallies), “pro-positive” actions (e.g. conferences, conventions, forums) and even further approach decision-makers for policy changes in favor of their demands.

My interviews with Taiwan-based NGOs indicate that most activists actually only resort to the first two types of actions to allow for open discussions among interested parties and to raise societal awareness. There is virtually no lobbying activity going on for NGO activists to seek the current government’s support of their positions. One reason why there is no further progressive action is that the issue of the Beijing Olympics and its implications are not salient and popularly debated in Taiwan. The society is never really torn between the pro- and-anti Olympics stances. This is evidenced in a simple web-based survey result that the author garnered from January to February 2008, six months before the Beijing Olympics. Around 28% (21 out of 74) respondents express that they look forward to the Olympics, while the rest 72% (53 out of 74) either do not look forward to or simply have no feelings for the event. In addition, 92% (69 out of 75) respondents do not take part in any activities to oppose the Olympics. Only 3% (2 out of 75) have participated in anti-Olympics activities.

Furthermore, those in the broadly-conceived pro-and-anti Beijing Olympic camps usually do not confront each other in a direct manner, but only “do their own things” with their own capacity and within their own established networks. Activists or politicians who have picked up this Olympic issue mostly do it out of personal beliefs and interests, and contribute only on voluntary basis to advance their positions. There is no consistent, established institution to carry out the agenda. The anti-camp has not fully developed and framed their concerns. Some talk about human rights and others express political antagonism towards the PRC regime. Their demands are not well articulated and linked to a diversity of side-issues (e.g. environment, housing rights, Burma, and Sudan) that other international actors have been able to create.

For these small groups of Taiwan-based activists, they never acquire solid domestic supports. Their domestic actions are mainly initiated reactively in support of the wider international anti-Olympics campaign. Their international linkages constitute an important part of their continued identities and loyalty to the international anti-Olympics campaign. This thus makes it interesting to examine the opportunity structures at the international level.

2. International Opportunity Structures
Beyond the domestic arena of Taiwan, the activism is carried out by various China-related or pro-Taiwan “seeds” in different countries. Most of these countries are democracies with relatively open
domestic opportunity structures for the operation of interest groups. They focus on domestic activism to garner domestic supports. Take the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA), the first Taiwanese-American congressional lobbying force in the US, for example. FAPA has long held a stance on promoting Taiwan’s right to an independent statehood. Using its long-time experience of lobbying the Congress, FAPA was able to mobilize individual American legislators to support FAPA’s cause. For instance, working with FAPA, Congressman Tom Tancredo (R-CO) issued a letter to the IOC, condemning it for not living up to the “fair play” spirit of the Olympic Movement because Taiwan could only use the name of “Chinese Taipei” when participating in the Olympics. FAPA’s influence on the Olympics issue, nevertheless, does not move beyond garnering such kind of non-binding expressive support.

Other INGOs, such as the Czech Olympic Watch do not lobby, but mostly disseminate press releases, a conventional play of “information politics”, to express their concerns on the human rights conditions in China. The issue of Taiwan is not obvious in their articulation of demands. And it is not a surprise that such strategies only serve to embolden their causes, but do not have further impacts on their desired outcome.

3. Symbolic Events
Apart from examining the rather fixed status of political opportunity structures at the domestic and international levels, one can also observe a number of “events” which have served as catalysts for further actions. Not many of them, however, were able to stimulated wide-scale debates and mobilize sustaining actions. The PRC’s management of the recent unrest in Tibet in March, 2008 is probably the most notable example that has been able to at least stir debates among the pro-and-anti camps in many parts of the world. Although the Tibet issue is by origin a matter of territorial conflict, the Tibetan issue has widely been projected and conceived of as a human rights matter in the eyes of many international actors, and thus gathers sympathy and creates some kind of international leverage over China’s handling of the Tibetan issue. I do not trace the causes of this event here because it is the not focus of my study. What is important is that this event came at the time when the summer Olympic is imminent. It gives those anti-Olympics activists a chance to link the issue to the upcoming Olympics, push those in the pro-camp to stand up for their positions, as well as stimulates by-standers to attend to the issue and take sides.

Similarly in Taiwan, some NGOs (e.g. Taiwan Friends of Tibet) have mobilized to protest against the Chinese handling of the Tibet unrest in March. Other Taiwan relevant actors in Europe and the US have also used the “low-budget” tactic of issuing press releases and statements to express their dismay over China. Their actions, again, only echo the wider boycott efforts in the international arena, and as the issue is focused on Tibet, there is no direct linkage to the Taiwan issue.

