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**CITIUS, ALTIUS, FORTIUS:
FASTER, HIGHER, STRONGER**

by

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June 2013

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CITIUS, ALTIUS, FORTIUS: FASTER, HIGHER, STRONGER

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

Chinese elite female athletes have experienced extraordinary success in international athletic competitions. Since 1992, elite women athletes have been more represented and successful in the Olympics and National Championships than men; while accounting for less than 50 percent of the elite athletes in China, and competing in less Olympic events; in the Olympics, women were represented in less than 50 percent of the events until 2012. Concisely, the rise of Chinese female athletic participation and success in international competitions has become the backbone for China's rise to sports relevance, and has been unlike historical Western nation-states' experience in athletics.

This historical examination chronologically documents the rise of Chinese elite female athletes and the policies affecting athletes from 1949 to the present, and reveals a connection between female athletic success and state enforced gender equality policies that targeted culture, education, and labor. Through gender equality policies, men and women were uniformly exposed to a national sports system that invested in research, training, equipment, recruitment, and incentivizing athletes "to win honors for the country." Moreover, this examination evaluates various hypotheses on what Chinese policies, if any, have produced these extraordinary results, and proposes the sports system, although exceptionally successful, is ultimately imbalanced and plateauing, while the Chinese Communist Party desires participation, power, and control at the expense of possible broad athletic victory.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION.....	1
B.	IMPORTANCE.....	2
C.	PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES	3
D.	LITERATURE REVIEW	4
E.	METHODS AND SOURCES.....	7
F.	THESIS OVERVIEW	8
II.	THE MAO ZEDONG ERA.....	11
A.	1949–1957: SOVIET ASSISTANCE, GENDER EQUALITY, ELITE SPORTS, AND FEMALE SUCCESS	11
B.	THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD: COMPETITION, INVESTMENT, AND UNSUSTAINABLE SUCCESS.....	19
C.	THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION: ANTI-ELITE SPORTS AND FRIENDSHIP FIRST	23
III.	THE DENG XIAOPING ERA.....	29
A.	ECONOMIC REFORM AND OPENING (1979–1988): ELITE SPORTS, COMPETITION, INVESTMENT, AND FEMALE SUCCESS ARE BACK.....	29
B.	ECONOMIC REFORM AND OPENING ATHLETES: URBAN AND ACCOMMODATED	34
IV.	THE JIANG ZEMIN AND HU JINTAO ERA	39
A.	MARKET REFORM AND FEMALE SPORTS: DECENTRALIZATION, INDIVIDUAL SPORTS, AND FEMALE SUCCESS.....	39
B.	DO THE CHINESE WIN BECAUSE THEY USE PEDS?	46
V.	CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	51
A.	WHY DID CHINESE ELITE FEMALE ATHLETES RISE AND SUCCEED?	51
B.	IMPLICATIONS	57
C.	CONCLUDING REMARKS	61
	LIST OF REFERENCES	63
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	67

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACAF	All-China Athletic Federation
ACFTU	All-China Federation of Trade Union
ACWF	All-China Women's Federation
CAS	Chinese Athletic Association
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCTV	Central China TV
CFA	Chinese Football Association
CMFT	Chinese Men's Football Team
CWBT	Chinese Women's Basketball Team
CWFT	Chinese Women's Football Team
CWVT	Chinese Women's Volleyball Team
EPO	Erythropoietin
FINA	International Swimming Federation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLF	Great Leap Forward
HGHs	Human Growth Hormones
IAAF	International Association of Athletics Federations
IO	International Organization
IOC	International Olympic Committee
NSC	National Sports Commission
PEDs	Performance-Enhancing Drugs
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
SGAS	State General Administration of Sports
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTA	Women's Tennis Association
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Mao Zedong declared, “Women hold up half the sky.”¹ In modern international sports, Chinese women hold up more than half the sky, and women have accomplished what men cannot in competitive international sports. For example, in 1988, as women events comprised approximately 25 percent of all Olympic events, Chinese female Olympic athletes comprised 46 percent of the Chinese Olympic team and accounted for 60 percent of the Chinese gold medals. Moreover, in 1992, Chinese female Olympic athletes comprised 52 percent of the Chinese Olympic team and accounted for 75 percent of the Chinese gold medals.² In 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012, Chinese female Olympic athletes comprised 62, 66, 64, 52, and 57 percent of the Chinese Olympic team while accounting for 56, 59, 60, 53, and 54 percent, respectively, of all Chinese gold medals.

Concisely, since 1988, more Chinese women have qualified for the Olympics and won gold medals than Chinese men. Additionally, Chinese female athletes have achieved excellence in World Cup Marathons, World Championships in Athletics, World Swimming Championships, World Cup Diving Championships, and have accounted for 89 percent of all gold medals won in the Winter Olympics (since 1988). Regularly, in international competition, Chinese female athletes are more represented (as a ratio of women to men) than the industrialized countries of Great Britain, the United States, or Germany³ while domestically, between 1978 and 1998, over 60 percent of the Chinese top 10 athletes of the year were women.⁴

¹ Dong Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China: Holding Up More than Half the Sky* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 1.

² James Riordan and Dong Jinxia, “Chinese Women and Sport,” in *Sport and Physical Education in China*, ed. James Riordan and Robin Jones (London: E & FN Spon, 1999), 162.

³ *Ibid.*, 159–169.

⁴ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 220.

In view of these consistent results, why have international Chinese female athletics (since 1949) risen to prominence and experienced exceptional success? Specifically, what Chinese Communist Party (CCP) policies have produced the rise and success of Chinese female athletics in international competition, and what are the possible implications both internationally and domestically?

B. IMPORTANCE

An examination of CCP policy and implications towards cultivating successful international Chinese female athletics is an examination of the evolutionary effects of the CCP's policies on female physical and social liberation, female social roles and responsibilities, broader regime policies toward the international community and international sports, and domestic customs, or acceptance of international sports. Succinctly, sports do not exist within a void; sports influences and is influenced by governmental, social, and personal relationships. For example, female physical and societal liberation from the governmental, social, and personal practices of “footbinding” or educational exclusion must exist for competitive volleyball, swimming, track and field, or gymnastics to exist. Adrian Smith and Dilwyn Porter assert, “Sports supplies a mirror that a people holds up to itself.”⁵ Thus, an examination of the recent history of modern Chinese female athletics is an examination of the evolution of the Chinese government and society.

