



## Why shouldn't US Olympic uniforms be made in China?

Daniel J. Ikenson, associate director of the Cato Institute's Center for Trade Policy Studies, [cuts through the political hue and cry](#) raised over the made-in-China US Olympic uniforms:

So, what exactly is un-American about Chinese-made Olympic uniforms? Nearly half of the clothing in America's closets is made in China, and almost all of the rest is made in other foreign countries. With a very few exceptions, we simply don't cut and sew clothing much in the United States anymore.

But we design clothing here. We brand clothing here. We market and retail clothing here.

The apparel industry employs plenty of Americans, just not in the cutting and sewing operations that our parents and grandparents endured, working long hours for low wages.

Could Ralph Lauren -- the brand atop the long, integrated supply chain that takes apparel ideas from conception all the way to the consumer -- have forgone use of the Chinese factories that do most of the brand's cutting and sewing operations and, instead, contracted with U.S. factories for the Olympic uniform project? Yes, probably, but at significantly higher cost. Still, that change would have had to be a custom request of the private funders of the Olympic team, who -- unlike the Congress -- might have felt obligated to stay within budget.

Besides, the implication that producing several hundred uniforms in the United States would fix the national employment problem is humorous. Maybe it would have created a few dozen jobs for perhaps a few weeks, but not much more than that. Far more jobs would be created from the one extra day of certainty that would be afforded by Congress deciding today, as opposed to tomorrow, what the 2013 tax rates were going to be.

If you are still not convinced of the folly of our policymakers' objections, consider this: As our U.S. athletes march around the track at London's Olympic stadium wearing their Chinese-made uniforms and waving their Chinese-made American flags, there is a good chance that Chinese athletes will have arrived in London by U.S.-made aircraft, been trained on U.S.-designed and -engineered equipment, wearing U.S.-designed and -engineered footwear, many having perfected their skills using U.S.-created technology.