

1988 Summer Olympics and the Rise of South Korea and Seoul

Abstract We examine the 1988 Olympics that marked the beginning of South Korea's pursuit of mega-events. Although South Korea had successfully embarked on a course of industrialization, it was far from being ready to host the Olympic Games. Seoul was still largely a Third World city, with large slums and inadequate urban infrastructure. Nevertheless, the centralized authoritarian state successfully pushed through to bidding and hosting the 1988 Games. The Olympics marked a turning point for Seoul, as well as for South Korea, introducing them to the world. With its astonishing success at both local and national levels, the 1988 Olympics set the tone for international mega-events to serve as a development tool in South Korea, leading to its popularity for many years to come.

Keywords Summer Olympics · Democratization · Seoul · Urban development · Urban infrastructure · Eviction

The Summer Olympic Games are the biggest and the most spotlighted of the international sports mega-events. In the 1980s, the majority of the Summer Olympic Games had been held in Western developed countries. The 1988 Seoul Olympics was only the second Summer Olympics to be held in Asia, after the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. It was also one of the most well-attended Olympics, with 159 participating countries and a total of 8391 athletes. Although South Korea earned 335 million dollars in

profit (KDI 1989), the greatest achievement of the Olympics in the eyes of South Koreans was the transformation of the country's image. South Korea at the time was seen as a poor Third-World country that had suffered under Japanese colonialism (1910–1945) and civil war (1950–1953). South Korea's hosting of the Olympics introduced a new image of the country to the world through sport policy as image maker—a country that had achieved the 'Miracle of Han River' and integrated into the global economy (Bridges 2008). In other words, the 1988 Seoul Olympics was a celebration of South Korea's hard-earned economic achievements that had been pushed under the growth-first ideologies of Park Chung-hee's authoritarian developmental state. Under the state-led export-oriented industrialization of the 1960s to the 1970s, South Korea's economic growth accelerated from 4 to 10% per annum. By the 1980s, South Korea had pulled itself out of dire poverty, and the 1988 Olympics suggested an occasion for both national and international celebration of the country's economic development.

Despite South Korea's economic achievements and progress in industrialization, the country was still considered far from ready to host the Summer Olympic Games. At the time that the Games was awarded, Seoul was still largely a Third-World city, with large slum areas and inadequate urban infrastructure. In addition, the authoritarian regime's pursuit of economic development had come with severe costs, including abuse of citizens' human and political rights. As economic development progressed, domestic political tensions began to rise. Within the Korean Peninsula, the tension between the South and the North had remained high since the 1953 armistice (Black and Bezanson 2004). These limitations and difficulties set the context for the national government's drive to host the Games, and its highly centralized and authoritarian approach taking to the bidding and the preparation.

This chapter explores the aspirations and processes of hosting the 1988 Olympic Games, with an emphasis on the political conditions and motivations that led to the national government's strenuous campaign and preparation efforts. It then analyzes the achievements and the impacts of the Games at both the national and the local levels. In particular, it highlights how the Olympics provided an impetus to develop Seoul into a modern metropolis with urban infrastructure and amenities comparable to those of other advanced economies. It also sheds light on the achievement in sport policy area as a part of political practices of the regime. Overall, the chapter illustrates how the 1988 Olympics set the tone for international

mega-events to serve as a development tool in South Korea, leading to the popularity of such events for many years to come.

ASPIRATIONS AND BIDDING FOR THE 1988 SUMMER OLYMPICS

The aspirations to host the Olympics were shared by both President Chun Doo-hwan and his predecessor Park Chung-hee. While it was President Chun who ultimately bid for the 1988 Olympics, the idea had originally been mooted under the Park administration for three primary reasons. First, the Park regime sought to defend its legitimacy following years of dictatorship and human rights violations. The gap between the political aspirations of the increasingly affluent citizens and their leaders' willingness to liberalize the political process was widening (Heo and Roerig 2010; Manheim 1990), and the public was increasingly reluctant to accept Park's despotic leadership. It was in this context that the Park administration became interested in promoting an elite sport policy and the bid for the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul.

Second, the conflict and tension between the military governments of South Korea and North Korea remained very high after the Korean War and in the absence of a peace treaty. South and North Korea were in an intense rivalry for national and international legitimacy.¹ The Park regime intended to project a new image of South Korea to the international community, that of a peace-loving and prosperous country. It believed that hosting a mega-event like the Olympics, which attracts massive participation and attention from countries around the world, would demonstrate the superiority of the South over the North.

Third, Park was inspired by the success of the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, which had marked an important turning point in improving Japan's international image after World War II. It had also garnered more direct investment in social infrastructure and spurred economic growth of Japan. Bridges (2008, p. 3) put Park's motivation rather aptly: 'given his strong top-down style of government and his personal admiration for the Japanese model of economic development, it was not surprising that the idea of winning the right to host the Olympic Games was mooted under President Park in 1979.' However, in October 1979, just 2 months after South Korea's initial announcement of its intention to bid, President Park was assassinated.