Internationally and domestically, competitive sports foster national identification, diversification, globalization, and internationalization as governments and athletes participate in cross-cultural competition and transnational organizations like the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Moreover, international sports generate patriotism, pride, social change, and legitimizes (or delegitimizes) government philosophies and policies through athletic performance (success and failure), international acceptance, and rule compliance (or non-compliance).⁶ For example, the domestic mass

⁵ Adrian Smith and Dilwyn Porter, eds., *Sport and National Identity in the Post-War World* (London: Routledge, 2004), 2.

⁶ Xu Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams: China and Sports 1895–2008* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 2.

acceptance of the 1980s Chinese female volleyball team,⁷ or the 1990s Chinese female soccer team (the “iron roses”), fueled patriotism,⁸ identity, pride, and assisted in legitimizing CCP rule while the international mass acceptance assisted globalization, respect, and legitimacy through athletic skill and performance. As Guoqi Xu asserts, “Sport defines a country’s national identity and internationalization because it inspires solidarity and self-reflection.”⁹

C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

Broadly speaking, problems with an examination of CCP policy and implications towards cultivating successful international Chinese female athletics include negative opinions of sports’ significance, a lack of gender studies in sports, a lack of gender-divided statistics, and a lack of participation of female athletes in gender studies in China. For example, historically, Chinese and international gender studies have rarely placed importance upon female representation in sports. Chinese female athletes examine and are examined for primarily athletic performance-related studies. Further, in China, historical sports statistics and sports studies rarely decouple men and women.¹⁰ Therefore, a historical assessment of specific policies toward female athletics, and efforts to assess specific motivations to use female athletics as a tool for economic, political, or social goals easily becomes intertwined with broad policies like the Great Leap Forward (GLF, 1958–1960), female policies like the Marriage Law (1950), and sports policies like the Olympic Strategy (1985).

One female athletic policy hypothesis stipulates that Chinese women’s athletic success results from government policies fostering admission, opportunity, equality, and general male support towards female athletics and female equality.¹¹ Another female athletic policy hypothesis stipulates that Chinese female athletic success is a consequence

⁷ Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams: China and Sports 1895–2008*, 72.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 2–3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

of government and social policies deterring female societal advancement and encouraging inequality. Accordingly, women participate in athletics and achieve success because a male dominated society deters female advancement in business, politics, academics, etc.¹² Succinctly, Chinese men have numerous career options while women have few—women need to succeed in athletics. Finally, another female athletic policy hypothesis stipulates that Chinese women athletes succeed apart from government policies. Chinese women are culturally socialized different from men. Traditional Confucian values encourage Chinese women to be more obedient and work harder than men; therefore, they are culturally more inclined to achieve athletic success.¹³

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

The earliest important academic literature assessing gender, sports, and politics (in addition to media) in China is Susan Brownell's *Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People's Republic*. Brownell devises an anthropological theory through the study of collegiate sports in China that utilizes gender, the body, and the nation to explain culture and sports' importance in culture. The body, or the "body culture," through observable differences (for example, hygiene, manners, health, feelings, etc.) determines culture—not knowledge. For example, same sex hand holding in China evokes apprehension in Americans because humans are concerned about bodily actions—not because of yin-yang theories or sexual symbolism. Further, the visceral reaction to same sex hand holding is the basis for gender, ethnic, class, or national hatred.¹⁴ Brownell stipulates, first, sport is an expression of a culture, second, power relationships determine the body culture, for example, the Chinese walk differently than Americans because of differing history and power relationships, and third, competitive sports are cultural artifacts as gender, the body, and the nation are on display.

¹² Susan Brownell, *Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People's Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 209.

¹³ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 10.

¹⁴ Brownell, *Training the Body for China*, 10–15.

Brownell's contribution to the importance of gender, sports, and nationalism in China is without question, but the data she addresses mainly concern amateur athletes, and her study was conducted before national athletes were granted favored access to colleges in the 1990s.¹⁵ Therefore, the truly gifted international Chinese female athletes and societal relationships remain unaddressed, and consequently, the reasons for Chinese female success in international competition remain unaddressed. Further, Brownell's theory of inequality producing superior Chinese female athletes (superior to Chinese male athletes), and the disenfranchised women, a subcategory of women, producing the most successful athletes, is not substantiated with data.¹⁶ For example, statistical data on the origins of elite Chinese female athletes are not provided.

Notably, Brownell predicts political themes, policies, and Western sports are largely irreconcilable. For example, she argues that "socialism with Chinese characteristics" promoting Western sports (or Olympic sports) competition while resisting Western political thought is improbable. Therefore, as China further embraces Western dominated international competition and the IOC, the Chinese economy, politics, and society will further embrace Western definitions of free trade, democracy, and human rights.¹⁷

Fan Hong's *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom: The Liberation of Women's Bodies in Modern China* is a historical examination of the evolution and importance of physical gender relations, physical female liberation, and sports in China (1840–1949); notably, Fan's historical examination includes Mao Zedong's philosophies on physical education. Through *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom*, Fan reveals a traditional Chinese culture that physically controlled women in modern China, a women's movement grappling with physical liberation, the relationship between exercise and liberation, and the relationship between female participation in sports and freedom from traditional patriarchy. Fan's thesis positing that Chinese female liberation through physical liberation links gender, sports, and politics while also revealing the mere

¹⁵ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 2.

¹⁶ Brownell, *Training the Body for China*, 209.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 323–324.

participation in sports has paradoxical social consequences. For example, government mandated exercise both confirms and denies traditional culture through a redefinition of female physicality using patriarchal methods.¹⁸

Fan's historical archival data present a complex chronological account of both Western Christianity's influence and nationalist and communist political systems concerned with tough women to defend the forming Chinese nation-state. Fan overstates Western Christian culture's influence. For example, the relationship between exercise and education existed in ancient Greece before Western Christian culture, and the Qing Dynasty (Fan examined 1860–94) not promoting baseball (invented in 1895) is congruent with Western Christian culture.¹⁹ Conversely, Fan provides strong archival data to prove that the nationalist and communist regimes promoted exercise, sports, and female physical liberation for political agendas of power and survival rather than gender equality. Therefore, Fan's thesis appears accurate while female physical liberation appears independent from a Chinese women's movement. Notably, Fan's *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom* is a well documented beginning to Chinese female athletics, and contributes to the general knowledge of the interconnectedness of gender, sports, and government in China.