Framing Processes
While the Olympic Movement promotes the universal Olympic spirits of friendship, solidarity and fair play, those in the anti camp expose the Chinese regime’s failure to live up to such spirits when it repeatedly violates human rights. Apart from such “master frames”, there are also “special frames” that link the Olympics issue further to China’s dealing with the Tibetan question, problems in Sudan and Burma as well as forced eviction generated by the Beijing Municipality, etc. By exposing the discrepancy between China’s promises to the Olympic spirit (and to ameliorate human rights practices) and its actual performance, NGO activists seek to shame the Chinese government, and hope that such external pressures would push it to improve.

Taiwan relevant activists (either at the international or domestic level), however, do not make use of all the “special frames” generated by other international actors. Taiwan Friends of Tibet has a Tibet focus; CIPFG-TW attends to the Falun Gong issue. FAPA stresses that the fair play spirit of Olympics has been violated since Taiwan cannot take part in the Games as a fully recognized sovereign state.

In reaction to the anti-Olympic voices, those supporting the Olympic movement establish a counter discourse, arguing that politics and sports are distinct domains which should be separated. In the
history of the Olympic movement and its opposition movement, the call for separating politics and sports is nothing new. Although it is obvious to observers that politics is in fact part of the Olympic Games, the Olympic Movement has so far been successful to champion its “sports only, no politics” slogan. This is not just an international phenomenon, but is also evidenced in Taiwan. In an online polling conducted by Yahoo Taiwan from the 20th to the 28th of March in the wake of the Tibet unrest, the majority of the respondents side with the Olympic movement’s general discourse that “politics should not influence sports and hence believe Taiwan should not boycott the Beijing Olympics”. Only a minority of respondents believe that “there should be international justices and hence support the boycott”.

**Mobilizing Structures**

Now, I turn to mobilizing structures, the question of how formal organizations and informal networks function as “vehicles” and provide “resources” for collective actions.

Although there is a pro-claimed international campaign to boycott the Beijing Olympics, most national campaigns operate independently from one another. Activists basically make use of their pre-existing resources (e.g. personal, expertise, capital, facility) and networks to oppose the Beijing Olympics in their respective countries.

In terms of resources, most Taiwan relevant actors rely on volunteers’ efforts and donations. They are able to initiate “protest-oriented” actions (e.g. demonstrations, rallies) and “pro-positive” actions (e.g. conferences, conventions, forums), but they do not have the capacity to have established personnel to undergo further lobbying activities towards the Taiwan administration or other governments.

Regarding domestic networks, CIPFG-TW, Taiwan Friends of Tibet and other like-minded human rights NGOs are in contact with each other. These NGOs share some overlapping members and supporters. Internationally, although CIPFG-TW has contacts with other Falun Gong focused actors and Taiwan Friends of Tibet has contacts with the International Tibet Support Network (ITSN), their resources do not permit them to have international scale of collective actions.

**Conclusions**

Were it not for the fact that the Olympics is slated to take place in Beijing, there would never have been the anti-Olympic debate within the Taiwan society. Some Taiwan-based or Taiwan relevant actors seize upon the potential linkage with the China issue and intend to make use of the event to evoke commitment and draw supports for their initial pro-Taiwan stance. However, none of the Taiwan relevant actors fully capitalize this event to their own purposes. This is because the nature of this event has been defined as a side-show to advance and legitimize their other pro-Taiwan causes. There are no brand new resources or personnel created for this particular campaign in Taiwan. There are information exchanges among between like-minded activists in Taiwan and at the international level, but again, their ad hoc engagement and cooperation remains event-based and sporadic. The overall effect of such kind of activism might serve the purpose of “expressive politics”, but it fails to bring forth changes that would ultimately boycott the 2008 Olympic Games.

The example of Taiwan also showcases other parallel endeavors in other countries. The anti-Olympic movement is a loose international coalition of a diversity of actors who oppose the Olympic Games for various reasons. Their “seeds” are in many parts of the work. But these seeds mostly operate quite independently within their own established networks and arena. There are a number of discourses developed along the widely known norms such as the respect for human rights or environment. But there is no effectively unified opposition to confront the much more institutionalized Olympic movement. Although it is still testable whether the Olympic cause has established itself as a universal norm, at least the cause for a universal sports event does have its lure to draw widespread enthusiasm and supports in the history of the Olympic Games. This is without exception in the Beijing Olympics.

The effectiveness of the anti-Olympic movement therefore cannot be evaluated based on whether it achieves the ultimate goal to boycott the Olympics or not. Instead, the fact that various activists have
capitalized this event, using the tactics of information politics, symbolic politics and moral leverage to evoke debates and to gather supporters for their respective purposes, are part of their achievement. The roles of Taiwan relevant actors, albeit minimal, constitute a part of this international collective ambition.