The interest in the Olympics carried through to the subsequent Chun administration, but the new President had even stronger political

motives. General Chun Doo-hwan seized power in a coup d'état on May 17, 1980. Chun established yet another authoritarian, military regime, instead of the long-awaited democracy. While President Park had legitimized his rule with the promise of economic development and poverty alleviation, South Korea was no longer the starving country that it had been in the 1960s. After the long-term repression of democracy, another military state was not welcomed (Davis 2011), and social unrest was reflected in a series of demonstrations and democratization movements in the early years of Chun's regime, including the Gwangju massacre of 1980.² To divert citizens' attention away from politics, President Chun actively implemented the 3S policy, promoting Sports, Screen, and Sex (Son 2003). An Olympics bid was part of this policy and sought to deflect citizens' attention away from politics and toward the more benign realm of international sports events (Davis 2011). In addition to concealing the political reality of the authoritarian state, the idea of hosting the Olympics helped to strengthen Chun's regime by providing it with an important goal of promoting South Korea and showcasing its economic achievements to the world (Cho and Bairner 2012; Manheim 1990).

Motivated by strong political necessity, Chun autocratically pushed the Olympics bid, despite a standoff between proponents and opponents of the Games inside the government. Skeptical government officials thought that South Korea's changes in winning the bid were low, mainly because Japan—which had already decided to bid for the 1988 Games, with Nagoya as the host city—had more experience in campaigning for the bid and in preparing for the Games at the time (Kim and Yang 2014). Japan also leveraged on its successful experiences of hosting the Tokyo Olympics (1964) and the Sapporo Winter Games (1972). Furthermore, some expected that the IOC would not award Seoul the right to host the 1988 Olympics because of the Chun regime's strong oppression of the democratic movement and the 1980 Gwangju massacre (Horton and Saunders 2012)—even though these were the very reasons that triggered the Olympic bid, under the premise that hosting a successful international sports event would bestow prestige and enhance Chun's authority to govern. Against the odds, South Korea submitted its official notice of the intent to bid to the Secretary General of the IOC in Lausanne, Switzerland, on February 26, 1981.

The South Korean government then organized the Olympic Bidding Committee and began to lobby the Seoul Olympic idea to international constituents. The members of the bidding committee comprised national

politicians, sports organizations, and some leading figures from the private sector (i.e., chairmen of chaebols) (Son 2003). National ministries, such as the Ministry of Education, also played a crucial role in promoting Seoul as a potential candidate city. The voices of local leaders were largely marginalized or disregarded, however, and the bidding preparation process was not transparent, with no room for input from ordinary citizens, labor groups, and other organizations (COHRE 2007). In short, the 1988 Seoul Olympics bid was a centrally motivated and planned event.

The initial group of cities vying for the Games—Melbourne (Australia), Athens (Greece), and Nagoya (Japan)—all put in bids for the 1988 Olympics. As the competition became fierce, Melbourne and Athens dropped out, leaving Nagoya and Seoul as the candidate cities by March 1981. During the first half of 1981, Nagoya, a city already well-equipped to host the Games, had been regarded as an almost certain winner of the nomination. In contrast, Seoul's competence to host a large-scale international event was widely unknown.

On the last day of September 1981, to everyone's surprise, the IOC announced that Seoul won the bid as host city for the 1988 Summer Olympic Games by an overwhelming result of 52 to 27. There are a number of explanations for the result, including Japan's failure to properly handle domestic anti-Olympics protesters and Japanese lobbyists' arrogant attitude in the final phases of the campaign (Weinberg 2001). Regardless of the tactical errors made by Japan,³ the role of the South Korean government and chaebols, which worked hard hand in hand to secure the hosting rights, was critical. Due to the much-lamented history of Japanese colonization of South Korea, losing against Japan would have been a serious emotional blow for South Koreans. Therefore, South Korean government officials and chaebols worked with a strong determination not to lose against Japan and managed to pull off the seemingly impossible task (Son 2003). South Korea's public diplomacy fully utilized the chaebols' business networks around the world. The former Chairman of Hyundai, Chung Ju-yung, for example, relentlessly lobbied IOC members in the Middle East and Africa by using Hyundai Construction's reputation and business networks (Kim and Yang 2014, pp. 288–289).

After winning the 1988 Olympic bid, in November 1981, South Korea also successfully won the bid to host the 1986 Asian Games. This would be South Korea's very first international mega-event and would serve as a test drive for the 1988 Olympics.

PREPARATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The Olympic Games was clearly the Chun administration's top priority. After Seoul won the bids for the Olympics and the Asian Games, the Chun administration accelerated preparations, which included promoting elite athletes and undertaking necessary infrastructure development and beautification projects. The administration established the Ministry of Sports (March, 1982) and the Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee (SOOC) (1981–1989) and appointed the second most powerful person in the ruling party, Roh Tae-woo, to lead the committee. Roh, who was elected as the 16th President of South Korea in December 1987, continued to play a crucial role in the preparation and the actual hosting of the Summer Olympics.

However, hosting the 1988 Olympics was a very challenging task for South Korea at the time. The first concern, particularly in international society, focused on the regional security; many commentators and foreign organizations viewed Seoul as a risky choice due to threats from North Korea (Guttmann 1992). At the peak of this concern, in 1987, a Korean Airlines commercial flight was bombed by North Korea, killing all 104 passengers and 11 crew members. The South Korean government, in the end, was able to ensure the security and safety of the Games by negotiating with North Korea. South Korea also made diplomatic efforts toward the communist regimes of the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe. Its efforts bore fruit, and many communist countries sent their delegations to the Seoul Games, except for North Korea and few of its close allies such as Cuba (Sigur 1992). This set the Seoul Olympics apart from the Los Angeles in 1984 and Moscow in 1980, where many countries on the opposing side of the Cold War ideology boycotted the Games.