Dong Jinxia's *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China: Holding Up More than Half the Sky* is a chronological historical examination of the evolution of elite female athletics under CCP rule from 1949 to 1998. *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China* provides case studies of elite female athletes in Beijing, Guangdong, and Sichuan to show expanding female participation in elite sports, and to argue that international Chinese female athletic success is due to recent Chinese history, culture, politics, gender relations, and the centralized sports system.²⁰ Dong's work utilizes Western and Chinese sources unavailable to the West (including interviews with Chinese female athletes) to

¹⁸ Fan Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom: The Liberation of Women's Bodies in Modern China* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 296.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁰ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 11.

compose a thorough historical examination of gender, sports, and politics from 1949 to 1998. The historical examination and sources are a valuable resource to academically addressing international Chinese female athletics.

Conversely, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China* is a multifaceted historical account of modern Chinese female athletics and advances a complicated thesis attributing the rise of Chinese female athletic success to innumerable competing factors—for example, to Confucianism, the international community, selflessness, drugs, drug policy, priorities, development, isolation, and globalization.²¹ The theories are often contradictory; for example, Dong states that Chinese Confucian female athletes are hard working and obedient in a centralized system while materialistic and inferior in a decentralized system. Therefore, culture matters and does not matter. Decentralization promotes materialism, but does not inspire athletic excellence for the sake of materialism. Centralization manifested the Chinese sport management system, which is defined as a success (by Dong), and the one child policy, which is defined as detrimental to athletics (by Dong). Succinctly, the emerging theory (apart from Dong's stated thesis) is Chinese female athletes are successful because of the Chinese economy, centralization, and Confucianism. Why U.S. female athletics is successful in a decentralized and Judeo-Christian culture, or why Soviet female athletics was successful in a centralized, socialistic, and atheistic culture are not resolved. Notably, historical examination is complex and *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China* does justice to historical complexity as Dong examines female athletics from Mao Zedong to Jiang Zemin with exceptional description.

E. METHODS AND SOURCES

The method for assessing CCP policy and implications towards cultivating successful international Chinese female athletics is a chronological historical study designed to answer why international Chinese female athletics have succeeded, and, in particular, what CCP policies produced the success? Notably, CCP policy and implications towards Chinese female athletics unfailingly intertwines with broader

²¹ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 224–225.

economic, social, and political policies and motivations throughout the People’s Republic of China (PRC) history. The examination and significance of international Chinese female athletics and CCP policies toward international Chinese female athletics does not entail an intensive examination of broad policies and motivations, for example, the policies and motivations of the GLF, but is an examination of how the broad policies largely affected sports and female athletics. For example, did the GLF assist female athletic participation? Conversely, specific CCP athletic policies and female athletic policies are examined to determine implications—domestically and internationally.

Chinese women and culture sources examined include Elisabeth Croll’s *Feminism and Socialism in China*, *Chinese Women Since Mao*, and *Changing Identities of Chinese Women*. Marilyn Young’s *Women in China: Studies in Social Change and Feminism*, Rey Chow’s *Woman and Chinese Modernity*, Ellen Judd’s *The Chinese Women’s Movement Between State and Market*, and Gail Hershatter’s *Women in China’s Long Twentieth Century*.

Additionally, Chinese and Western web resources on Chinese women and sports employed in the examination include, but not limited to, *China Trade in Services*, *Women of China*, *People’s Daily*, *The Economist*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *The New York Times*, while the general literature on sports and China employed are Xu Guoqi’s *Olympic Dreams: China and Sports 1895–2008*, Jonathan Kolatch’s *Sports, Politics, and Ideology in China*, and Fan Hong and Xiong Xiaozheng’s “Communist China: Sport, Politics, and Diplomacy”.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

The recent historical examination of CCP policy and possible implications towards cultivating successful international Chinese female athletics is divided into four segments.

- The Mao Zedong era
- The Deng Xiaoping era
- The Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao era
- Conclusions and implications for the PRC-CCP, Chinese female athletics, and domestic and international relationships

The Mao Zedong era segment, notably, examines the effects of female liberation in the “New China” on female athletics (for example, the 1950 Marriage Law), the effects broad CCP policies had on female athletics (for example, the GLF and the Cultural Revolution [1966]), and CCP motivations relating to sports, female athletics, and the international community, for example, the Chinese sports administration, and “friendship first, competition second.”²² The Deng Xiaoping segment, notably, examines reform era effects upon sports, athlete surveys, and CCP organization and motivation to female athletics and the international community, for example, the Chinese “Olympic Strategy,” and “competition first.”²³ The Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao era segment examines the post-Deng Xiaoping reform era to the present, notably, the effects of the growing Chinese market reform on female athletics, or the decentralization of professional sports teams and the emphasis upon individual sports, and the misuse of drugs in Chinese athletics. The conclusions segment summarizes and offers conclusions as to why international Chinese female athletics (since 1949) have risen and experienced exceptional success through evaluating the various hypotheses while posing possible implications of CCP policies and motivations—domestically and internationally.

Why international Chinese female athletics have experienced exceptional success, and what CCP policies have produced the rise and success of Chinese female athletics are effectively examined through a chronological historical examination. Upon displaying the information chronologically (telling the story), hypotheses and implications are addressed with respect to the intertwining of broad policy, female policy, sports policy, and implications. Moreover, revealing, since 1949, a connection exists between Chinese elite female athletic population and representation in international competition—ultimately

²² Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 220.

²³ Ibid.

linked to success—and CCP gender equality policies that targeted culture, education, and labor while simultaneously exposing men and women to a hierarchical national sports system that invested in research, training, equipment, recruitment, and incentivizing athletes “to win honors for the country.”²⁴

²⁴ China Trade in Services, “Law of the People’s Republic of China on Physical Culture and Sports, China Trade in Services,” August 29, 1995, <http://tradeinservices.mofcom.gov.cn/en/b/1995-08-29/18686.shtml>.

II. THE MAO ZEDONG ERA

A. 1949–1957: SOVIET ASSISTANCE, GENDER EQUALITY, ELITE SPORTS, AND FEMALE SUCCESS

In 1950, upon accomplishing the Chinese-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance (February 1950), and within the context of Chinese involvement in the Korean War (October 1950), and China’s “lean to one side” policy, Soviet athletes and experts assisted in constructing the foundation for professionalizing Chinese sports. Prior to 1950, the CCP had professed the value of mass sports and exercise, or mass participation in sports and exercise to assist national security, economic productivity, national cohesion, and individual health. For example, in “On Physical Education” (1917), by Mao Zedong, Mao referred to the cultivation of a “physical culture,” and stated, “attention should first be given to a child’s physical needs;”²⁵ “[China] is wanting in strength. The military spirit has not been encouraged. The physical condition of our people deteriorates daily.”²⁶ Further, and similar to Mao, Zhou Enlai related socialist construction, national security, and national rejuvenation to the public’s “physique.” Remarkably, prior to 1950, the CCP’s emphasis upon mass sports, which assisted in creating the “mass organization”²⁷ named the All-China Athletic Federation (ACAF), echoed the Kuomintang’s Citizens’ Physical Education Act (1939),²⁸ while the CCP was claiming a divergence from the nationalist’s bourgeoisie sports policies that had produced the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in China, and the Chinese athletes in the 1932 and 1936 Olympics—the inspiration for director Siu Ming Tsui’s movie “Champions” (2008–Hong Kong).²⁹

²⁵ Jim Riordan and Arnd Kruger, *The International Politics of Sport in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 49.

