

Analysing the political effect of the olympics politics essay



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The Olympic games are supposed to unite the world; they were created as a tool to help connect individual countries; they are a way to put politics behind us and compete athletically; however the summer Olympic games in 1980 and 1984, held in Moscow and Los Angeles respectively, showed that they could be used as leverage when one country disagreed with another. The 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, the Cold War, and disagreements among leaders of different countries played a role in the boycott of these Olympic Games. The tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union as well as their boycott of the Olympic Games in the 1980's will be analyzed in this report.

After World War II had come and gone a conflict arose between the United States and the Soviet Union. This conflict is believed to have lasted all the way into the early 1990's when the Soviet Union collapsed. The war was passed down from leader to leader in each country. It was not a conventional war but instead was mostly fought with threats. Each country would use the media to condemn the other. It is unknown how long the war lasted. This is a huge debate among many historians (Cold War). The only post World War II super powers were the Soviet Union and the United States. Each country began investing time and money in the development of nuclear weapons. This led to what is known as a nuclear arms race. Each side tried to develop more nuclear weapons than the other. This dangerous situation led to the each country using words to fight instead of weapons. They were afraid of the outcome if nuclear weapons were used (Cold War). As a result, tensions were high between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union tried to make peace with the rest of Eastern Europe even though they had been invaded by some of the Eastern Europe nations in both World War I and World War II. They used their communist influence in liberating nations of Eastern Europe after World War I. As a result, the world began to see other communist nations in Eastern Europe. They hoped that this would protect their borders from future invasion (Cold War). This also helped unite Eastern Europe and led to more nations supporting the Soviet Union.

Afghanistan is a country in the Middle East just west of Pakistan. A country with more than 28 million people, as of a July 2009 estimate by the U. S. Department of State, its size is just smaller than the state of Texas (Afghanistan). In 1979, after the Afghan Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin refused to cooperate with the Soviet Union on how to stabilize the government, the Soviets invaded Kabul. Once they landed in the country's capital they killed Hafizullah Amin and replaced him by with a new man chosen by them as the new Prime Minister (Afghanistan). The new leader needed the Russian army to maintain control of the government because the mostly Muslim Mujahedeen was fighting back. As a result of the Mujahedeen's resistance the Soviets were only able to keep control of the major cities while 75% of the country was controlled by the Mujahedeen (Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan).

The United States, in the midst of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, denounced the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. They did not want the Soviet Union to spread communism any further than they already had in the rest of Eastern Europe. The U. S. supported the Mujahedeen in their efforts against <https://assignbuster.com/analysing-the-political-effect-of-the-olympics-politics-essay/>

the Soviet Union. They supplied them with money and various weapons, and also began to use the term “ freedom fighters” to describe them. This was done in spite of the Soviet’s claiming that they did not invade Afghanistan but they were invited by the Prime Minister. They also said that they were there to support a legitimate government and the Mujahedeen were just terrorists (Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan).

The invasion took place just months before the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow. President Jimmy Carter informed the American people of the boycott in his January 23, 1980 State of the Union Address. Saudi Arabia was the first to boycott the 1980 Olympic Games due to the invasion taking place on Islamic Land. They were backed up by many other countries including Canada, West Germany, Japan, the United States, and Israel. In total 60 other countries joined Saudi Arabia including the United States. Many cited the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as the main cause for their boycott. However, some did say that they did to not participate due to economic reasons (Tristham).

Four years later the 1984 Olympic Games were held in Los Angeles. The Soviet Union issued a statement, “ chauvinistic sentiments and an anti-Soviet hysteria being whipped up in the United States.” They decided to boycott the Olympics due to those reasons. Thirteen other Soviet Allies also choose to boycott the Los Angeles Olympics. Iran was the only country to boycott both the 1980 and 1984 Olympics (Olympic Boycott History). That same year the Soviet Union organized the Druzhba Games. Other countries, which boycotted the 1984 Olympics, participated in the event. The motto of these games was “ Sport, Friendship, Peace” (Olympic Boycott History).
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The Soviet Union pulled out of Afghanistan in 1989. That same year the Berlin Wall collapsed, which marked an end to a communist Germany. Two years later the Soviet Union also collapsed and the United States was able to begin to establish good relations with Russia. Although much has changed between the United States and Russia it is not hard to see how the tension of a Cold War and a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led to a boycott of the Olympics. The Olympics are a time to put the politics behind us and unite in sport. As shown in the 1980 and 1984 Olympic Games, this is not always the case.