Secondly, there was a question of whether Seoul would be able to successfully host a mega-event such as the Summer Olympics. When Seoul entered the bidding competition in 1980, few sports facilities in Seoul met International Olympic Committee (IOC) requirements. Significant national and local investments were required in 20 new sports arenas, as well as in urban infrastructure (roads, railways, and buildings) and other beautification projects (MCST 2012). This was particularly important since the hosting of the 1988 Olympics aimed to showcase South Korea's development to the world. In fact, before Seoul won the

Table 2.1 Seoul government's development plans for the Olympics (1979)

| | <i>Facilities</i> | <i>The estimated time of completion</i> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Sports facilities</i> | Seoul Sports Complex | 1983 |
| | Seoul Indoor Stadium | Completed (in use) |
| | Indoor Swimming Pool | 1980 |
| | Cycling Track | 1983 |
| | Supplementary Stadium | 1985 |
| <i>Urban infrastructure</i> | Subway Line 2 | 1980: City center to Seoul Sports Complex |
| | | 1988: The rest lines |
| | Subway Line 3, 4 | 1979 (Begin)–1984 (Completion) |
| | Airport | 1983: Expansion of Gimpo International Airport/ Consideration of the 2nd International Airport |
| | Olympic Village/ Accommodations | Completion by 1985 |
| | Leisure Facilities | 1983: West park and other neighborhood parks 1985: The Seoul Grand Park |

Source Seoul Metropolitan Government (1990)

Olympics bid, the Seoul government was skeptical of the bid, mainly because of lack of preparations (COHRE 2007). When the Park regime officially announced its intention to participate in the bidding in 1979, Seoul's mayor had listed daunting development plans that included the development of a new sports complex, the Olympic Village, an extensive extension of the subway lines, and the construction of other urban infrastructure (Table 2.1). These challenging development tasks remained to be fulfilled in the early 1980s, and to avoid criticism from the opposition, the political discourse surrounding the Games centered on how the Games sought to 'maximize profit,' 'gain surplus,' and 'utilize existing facilities' (Park 2008, p. 793). The Chun administration also aimed to portray the Olympics as an all-around beneficial event, hoping to gain widespread support for hosting the Games (Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee 1989).

Seoul not only faced pressure to develop stadiums and other necessary infrastructure, but also had to address its seriously degraded urban environment, a result of the city's rapid population growth (Fig. 2.1) and

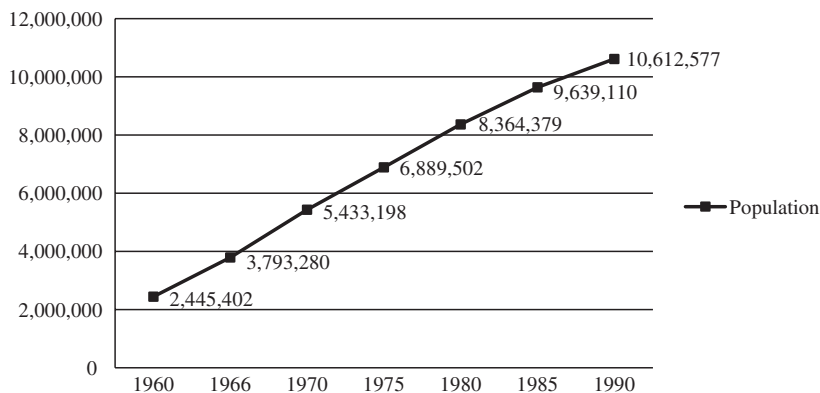


Fig. 2.1 Population of Seoul (1960–1990). *Source* Seoul Metropolitan Government (n.d.)

its high population density.⁴ The city was suffering from an increasing number of cars, environmental pollution, massive areas of illegal housing (shantytowns), and the under-provision of infrastructure—all visible manifestations of a Third-World city. The city had thus far largely depended on regulation-oriented policies, which prioritized growth management and sought to restrict development, rather than delivering appropriate infrastructure to support the population growth. In short, Seoul was suffering from overpopulation and inadequate urban infrastructure. In such a context, the Olympics suggested an opportunity to push through massive-scale urban developments that were necessary and long overdue.

Because a number of previous Olympics (for example, the 1976 Montreal Games) had resulted in significant financial deficits for the host cities,⁵ many South Korean government officials, including President Chun himself, were concerned whether Seoul could indeed complete the necessary infrastructure developments in time and within a reasonable budget (Park 2008). Even though the economic success of the 1984 Games in Los Angeles presented some hope, it was clear that Seoul would require significantly more investment in urban infrastructure than Los Angeles did. The preparation processes for the Seoul Olympics thus largely involved two main aspects: first, to keep IOC members satisfied with the ongoing construction of sports facilities, and second, to

‘upgrade’ the city landscape and ‘clean up’ undesirable parts of the city, such as slums. The rest of this section explains (1) the earlier development of Jamsil area, which is the key site for the 1988 Olympics, (2) sports facilities and the Olympic Park development, and (3) the key urban infrastructure development that took place in Seoul overall.