²⁶ Patricia Uberoi, “Body, State and Cosmos: Mao Zedong’s ‘Study of Physical Education’ (1917),” in *Across the Himalayan Gap: An Indian Quest for Understanding China*, ed. Tan Chung (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1998), 121.

²⁷ Jonathan Kolatch, *Sports, Politics, and Ideology in China* (New York: Jonathan David, 1972), 98.

²⁸ Olympic Dreams, 63.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 41–48.

By August 1950, following the conclusion of the Chinese-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance, the CCP sent Chinese athletes and coaches to examine Soviet schools, training, and administration with the assistance of ACAF's Research Committee while the Soviet Union sent athletes and experts to assist in Chinese sports development. Between December 1950 and February 1951, Soviet and Chinese teams played 33 basketball games, and Soviet sports experts began teaching at universities and schools. Further, the "Ten-Year Teaching Program of Physical Education in Soviet Schools," and the Soviet teaching programs for volleyball, athletics, gymnastics, cycling, diving, skating, skiing, basketball, and swimming,³⁰ were translated from Russian into Chinese by the ACAF's "Propaganda and Translation Committee."³¹ Moreover, the eventual central sports authority, specialized training, and early age sports professionalization were all Soviet exports rooted in the early 1950s. As Dong Jinxia states, "Undoubtedly, Chinese sport benefited greatly from the former Soviet Union's assistance in the early 1950s."³²

Correspondingly, in 1950, the CCP passed the Marriage Law and was assisted by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in accordance with communism's professed "socialist liberation of women" ideology.³³ The CCP has asserted, "It was not until the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 that Chinese women . . . finally won their historic freedom,"³⁴ and "Chinese women [now] enjoy equal rights with men in all aspects of political, economic, cultural, social, and family life."³⁵ However, apart from CCP assertions, the Marriage Law and socialist liberation of women, although assisting in female freedom through banning the marriage of children, concubines,

³⁰ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 35.

³¹ Kolatch, *Sports, Politics, and Ideology*, 99.

³² Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 36.

³³ Jian Zang, "The Soviet Impact on 'Gender Equality' in China in the 1950s," in *China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1949–Present*, ed. Thomas P. Bernstein and Hua-Yu Li (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010), 260.

³⁴ Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, "The Situation of Chinese Women," June 1994, <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/chinesewoman/>.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

infanticides, and betrothals,³⁶ has become primarily defined as an abolition of barriers to female participation in the socialist revolution.³⁷ Therefore, female participation in the socialist liberation of women, particularly, economic production and education, was paramount.

Further, in 1950, to accomplish the socialist liberation of women and further female participation in the socialist revolution, a Chinese propaganda campaign utilized theatre, books, and pamphlets, such as the magazine *Women of New China* (later named *Women of China*), published by the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), to profoundly influence Chinese women. *Women of New China* articles included, "Stalin on the Liberation of Women through Collective Farms," "Follow the Good Example of Soviet Women," "The Soviet Union's Today Is Our Tomorrow,"³⁸ and an editorial on the Marriage Law in every issue. From 1949 to 1951, and throughout the 1950s, the CCP policies and Soviet assisted propaganda on female liberation and participation aided in increasing female literacy through educational attendance, and female participation in factories, farms, schools, and hospitals, while incidentally influencing the future of Chinese female athletics.

Notably, CCP Marriage Law policies echo the legacies of the national Reform Movement (1896), or the "hundred days reform" enacted by Emperor Guangxu of the Qing Dynasty.³⁹ Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, representing Chinese bureaucrats and intellectuals of the Reform Movement, introduced the anti-"footbinding" campaign and female education for national revival.⁴⁰ By 1912, Guangdong province founded the Guangzhou women's sports school. By the 1920s and 1930s, women were allowed in universities while the Sichuan Women's Musical and Physical Education School, Hanyuan Girls' Primary School, and Sichuan Women's Physical Education School, were

³⁶ Noboru Niida, "Land Reform and New Marriage Law in China," *The Developing Economies* 2, no. 1 (2007): 6.

³⁷ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 26.

³⁸ Zang, "The Soviet Impact," 262.

³⁹ Jack Gray, *Rebellion and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to the 1980s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 132.

⁴⁰ Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom*, 62–69.

founded. Further, as Dong states, “Guangdong women played volleyball at the Eighth Provincial Games of the ‘Old China’ in 1921 . . . Women debuted at the National Games in 1922 . . . [and] Yang Xiuqiong, from Guangdong, won five medals at the Tenth Far-East Games in 1934.”⁴¹ Consequently, the CCP with the Marriage Law, propaganda campaign, and early sport strategies, while the Kuomintang with the YMCAs and the Citizens’ Physical Education Act, are the benefactors and an evolution of Qing Dynasty legacies from nearly a half-century ago.

In 1952, predating China’s First Five-year Plan (1953–1957), the hierarchy and centralization of the CCP, with the assistance of the Soviet Union, revealed the creation of a formally state controlled centralized National Sports Commission (NSC), which incorporated the loosely controlled previous ACAF structure. When the ACAF was created in 1949, the CCP required representation in the ACAF for any element in society thought to have a concern (major or minor) in “physical culture;” therefore, exemplifying the mass sports emphasis prior to the NSC.⁴² Conversely, with the new commission came centralized responsibility to the State Council for Chinese sports organization, propaganda, international liaising, a national defense physical culture, individual sports,⁴³ and a “national sports program.”⁴⁴ The NSC administered through a general membership, standing committee, and secretariat that represented the State Education Committee, the National Sports Committee, the All-China Federation of Trade Union (ACFTU), and the General Political Ministry of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The NSC consisted of four administrative departments (cadres, international liaison, political, and propaganda), and eight athletic departments (aviation, ball games, land sports, mountaineering, navigation, mass physical culture, and sports competition) with one “specialist in physical culture”⁴⁵ on the NSC Standing Committee—in contrast to the ACAF’s three specialists, and a more decentralized structure.

