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## China's Party, America's Win

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Everybody knows that this Olympics was supposed to be China's introduction to the world. What we didn't expect was that it would be the reintroduction of America.

We won the overall medal count, lost the gold medal count, and none of that really matters - not in the bigger picture.

China put on a show that must have London feeling like a guy who does bird whistles coming on stage after Pavarotti. But we expected that. Their resources are unlimited, their discipline unparalleled and the stakes of getting it right were unequalled. Even the air quality cooperated - even if it did take shutting down local factories and banning cars. And, of course, these are a people who know a bit about symbolism and pageantry.

But it was the American moments that that might have shown a different face to a world where our standing - after eight years of practiced dismissiveness and arrogance - has brought world opinion of us to a new low.

It's worse than the near-universal loathing of the current administration. And it is beyond the resentment naturally targeted at the world's lone - at least for now - superpower.

There have always been disagreements with U.S. policy and resentments of our success, but beneath that was a fundamental appreciation for Americans themselves. But world surveys over the past several years show the long affection for Americans is fading.

Majorities see us as greedy, violent and rude. A 2006 Pew Global attitudes project found a "rising antipathy toward Americans" - particularly among the young

But throughout this Olympics, the world saw the best of us. It saw the America that we would like to see ourselves, but have lost in recent in the haze of rancor, incivility and self-promotion.

Michael Phelps' eight gold medals drew attention to a person of uncommon humility and decency - someone who celebrated his accomplishments but also made certain again and again that the flow of those accomplishments also illuminated his teammates. The bond with his smart, funny and wonderfully natural mother humanized him all the more.

There was the obvious affection and mutual support of gymnasts Shawn Johnson and Nadia Liukin - whose friendship survived - even surpassed - their rivalry.

There was the men's basketball team - which combined incandescent athleticism and a renewed commitment to teamwork with unblemished statesmanship. Redeem team, indeed. Not just because they recaptured the gold, but for how they recaptured the gold: a performance of carefully executed steps, culminating with each putting his medal around the neck of Coach Mike Kryzyewski.

There was the sweet and articulate joy of the American women's 4X400 relay team, each giving credit for the win to the others.

The performance, humility and humanity of our athletes and our teams throughout these games won't undue damage that was years in the making. But it just might be a start.