Early Development of Jamsil

Despite concerns of Seoul being underprepared to host the Olympics at the time of the bidding, initial developments of the Jamsil neighborhood had already begun, setting the foundation for Seoul’s Olympic preparation efforts. The development of Jamsil came about because of a rather embarrassing incident for South Korea. In 1966, the Asian Games Federation had announced its intent to host the 6th Asian Games in Seoul, but the South Korean government soon realized that it did not have adequate sports facilities and infrastructure. It would have cost millions of dollars to build them, at a time when South Korea’s GDP per capita was only US \$125 (Son 2003). In addition, very few hotels met international standards to accommodate the thousands of foreign guests and athletes. In 1967, after careful consideration, the Park administration withdrew the right to host, expressing tremendous regret (Son 2003, p. 200).

Shortly afterward, the Park administration announced plans to develop the east side of Gangnam area⁶—i.e., Jamsil district—and designated it to house a number of key sports facilities. The main goal was to prepare Seoul for future international sports events. A massive land reclamation project was carried out in the 1970s to transform Jamsil’s agricultural land (peanut and mulberry growing fields) into a modernized urban district.⁷ The development was a significant event in the urban planning history of South Korea, because it was based on the report, ‘Basic Plan for Comprehensive Development Plan of Jamsil District,’ which first used the concept of ‘urban planning’ in South Korea (Kang 2014). The report contained plans for developing the 1100 ha of land with education facilities, open spaces, greenery, landmark buildings, and mega-scale commercial facilities. It also underscored considerations for community connectivity and a clean environment (Son 2003). Two sites in the Jamsil district were specifically reserved for the construction of national sports complexes, under the special order of President Park. One of these sites later housed the Seoul Olympic Stadium (see Image 2.1).



Image 2.1 Seoul Olympic Stadium

Photograph by the authors, taken in January 2017

Sports Facilities and the Olympic Park

After the bid, both national and local governments devoted to complete the Jamsil Sports Complex development, as the main sports facilities for the Olympics, and launched other necessary projects. Table 2.2 illustrates the overall investments in construction and operations for the Games, including infrastructure developments. In more detail, the Jamsil Sports Complex included plans for the main Olympic Stadium, Jamsil Baseball Stadium, Jamsil Gymnasium, Indoor Swimming Pool, and Students' Gymnasium. The Chun administration tried to maximize the usage of these sports facilities for the Olympic Games, but it also had to additionally plan for a new boat race course (the Olympic Yachting Center), Seoul Race Course, and the Olympic Park (KDI 1989).

The Olympic Park was the other major development project for the 1988 Olympics, besides the development of Jamsil. From a planning perspective, the Olympic Park was designed to portray 'the harmony of modernity and Korea's traditional culture,' according to the SOOC. Located on the eastern edge of Seoul, just outside of Jamsil, the Olympic Park became a landmark site for foreign tourists as well as Korean citizens. It included sports facilities, training facilities for athletes, a park

Table 2.2 Investments for the Olympic-related projects and infrastructure development

| | 1982–1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | Total |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| Direct projects | 237.1 | 215.3 | 234.5 | 291.6 | 129.9 | 1108.4 |
| Operation | 25.2 | 66.6 | 88.6 | 61.8 | 118.9 | 361.1 |
| Construction | 211.9 | 148.7 | 145.9 | 229.8 | 11.0 | 747.3 |
| Infrastructure development | 217.0 | 262.0 | 267.6 | 276.4 | 251.2 | 1274.2 |
| Total | 454.1 | 477.3 | 502.1 | 568.0 | 381.1 | 2382.6 |

Unit Million dollars

‘Direct projects’ refer to the management of the Olympic stadiums and the Olympic village, which includes the costs related to management of facilities, operation of the events and ceremonies, human resources, etc.

Source KDI (1989, p. 121)

open to the public, newly excavated historical sites, and performance facilities (Seoul Metropolitan Government 1990, pp. 420–421).

In the development of the Olympic Park, Seoul’s need to rapidly shed its Third-World city image before the arrival of international guests and tourists motivated the city to try out and create new urban design guidelines for the project. For the Olympic Athletes Village, the SOOC allowed an architectural experiment that sought to present an alternative to South Korea’s typical ‘matchbox’ style apartment clusters (Kang 2004). The Village’s apartment complex was designed by a Korean–American architect and sought to emphasize urbanity, openness, organized variety, and a sense of order (Kang 2004, p. 5). It is still considered one of the best townships in Seoul for its arrangement, neighborhood park structure, sunshine duration for apartment units, and spacious floor plans (Seong 2006). During the Games, 21,000 athletes, staffs, and media representatives stayed in the Village, and the units were later sold to Seoul residents. Private companies initiated and carried through the project from the beginning, knowing that the units would be sold after the Games. The well-designed units and choice of location enabled the units to be successfully sold off in the market later on, which helped to alleviate Seoul’s persistent problem of housing shortages (Seong 2006).