⁴¹ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 12.

⁴² Kolatch, *Sports, Politics, and Ideology*, 103.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁴⁴ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 23.

⁴⁵ Kolatch, *Sports, Politics, and Ideology*, 104.

First, the State Education Committee was represented on the NSC and below the national level to enforce and administer State Council mandated physical education and exercise, which ultimately interconnected female social policies and female participation in sports. The CCP, within the context of the Korean War, the “sick man of Asia” legacy, and the previously stated ideologies on mass sports, mandated students to engage in physical instruction on sports, such as volleyball, basketball, athletics, badminton, martial arts, soccer, and athletics twice a week. Additionally, students were mandated to engage in physical exercise for 90 minutes daily. The NSC instituted the “labor and defense program” that incentivized and recruited student athletes for national training and provincial elite teams through a national fitness program. City and county education departments and teachers were able to inform provincial education bureaus and provincial municipal sports commissions of student athletes while customizing a student’s extracurricular activities to that student’s talents. Therefore, female populations attending schools and universities in extra-ordinary numbers due to the socialist liberation of women, and the previously stated Marriage Law that prohibited marriage before the age of eighteen, were educated and participating in sports because of CCP policies relating to mass sports, physical education, physical exercise, and female participation in the socialist revolution. Notably, the “sick man of Asia” image relates to the “century of humiliation” and Chinese internal divisions, but during the early 1950s, the image may have literally applied and influenced CCP policy as 10 percent of Beijing University students experienced lung disease, and over 8 percent of North-East Normal University students dropped out due to illness.⁴⁶

Second, the ACFTU was also represented on the NSC and below the national level to administer sporting activities that interconnected with female social policies and female participation in sports. Similar to education, the CCP placed the responsibility of administering sporting activities upon the ACFTU. The ACFTU represented 10 percent of China’s working population,⁴⁷ and sports within the trade union could interact with

⁴⁶ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 238.

⁴⁷ Lai To Lee, *Trade Union in China, 1949 to the Present: The Organization and Leadership of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1986), 46–48.

city and provincial trade unions while liaising with city sport committees and provincial or municipal sports commissions. By 1955, due to the sporting activities of the ACFTU, a Workers' Games commenced that represented 17 enterprises in six sports, and by 1956, the Workers' Games represented 19 enterprises and over 25,000 sports associations. Further, by 1956, over a fourth of the athletes chosen to represent China at the 16th Olympic games, which was eventually boycotted due to Taiwan's admission, came from the ACFTU in conjunction with the NSC.⁴⁸ Therefore, similar to education, female populations participating in economic production in extraordinary numbers for the first time, were educated and participating in sports due to CCP policies relating to mass sports, and female participation in the socialist revolution.

Third, the General Political Ministry of the PLA was represented on the NSC, or perhaps more accurately stated, the PLA initially influenced and administered the NSC. Upon the NSC's creation, PLA officers and soldiers populated the ranks, for example, General He Long, a vice premier, administered the NSC,⁴⁹ Han Fudong administered the NSC's Ball Games Department, and Zhang Zikui administered the NSC's Competition Department. The PLA had experience with modern sports dating back to the late 19th and early 20th century,⁵⁰ and in 1951, with Soviet assistance, the 3,000 soldier PLA sports brigades were founded in all six military regions (north, north-east, north-west, east, central-south, and south-west) before the NSC. The PLA sports brigades filtered athletes into PLA sport teams and into PLA elite sports. Further, the PLA culture of morning exercise, isolated training, dormitories, discipline, and sacrifice filtered into the NSC through leadership.⁵¹ In short, the NSC liaising with the PLA did not substantially influence female physical education, female physical exercise, or female participation. Further, the PLA, in comparison to the sporting schools, did not substantially contribute

⁴⁸ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 27.

⁴⁹ Chinese Olympic Committee, "Westernization of China's Physical Education," March 27, 2004, http://en.olympic.cn/china_oly/history/2004-03-27/121807.html.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 29.

elite athletes to the Chinese national team, but the PLA did foundationally influence the NSC. One, arguably, witnessed the professionalization and militarization (or military “lifestyle”) of athletes through the PLA influence.

Last, the NSC administered the provincial National Sports Committee. The National Sports Committee was responsible for the development of provincial sports institutes, provincial sports schools, and the National Training Bureau—previously the “Central Sports Training Class.” Combined, the National Sports Committee policies and institutions produced the majority of elite athletes during the 1950s. Notably, sports schools produce the majority of Chinese international athletes to this day. Further, the National Sports Committee, city sports schools, National Training Bureau, city sports committees, and sports institutes professionalized coaching and athletics—employing and subsidizing coaches and athletes—while institutionalizing the recruitment of talented athletes through education and the ACFTU (all products of Soviet influence). The pragmatism, centralization, and hierarchy of training, and the recruitment of athletes, rapidly manifested national sports teams and poised China, as sports funding increased from 1953 to 1958, to experience a degree of success in international athletic competition.

From 1952 to 1958, with Soviet assistance and the NSC, Chinese participation in international sports, Chinese elite athletes, and elite female athletes, began to expand in numbers and success. By 1956, China had competed in 185 international competitions, and was a member of 14 international athletic organizations. The NSC’s sports budget had increased from under 10 million yuan in 1953 to over 60 million yuan in 1958, and 45 sporting fields and seven gymnasiums had been built between 1952 and 1956—from 1949–1951 seven sporting fields were built. Further, Chinese elite athletes had bettered more than 200 national records; notably, new records from Chinese women outnumbered new records by men. Cheng Jinkai (male weightlifter) broke a world record, and Shi Baoshu (female shot putter) ranked seventh in the world. Remarkably, elite male athletes outnumbered elite female athletes in population and events, but female athletic successes—including national records and international performance—were outpacing

males. For example, elite female athletes improved the national 100-meter sprint and 80-meter hurdle record by nearly two seconds. High jump was improved by a third of a meter, and shot put and javelin improved by over 30 meters.⁵²

Notably, the motivations of the CCP's sports policy from 1949 to 1957 eventually echoed the motivations of the Soviet Union; thus, the CCP's sports policy became motivated by proving ideological superiority, nation-state superiority, and advancing political goals through sports competitions. Initially, as stated, mass sports were promoted to assist the Korean War effort and various national rejuvenation goals, or more generally stated, mass sports were promoted to "broadly" compete with Western capitalist nation-states. Conversely, as exemplified, with Soviet assistance, Chinese sports policies began to evolve from a primarily mass sport focused policy to an elite, or professional sport focused policy. Further, CCP motivations began to evolve from competing with Western capitalist nation-states outside of sports competitions to proving the superiority of China and communism, or advancing Chinese nationalism, and advancing political goals through sports competition. For example, with an elite sports focus and Soviet style motivations, or a Soviet style competition with capitalism through sports, China was motivated to advance its "one China" stance (relating to Taiwan) through boycotting the 1956 Olympics and the Singapore international table tennis competition. As Chinese female table tennis champion Qiu Zhonghui states, "The Americans . . . [were] regarded as a 'political' match against our enemy."⁵³