Urban Development and the Transformation of Seoul

As mentioned earlier, the 1988 Olympics was to be a catalyst for urban change in Seoul. The Department of Urban Planning and the

Department of Urban Renewal of Seoul carried out a number of development projects, including improving transport management, enhancing cultural facilities, undertaking environmental beautification, and upgrading health and hygiene standards throughout the city (Chalkley and Essex 1999). Many of the development projects were not directly related to the Olympic Games, but were considered critical in order to host a high-quality mega-event. These projects were also deemed important for improving the quality of life and welfare of Seoul residents after the Olympics. Table 2.3 indicates the government's projects related to improving transportation, urban environment, and public health and sanitation.

First, one of the top priorities was the development of transportation-related infrastructure (Chalkley and Essex 1999). To meet the rising air transportation demand, the national government expanded the annual capacity of Gimpo International Airport from 4.8 million to 8.9 million passengers and from 32 to 54 tons of baggage handling facilities. To enhance public transportation systems and to ease Seoul's notorious traffic congestion, the Seoul government constructed additional subway lines and increased bus routes linking the south and north axis of Seoul. It also built the 41.8-km Olympic Daero (or Olympic Blvd) along the Han River, which directly connected the international airport to the Olympic Stadium in Jamsil. This eight-lane highway was considered a breakthrough in Seoul's transportation system, as it was the only motor expressway that linked the east and west sides of the city.

Second, a wide range of 'beautification' projects took place throughout Seoul. Roadsides and public parks were cleaned, beautified, and

Table 2.3 Outline of projects for the Seoul Olympic Games

| <i>Project area</i> | <i>No. of projects</i> | <i>Budget investment (%)</i> |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Facility management/construction | 10 | 37.5 |
| Transportation | 20 | 6.0 |
| Urban environment | 20 | 33.4 |
| Tourism/accommodation | 14 | 0.6 |
| Public health/sanitation | 18 | 20.0 |
| Culture/art | 15 | 2.1 |
| Citizen participation | 18 | 0.4 |
| Safety | 5 | 0.0 |
| Total | 120 | 100.0 |

Source Seoul Metropolitan Government (1990, pp. 371–380)

renovated, and streetlights and road sign systems were newly repaired and improved. The government also spent 93 million dollars to improve public sanitation, health, and toilet facilities (KDI 1989). Under the goal of urban ‘beautification’, Seoul undertook extensive redevelopments of the city center areas, and before 1988, a total of 426,000 m² was redeveloped (Son 2003). Outside the city center, massive slum areas were quickly replaced with new, modern apartment buildings. Although these housing developments were not necessarily considered as preparation projects for the Olympics, they were nevertheless influenced by the motivation to hide undesirable landscapes from foreign visitors. Given Seoul’s persistent housing shortages and thus high demand for apartment units, the building of apartment complexes was an effective way to remove large slum areas from the city and also to quickly build out open lands.

Third, the city government undertook comprehensive restoration and development projects of the Han River from 1981 onward. Taking place over 5 years, the projects included repairing the riverbed and building docks, recreation parks, and five new bridges, as well as the already-mentioned Olympic Daero along the river. The projects also included the building of underwater dams, embankments, and sewer and treatment plants, which significantly cleaned up the severely polluted river.⁸ Through the extensive projects, the Han River was transformed into an accessible public riverside park, enjoyed by many Seoul residents (Son 2003).

Fourth, the national government built several new cultural buildings and facilities, including the Seoul Art Centre (September 1987), the National Classical Music Institute (April 1986), and the National Museum of Contemporary Arts (August 1986) (Chalkley and Essex 1999). Many of the new projects sought to combine Korean traditional culture with new ‘modern’ and ‘contemporary’ concepts (Kal 2011). South Koreans saw this fusion of traditional and modern culture as representing the social harmony of the Olympic Games and believed that it would impress the international community. Additionally, the government restored some ancient remains, such as Mongchon Earthen Fortress (built during the Hanseong Baekje Kingdom), and planned a number of cultural festivals for the 1988 Olympic Games, in order to showcase South Korea’s cultural heritage. The Seoul government also installed hundreds of cultural heritage signs to cater to foreign visitors.

In short, as Seoul prepared for the 1988 Olympic Games, it pushed through many infrastructure and mega-scale development projects that transformed its urban landscape. Billions of dollars were invested

in Olympics-related infrastructure developments, of which the central government and the city government contributed roughly one-third each, with the remaining one-third coming from private companies. Throughout the 1980s, the city quickly made a leap toward modernization, shedding its earlier Third-World city reputation. It thereby earned a new confidence and capacity to manage its urban growth and expansion as a metropolis. As if to symbolically mark the developments and transformations triggered by the Olympics, Seoul's population reached its peak of 10 million in 1988.