Collectively, the empirical data between 1949 and 1958 primarily suggests, first, a CCP policy evolution from mass sports to elite sports occurred in accordance with Soviet assistance, and was exemplified through the creation, administration, and funding of the NSC and Chinese participation in international competition. Second, the CCP's broad social policies towards women and mass sports, which occurred before or simultaneous to Soviet assistance, were responsible for early female participation in athletics, and interconnected to female success in athletics. Last, CCP sports policies were gender neutral in promoting athletics, but females, generally, were improving more rapidly than

⁵² Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 31–34.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 33.

males. For example, men and women populated the same educational, military, and economic structures, and men populated these structures in higher numbers than women, but female athletes were setting more new national records with fewer athletes than men.

B. THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD: COMPETITION, INVESTMENT, AND UNSUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

From 1958–1960, in the context of a deteriorating Sino-Soviet relationship that resulted in the Sino-Soviet split by 1960, and a second Taiwan Strait crisis, the GLF was launched by Mao to accelerate China’s socialist construction, modernization, and industrialization in an attempt to compete with Western capitalist nation-states, and arguably, Soviet revisionism. The USSR disapproved of Mao’s audacity. Further, the Soviet Union disapproved of “people’s communes” and ridiculed the communes’ haphazard or inexperienced practices of “makeshift” agricultural production acceleration (for example, close cropping) and the smelting of iron and steel in “backyard furnaces.” Notably, both practices exacerbated the famine experienced during the GLF in the people’s communes. However, despite all the failures and unanticipated consequences of the GLF in the people’s communes, professional sports thrived.

For example, in 1958, 85 percent of Chinese children attended school⁵⁴ while counties, schools, factories, neighborhoods, and communes founded nearly 70,000 sports schools that trained and educated nearly two million students. Prior to the GLF, 73 sports schools existed and 7,000 students were trained and educated at sports schools.⁵⁵ Further, sports investment climbed to over 50 million yuan, and by 1960, sports investment totaled nearly 150 million yuan. As sports investment increased, 26 stadiums, 20 sports fields, and over 100 swimming pools were built. Notably, “national defense” sports like mountaineering and aviation required large investments and the CCP was willing to make the investment—for example, 3.6 million yuan was required to prepare a climbing team for the Himalayas.⁵⁶ Concisely, capital flowed into sports through the NSC at rates

⁵⁴ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 50–51.

⁵⁵ Kolatch, *Sports, Politics, and Ideology*, 128.

⁵⁶ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 53.

unseen in the previous decade, and as sports capital increased from 1958 to 1960, 40 world records were broken annually, women broke 35 event records, the Chinese female gymnastics team was ranked sixth in the world, and the Chinese female volleyball team was ranked third in the world.⁵⁷ Moreover, as sports were professionalized, and investments and subsidies added, the amount of professional coaches increased while the amount of educational institutes devoted to sports training and coaching rose from six to thirty.⁵⁸ Therefore, CCP motivations were well defined during the GLF; competition and security were essential to socialist construction, modernization, and industrialization. Famines in the communes were less important, and elite sports occupied a forefront position in competing with Western capitalist nation-states, and arguably, the Soviet Union.

Culturally, the GLF continued to accelerate female liberation and the redefining of “cultural norms” to populate the professional sports ranks. Prior to the GLF, as stated, the CCP stressed broad female and youth liberation through female economic independence in labor, youth education, and marriage defined as a “comradeship” rather than female servitude, but as the CCP internationally competed throughout the GLF, the desire to employ all able citizens intensified. For example, young female athletes were urged to abandon cultural superstitions, specifically, the Chinese cultural “falsehood” relating to the undesirability of sports as an occupation, and assist the CCP’s sports competition goals. Notably, the cultural redefinition of professional sports as an occupation existed prior to the GLF, but through the Party’s ambitious objectives, was intensified during the GLF. Therefore, rapidly observed is the Chinese youth and females mobilizing around CCP policies rather than historical cultural norms of Confucianism. As Chinese female volleyball player Dong Tianshu stated, “My father, a senior engineer specializing in a project on the Yellow River, did not like me to engage in sport . . . [but] conditioned by the socio-political climate (equality between children and parents in the eyes of the Party) at the time, he could not overtly intervene.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 51–52.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

By the end of the GLF, for the purpose of competition and security CCP policies, governing sports institutions, investment, and culture had won considerable successes in elite female sports. Primarily, the educational, recruitment, and sports schools system, and public acceptance of professional sports, which was dramatically assisted by CCP policies toward abandoning cultural norms, had increased the population of elite female athletes to over 3,000—one third of all elite athletes were female. Further, in sports that both men and women competed, such as shot put, high jump, track, and discus, women tended to outnumber men. Secondly, elite female sports began outperforming elite male sports in athletic performance against world ranked teams. For example, the women’s basketball team defeated the third ranked Czechoslovakian team, and the women’s volleyball team defeated the Soviet Union.⁶⁰ Notably, the question of why women’s athletics are outperforming men’s athletics is not addressed through studying the Party’s GLF policies, or the policies prior to the GLF, but the question of how women’s athletics began to rise to prominence is addressed.

The GLF, although primarily positive for Chinese sports and elite female sports, did inadvertently have negative effects on Chinese training and Chinese participation in international sports competitions. In 1958, within the context of the Party’s desire to compete with Western nation-states, the PRC abandoned all participation in the IOC, and eight international sports organizations not associated with the IOC due to their acceptance of a “two China” policy. Therefore, GLF-CCP policies and international politics marred the ability of Chinese athletes to compete truly on an elite international level while drawing into question the validity of Chinese claims to world record performances. Notably, a similar theme exists in relationship to most GLF claims, as the GLF is often referred to as the “great exaggeration.”⁶¹ Further, CCP policies within the “higher, faster, stronger” climate of the GLF led to “passionate” training rather than scientific training. For example, in attempt to gain immediate victories—a legacy witnessed throughout the GLF—intensive training sessions were embarked upon. As a result, in a 1961 survey, over 50 percent of athletes were injured and over 8 percent of

⁶⁰ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 51–52.

⁶¹ Kolatch, *Sports, Politics, and Ideology*, 142.

athletes were ill. Ninety percent of all injuries and illness were extracted after 1958, which resulted in over 22 percent of athletes being unable to train. In 1958, during one Chinese national gymnastic contest alone, 69 injuries occurred.

After 1961, and within the context of the Sino-Soviet split and a depressed Chinese economy due to GLF economic policies that caused 20 million Chinese deaths, the CCP's accelerated sports advancement goals were ended. In 1960, China held 52 national competitions, but in 1962, merely 21 national competitions were held. In 1961, Chinese sports investment plummeted by almost 100 million yuan while 41 percent of China's elite athletes left the sports system. In 1962, the NSC's leader (General He Long) stated that the NSC, due to limited resources, would concentrate on elite sports like gymnastics, table tennis, weightlifting, and volleyball, while mass sports, which now were synonymous with national defense sports,⁶² would be the responsibility of provincial or municipal administrations. Further, many sports schools practically abandoned training while numerous sport schools closed.⁶³ Therefore, the dreams of rapid sports advancement, much like the dream of rapid economic advancement, disappeared into the reality of ill-conceived GLF policies; notably, revealing the interconnected relationship of economics, politics, and sports.

Collectively, the empirical data from the GLF years primarily suggest that, first, mass sports or national defense sports, and elite sports became direct extensions of GLF policies to compete rapidly with the Western-capitalist international community and secure China. Therefore, a rapid increase in sports investments, sports schools, athletes, coaches, and training for reasons of competition and security occurred. Second, the CCP's sports policies, rooted in a motivation for rapid competition and security were, again, as in the previous decade, not designed specifically to target female athletics although women were directly encouraged by the Party to advance in athletics and elite sports due to national objectives and a historical under representation. Further, CCP

⁶² Kolatch, *Sports, Politics, and Ideology*, 143.

⁶³ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 61.

polices were designed to employ all citizens equally. Last, the Party's GLF rapid advancement in sports desires produced greater results in international competition with women's athletics than men's athletics, but was, ultimately, unsustainable.

C. THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION: ANTI-ELITE SPORTS AND FRIENDSHIP FIRST

By 1965, China's economy had recovered from the GLF, and the NSC, with a renewed focus upon "scientifically" training professional athletes, through technology and education, published updated training manuals for 17 sports while devising a new ranking system for coaches, athletes, and referees. Moreover, Chinese professional sports appeared to have recuperated as sports schools began to flourish with 1,800 sports schools educating and training about 140,000 students. China placed first in the New Emerging Force Games (1963), set 29 world records (in 1965), and 202 national records (in 1965). At the Second National Games (1965), nine world records were set, about 100 national records were set, and China now was home to five of the world's top 10 female high jumpers. Largely, by 1965, the negative aftereffects of the CCP's GLF sports policies had been reversed, and although less ambitious with less investment capital, the post-GLF sports policies by the NSC were producing success and appeared sustainable. Conversely, and unbeknownst to the NSC or the majority of elite politicians, Mao's destructive and chaotic Cultural Revolution (1966) was upon the horizon. Notably, and as stated, this historical investigation does not entail an extensive examination of broad CCP policies like Mao's Cultural Revolution, but is an examination of how the broad policies affected Chinese sports and Chinese female athletics.

By 1966 (and until 1969), as Mao engaged in power politics against elite Party bureaucrats, and sought to advance "Maoism" (Mao's communist ideology) professional sports became a target for the Cultural Revolution. For example, shortly after the Cultural Revolution was launched in May 1966, the wall posters campaign was launched,⁶⁴ which

⁶⁴ Andrew G. Walder, "Factional Conflict at Beijing University, 1966–1968," in *The History of the People's Republic of China (1949–1976)*, ed. Julia Strauss, *The History of the People's Republic of China (1949–1976)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 173.

ultimately employed athletes and criticized the NSC.⁶⁵ By August 1966, the Red Guard campaign, populated by China's youth, was launched to attack the "four olds" (custom, culture, habits, and ideas)⁶⁶ and the "five black categories" (landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, bad elements, and rightists);⁶⁷ professional sports were attacked as a result. Chinese table tennis coach Fu Qifang and Chinese table tennis champion Rong Guotuan were charged with spying and driven to suicide because they had lived in Hong Kong. About 300 volleyball players were driven into hard labor and "re-education."⁶⁸ General He Long, director of the NSC, was beaten, and eventually, died from his wounds.⁶⁹ Further, by 1968, the NSC was disbanded and the PLA's General Political Department began administering the sports commission while education, training, and recruitment were terminated. In 1967, the journal *China's Sports* ceased publication, and by 1970, the number of professional athletes had fallen to around 6,000 from over 11,000 in 1965. Moreover, sports investment plummeted to around 25 million yuan. Remarkably, while professional athletes decreased from 1965 to 1970, female athletes as a percentage of professional athletes increased from around 35 percent to over 37 percent, and by 1975, female professional athletes comprised about 40 percent of all professional athletes.⁷⁰

Oddly, during the Cultural Revolution, and directly related to Mao's Yangtze River swim (July 1966), and Mao's Ming Tombs Reservoir swim (June 1964), a mass swimming campaign was ignited. Notably, both swims were politically motivated to prove good health, but, arguably, both swims were exaggerated. For example, the Yangtze River swim claimed Mao swam 10 miles in 65 minutes, and the Ming Tomb Reservoir swim claimed Mao swam for two hours. Therefore, hundreds of thousands of

⁶⁵ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 74.

⁶⁶ BBC News, "Cultural Revolution, British Broadcasting Corporation News," (n.d.), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/china_politics/key_people_events/html/5.stm.

⁶⁷ Heng He, "Five Black Categories Reappear in Today's China," *The Epoch Times*, August 8, 2012, <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/opinion/five-black-categories-reappear-in-todays-china-276381.html>.

⁶⁸ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 76.

⁶⁹ Jung Chang, *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), 391.

⁷⁰ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 81.