THE IMPACT AND LEGACY OF THE 1988 SUMMER OLYMPICS

The Seoul Olympics gave great national pride to South Koreans, not only as a host of the major international event, but also through the national team's outstanding performance in the Games. The politics in and of sport was evident in the 1988 Olympics; the Games was promoted under both Park and Chun military regimes that sought to fully utilize the sports to stir up the nationalistic emotion and to use that toward the governmental initiatives for development and modernization. While the Games unexpectedly ended up being hosted just after South Korea's new democracy, the military regime that bid and prepared for the Games anticipated the international sporting event to significantly help enhance its legitimacy. Held in the capital city, the Games was to muster a unified support for the regime, while highlighting its great success, through the sport competitions promoting intense national pride and unity. As such, the South Korean government systematically fostered its national team athletes throughout the 1980s so as to achieve better outcomes in the Seoul Olympics. Indeed, the South Korean team performed the best in the 1988 Olympics, even to date. It ranked fourth in the world with 12 gold medals and 33 total medals. It is no exaggeration that the Seoul Olympic Games was the culmination of the military government's '3S' (sex, sports, and screen) policy.

Furthermore, the Seoul Olympics is recognized as one of the most notable mega-events that first promoted 'South Korea' to the international society. Inviting the largest batch of athletes and staffs from different countries, its scale was the biggest compared to other previous Olympic Games. The economic impact was estimated at about 47 billion dollars, in addition to creating 33,600 new jobs and bringing in 240,000 tourists to South Korea (KDI 1989). The Seoul Games can

be considered a success on many fronts, including attracting maximum participation across continents, achieving harmony and safety during the event, and having an overall positive economic impact. This section further elaborates the political, economic, and social/urban achievements and legacies of the Games.

Political Impact

The decade of South Korea's engagement with the 1988 Olympics, from the inception of the idea to the bidding and the successful hosting, frames a tumultuous period of political and geopolitical change. In addition to the politics in and of sport explained at the beginning of this section, domestically, the 1988 Olympics played a crucial role in bringing democracy to the country. We discussed earlier how Chun pushed for the Olympics to divert attention from citizen demands for democracy. Ironically, it was the Olympics that helped to contribute to the downfall of Chun's authoritarian state and brought democracy to South Korea.

Since 1985, South Koreans had demanded direct presidential elections and the revision of the constitution. Chun had initially agreed to create a special committee to review the issue in 1986, but he withdrew his promise the following year. He argued that the country needed to prepare for the 1988 Olympics, and a constitutional debate at such a critical time was inadvisable. This led to public outcry and resulted in the 'Seoul Spring', which eventually triggered the historic nationwide pro-democracy demonstration in June 1987. The presence of the international media and their coverage of South Korea (as the next Olympics host country) and its politics gave added impetus to student demonstrators and opposition politicians, and international mass media reports conferred legitimacy (Mangan and Ok 2012). Given the intensifying international scrutiny ahead of the Olympics, the Chun regime was pressured to avoid the use of military force against demonstrators (Black and Bezanson 2004). The last thing that the South Korean government wanted was mass demonstrations and tear gas canisters flying on the main streets of Seoul (Heo and Roehrig 2010). On June 29, Roh Tae Woo—then the presidential candidate of the ruling party⁹—made the national broadcast of the June 29, 1987, declaration of democratization. The declaration promised a fundamental political change, including direct presidential elections and the introduction of a democratic constitution (Cotton 1993).

Internationally, the 1988 Olympics significantly helped to improve and expand South Korea's diplomatic relations. Through the successful hosting of the Games, the international community began to recognize South Korea as a middle power country rather than a Third-World country. More importantly, the event provided the first opportunity for South Korea to expand its diplomatic relationships with socialist countries, moving beyond its traditional relationships with the United States and other liberal democracies. This was significant because it was geopolitically important for South Korea, under the ongoing conflict with communist North Korea, to make alliances (or at least improve relations) with socialist countries. After Roh became president, he continued the trend of reaching out to non-traditional allies, including the former Soviet Union nations and Eastern European countries, and his signature foreign policy was labeled as Nordpolitik (Northern Policy). The 1988 Olympics thus provided a starting point for South Korea to engage with countries with different political systems and move beyond its traditional alliances (Kim 2010).

Economic Impact

Overall, the 1988 Olympics left a positive mark on the economy of South Korea. The SOOC reported total spending of about 785 million dollars for the 1988 Games. A significant portion of this went into construction works and activities involving the management of Olympic-related organizations, planning, and security. The total proceeds amounted to approximately 11.2 billion dollars, resulting in a net profit of about 335 million dollars (1988 standard) (KDI 1989). This could be considered a historical feat for a state-run Olympic Games (Hill 1996). The main sources of income were from worldwide broadcasting rights (380 million dollars), tourism,¹⁰ corporate sponsorships (Olympic products), and construction projects (KDI 1989).

The 1988 Olympics is also noted to have contributed to stimulating economic growth in South Korea. The massive construction activities led by the chaebols in preparation for the Games added to South Korea's overall economic growth. Together with the rising exports at the time, South Korea's per capita income steadily increased from 1927 (in 1982) to 5556 dollars (in 1989). Its economic growth rate between 1986 and 1988 exceeded 12% (Choi and Heo 2013). The Games also indirectly supported related industries, both during and after the event. The electronics, communication products, and sports-related goods that

were showcased during the Games earned positive brand recognition. Exports were further boosted, and both consumer and industrial electronics overtook textiles as South Korea's leading export. It is true that the South Korean government had a long-term plan for the development of the electronics and telecommunication industries, but the Olympics provided a push (Larson and Park 1993, pp. 242–243). Additionally, South Korea's successful hosting of the Olympics allowed the country to project a positive image to the international marketplace. Its international credit standing increased substantially, which benefited its export-oriented industries and companies (Kim 2004). Such a positive image also laid the foundation for diversifying South Korea's potential export markets in the future.

It is difficult to measure the local economic impact of the Olympic Games in Seoul itself. From 1988 to 1993, Seoul's average financial independence rate remained near 100%. This suggests that despite the costs of staging the Olympics, the city remained financially healthy and self-sufficient (Yang 2015). It is also noteworthy that during this time period, Seoul's general account met a meaningful upward change (see Fig. 2.2). As discussed earlier, Seoul's massive development projects significantly increased, expanded, and upgraded Seoul's infrastructure and urban system. The sharp increase in the general account of the Seoul government reflects the city's success in using the Olympics to develop into a larger and more modernized metropolis.

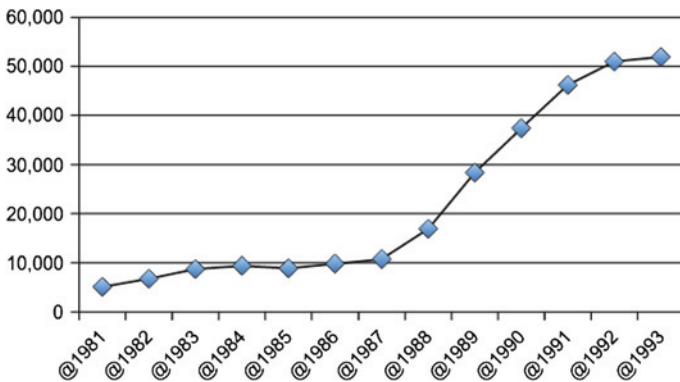


Fig. 2.2 Changes in Seoul government's general accounts. *Source* Ministry of the Interior (various years).

Unit Hundred Million Korean Won

Social and Urban Impacts

For South Koreans, the 1988 Olympics had important social and cultural implications. It was the country's first major exposure to the international community, reflected in the Olympics slogan, 'World to Korea, Korea to the World.' The arrival of athletes and tourists from many parts of the world was an eye-opening experience for many South Koreans, as Seoul had previously not been a global city by any means, and overseas travel had been strictly controlled by the authoritarian state. Since the Olympics, and under the democratic state, there has been an increase in the outflow of tourists from South Korea to other countries, indicating the changing lifestyle of South Koreans (Kim 2004, p. 74).

More important, however, the Olympics provided an occasion to strengthen national pride among South Koreans. The 1988 Olympics did not just introduce South Korea's economic achievements to the world, but marked a domestic celebration and acknowledgement of South Koreans' tremendous hard work that pulled through to bring near miraculous economic development. To South Koreans, hosting the Olympic Games symbolized that their country had emerged as a newly developed economy. The Games, in fact, marked a transition point: South Korea was no longer on the receiving end of foreign aid from the international community. Kal (2011, p. 88) argued that the successful bid for the Seoul Olympics over Nagoya, Japan, in 1981 alone had already exhilarated South Koreans. The Seoul Olympics was the first international mega-event that the South Koreans prided themselves on successfully hosting and became the benchmark for the country's mega-events in the future.

Specifically for Seoul residents, the Games left many physical legacies, including sports facilities, transportation infrastructure, parks, and apartments. The Olympic arenas continue to be used for sports competitions, sports classes for local communities, and other local sports programs. The Olympic Park is an important public space used by many Seoul residents for jogging and picnics. The main Olympic Stadium has gradually deteriorated, but it is still frequently used as a performing venue for K-POP performances, concerts, and cultural activities. Seoul's riverside public parks and water management system are well maintained and are considered to be one of the most important factors in improving the quality of life of Seoul residents. Last but not least, the massive investments in construction provided new homes to many middle-income residents of Seoul.

Yet, there was also a dark side to the Seoul Olympics. During preparations for the Games, South Korea gained international notoriety for the forced evictions of poor and low-income households and the mistreatment of street vendors, beggars, and homeless people (Davis 2011; Kal 2011). In the mid-1980s, the government and construction companies forcefully evicted many slum areas, sometimes engaging local gangsters, to prepare the land for development. The most notorious cases of mass forced evictions took place in Mok-dong, Sanggye-dong, and Sadang-dong.

The first mass evictions took place in Mok-dong. Its apartment development plan originally had intended to provide housing for the 32,000 illegal low-income households being displaced. However, the government later changed the plan and opted to build more units for the middle-income class instead¹¹ (Kang 2014). Following this decision, residents resisted the government's mass eviction plans and claimed that compensation was not sufficient, and from 1983 to 1985, resistance spread widely throughout Seoul (Park 2008, p. 797). Foreign media became attentive to the issue, and the massive forced evictions in more than 200 places led by public officials, private construction companies, and even gangsters were reported to the world. According to an international human rights group that visited South Korea to look into the allegations of forced evictions, about 700,000 cases of Olympics-related evictions were noted to have taken place (Davis 2011).

Apart from evictions, the process of urban refurbishment involved relocating street stalls out of public sight into back alleys. Temporary walls were also built to hide the slums and poor-quality houses that had not been demolished on the route of the Olympic torch relay (Davis 2011; Hill 1996). These examples illustrate the ways in which the Olympics superficially covered, and often further exacerbated, some of South Korea's social problems in an effort to project a positive image to global audiences.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As the most widely attended and globally sought after mega-event, the Summer Olympic Games have the potential to leave significant legacies in their host cities and nations. Yet, it is also evident that, in practice, not every host succeeds in bringing positive outcomes from the mega-event. Amid the pool of mixed outcomes, the 1988 Seoul Olympics was a case

in point where the Games overall helped to positively transform Seoul and South Korea.

The 1988 Seoul Olympics took place precisely at the moment when political change and massive-scale urban development were needed after two decades of rapid industrialization under a growth-first ideology. It thus marked a turning point, where South Korea's economic achievements and Seoul as a modern metropolis were successfully introduced to the international stage. South Korea at the time had a rather negative reputation as a poor, war-stricken, and divided country. The fact that South Korea was able to host the Olympics then was an impressive feat not only to international audiences, but also to South Koreans. The event brought together the entire nation and celebrated the 'miracle of the Han River' that they had worked hard to achieve since the 1960s. Internationally, the event gave the South Korean government an opportunity to build relations with communist countries, which were deemed important as it was in a conflict with North Korea.

On the local level, the Olympics provided an opportunity to pursue major urban infrastructure and development projects. Seoul seized the opportunity but with massive bulldozing of slums and beautification projects.¹² The social ramifications were thus unjust. However, it cannot be denied that the Olympic-led urban development projects enabled Seoul to transform its image from that of a Third-World city full of slums into a modern metropolis. As a growing key city of a rapidly developing country, the facilities and infrastructure developed for the Olympic Games quickly became embedded in the urban landscape and became useful. In a way, this helped consolidate Seoul's advantageous position within South Korea. Furthermore, together with South Korea's international and national feats, success at the local level led to a general belief among South Korean politicians and society at large that international mega-events are highly beneficial to national and local development. Perhaps this conception is one of the most notable legacies of the 1988 Olympics, which has led to South Korea's persistent attempts to host one mega-event after another.

NOTES

1. According to a mass survey done just after the Seoul Olympics (October, 1988), almost 90% of Korean citizens expected a better relationship with communist countries after the Games (KDI 1989, p. 22).

2. When Chun took power, there was an uprising in the city of Gwangju, home of the opposing political party, in southwestern South Korea. The Chun regime dispatched the military to suppress demonstrators, and many civilians were killed.
3. Japanese lobbyists spent more time highlighting South Korea's weakness—i.e., security and an unstable political situation—than promoting Nagoya to IOC voters. Due to several tactical mistakes, Japan failed to convince IOC members of the merits of the Nagoya bid (Clifford 1998).
4. The growth in population of Seoul has started to slow down since 2013, due to a low fertility rate and skyrocketing property market. But the population density of the city, which is roughly eight times that of New York and Sydney, is still the highest among the OECD countries ("Seoul ranks" 2009).
5. See Scherer and Shi (2016) on the biggest financial disasters in modern Olympic history. In addition, Lake Placid (Winter 1980), Lillehammer (Winter 1994), Nagano (Winter 1998), and Vancouver (Winter 2010) were recorded as the most financially disastrous Olympics.
6. Seoul is divided by the Han River, which separates the city into north and south. 'Gangnam' means 'South of the River.' Before Gangnam began to be developed in the 1970s, the urban development and infrastructure of Seoul was located to the north of the Han River, exacerbating the problem of overconcentration. Gangnam was part of the government's deconcentration policy. Jamsil is part of this deconcentration policy, as well as being a new development to prepare Seoul for future international sports events.
7. Jamsil was originally a sand cay in the middle of Han River. Under the provision of the Public Waters Reclamation Act, reclamation in the area started in 1971 (Son 2003). Located on the southeast bank of the Han River, it had been suffering from frequent flood risk and environmental damage (Liao and Pitts 2006).
8. There was no systemic water management authority or plan in South Korea at the time, and there were daily complaints of foul-smelling and contaminated rivers throughout the country. Due to this problem, the IOC demanded that bottled water be supplied in the Olympic Village (Eder 1996, p. 37).
9. While being a military government, Chun's presidency term was fixed. The ruling party's next presidential candidate was thus selected during its convention held on June 10, 1987. This candidate would have succeeded Chun Doo-hwan, as the next non-democratically elected president. The irony is that even after the declaration of democracy, the candidate (Roh Tae-woo) won the popular election and became the president in 1988.

10. The South Korean government made great efforts to attract tourists from around the world. It engaged in promotional activities, including public relations activities, advertising campaigns, and seminars that targeted foreign travel agents and consumer groups. As a result, the number of foreign tourists grew 16–24% every year from 1986 to 1989 (Korea National Tourism Organization 2000).
11. The shift in policy was mainly because the apartment project was not funded by the government. The inducement of commercial interests—i.e., big conglomerates—via the form of ‘joint ventures’ changed the overall direction of the project, from a housing development for the low-income citizens to a profit and efficiency-oriented development (Park 2008).
12. Similar forced displacement and eviction took place again 20 years later during the preparation for the controversial 2008 Beijing Olympics.

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