Chinese citizens learned how to swim through *People's Daily* articles on swimming history and technique during the Cultural Revolution.⁷¹ As Kolatch states, "Swimming solely for relief from hot weather was frowned upon, and each swimmer was expected to grasp clearly the concept of 'swimming for the sake of revolution.'"⁷² Eventually, the mass swimming campaign appears to have contributed to professional swimming in the 1980s.⁷³ Additionally, and unrelated to the mass swimming campaign, during the Cultural Revolution, an 18-part exercise program gained immense popularity (in 1966) through a *China's Sports* article entitled "Sports Should Serve the People," which combined exercise with Maoism while assisting in perpetuating (however small) sports during the Cultural Revolution.⁷⁴

By 1969, the generally damaging aspects of the Cultural Revolution were complete as Mao disbanded the Red Guard with the assistance of the armed forces, embarked upon a "rustication" program that would displace millions of Chinese youths to "re-education" manual labor jobs in the countryside,⁷⁵ and reestablished sports programs. In 1970, as the economy began to improve and sports investments increased, female and male professional athletes increased under Mao's "friendship first, competition second" sports policy (which influenced "ping pong diplomacy").⁷⁶ By 1972, former Chinese table tennis champion Zhuang Zedong began administering the NSC, and over 9,000 professional athletes populated China's ranks (up from 6,000 in 1970) while sports investment totaled over 100 million yuan. Further, 17 national competitions and 256 provincial or municipal competitions were conducted (1972), Chinese table tennis athletes regained world prominence, and female athletics set 10 out of 14 new national records (1971).

⁷¹ Kolatch, *Sports, Politics, and Ideology*, 162.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 79.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 253.

⁷⁵ Helena K. Rene, *China's Sent-Down Generation: Public Administration and the Legacies of Mao's Rustication Program* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 88.

⁷⁶ John Underwood, "What's China's Track?" *Sports Illustrated*, June 16, 1975, <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1089954/1/index.htm>.

Notably, “friendship first, competition second,” within the context of the Cultural Revolution and “politics in command,”⁷⁷ was a policy that treated sports as a direct extension of politics. Principally, “friendship first” meant that when international athletes visited China, they were showered with “mass humanity” before, during, and after competition to support CCP international policies like U.S.-China rapprochement.⁷⁸ For example, as U.S. runner Dick Buerkle stated upon competing in China, “I know this must be embarrassing for them, and you can tell it hurts, but they keep on clapping.”⁷⁹ Conversely, some academics claim that “friendship first” meant Chinese athletes would purposefully lose in competitions to advance CCP international political policies, and claim superiority (or “save face”) when defeat was eminent. Contrariwise, and relating to this claim, “friendship first” appeared to mean neither—as stated, “friendship first” meant Chinese athletes would display kindness to advance CCP political policies. Quantitatively, Chinese competitive defeats during the Cultural Revolution were mainly a result of athletic inferiority—except in table tennis. For example, in 1974 and 1975, Chinese athletic performances at the Asian Games and the National Games were poorer than pre-Cultural Revolution performances in 1966. In 1974, the women and men’s volleyball teams ranked 14th and 15th at the World Championships as opposed to 9th in 1962. Realistically, Chinese table tennis athletes may have been in a position to lose to other nation-states purposefully⁸⁰ for the purpose of international politics, but arguably, beyond table tennis, athletes were merely trying to recover from the negative effects of the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, purposefully losing, or claiming superiority through defeat for the purpose of international politics, could hardly be defined as a wide-ranging policy. Moreover, amicable behavior to befriend nation-states for CCP political purposes better matches the reality Chinese athletes found themselves in, and what the Party was communicating (although certain exceptions do exist).

⁷⁷ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 88.

⁷⁸ Underwood, “What’s China’s Track?”

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Fan Hong and Xiong Xiaozheng, “Communist China: Sport, Politics, and Diplomacy,” in *Sport in Asian Society: Past and Present*, ed. Fan Hong and J. A. Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 271.

Collectively, the historical empirical data of the Cultural Revolution primarily suggests, first, elite sports and elite competition became a target for destruction during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1969. All Chinese endeavors during the Cultural Revolution had political implications, and elite sports and competition were apparently associated with one of the “five black categories,” or possibly, bourgeois individualism to the Red Guards and Maoists. Therefore, many professional coaches and athletes were murdered or “re-educated,” and competitions were suspended or discontinued. Second, elite sports and elite female athletes, although occupying a larger percentage of professional athletes, receded while no true CCP sports policy existed—as exemplified through the lack of sports investment. Further, previous advancements and short-term future advancements in elite sports were sacrificed for revolutionary ends. Last, after 1969, CCP political objectives and a continued, more or less, competition aversion, governed elite sports and athletes.

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III. THE DENG XIAOPING ERA

A. ECONOMIC REFORM AND OPENING (1979–1988): ELITE SPORTS, COMPETITION, INVESTMENT, AND FEMALE SUCCESS ARE BACK

Following the death of Mao in 1976, the Party was confronted with a declining economy, soaring unemployment, and internal division in the wake of the destructive Cultural Revolution policies. Therefore, as the CCP dealt with the remnants of the Cultural Revolution, veteran Party leaders previously purged, such as Deng Xiaoping, were “rehabilitated” and reinstated, while new policies, such as the “four modernizations” posed by Zhou Enlai in 1963 and again in 1975, gained traction. By 1978, Deng Xiaoping had emerged as the CCP’s principal leader while Hua Guofeng remained the chairman of the Central Committee until 1981, and by 1979, through the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, “economic reform and opening” was inaugurated. Further, “friendship first, competition second” was discarded, and the IOC reinstated the PRC, while Taiwan remained in the IOC as a PRC “local institution.” Consequently, economic reform and opening policies would transform the PRC economy, society, and elite sports indefinitely.

Between 1978 and 1987, and within the context of economic reform, rapid growth, evolving CCP policies, and private enterprises⁸¹ expanded elite sports investment beyond previous boundaries to improve equipment, knowledge, training, and incentives. For example, in 1978, sports investment totaled about 253 million yuan, and by 1984, sports investment totaled around 600 million yuan and reached one billion in 1988. Moreover, the budgets for elite sports teams climbed from around 50 million in 1980 to over 150 million in 1985.

As sport investment expanded, China built over 200,000 modernized gyms and sporting fields between 1979 and 1988, while the NSC funded 27 research proposals on athletic recruitment, reinstated the previous ranking system, and updated junior training

⁸¹ Craig Dietrich, *People’s China: A Brief History*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 245.

programs. Further, in 1980, the practice of monetarily rewarding successful athletes began, and by 1984, a Chinese Olympic gold medalist could expect to receive 8,000 yuan. By 1988, a gold medal was worth 18,000 yuan, a silver medal was worth 5,000 yuan, and a bronze medal was worth 3,000 yuan. Remarkably, China's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) was around 1,000 yuan in 1988,⁸² and a bonus for an academic in the space shuttle program was 400 yuan.⁸³

Additionally, in 1984, CCP sports policy expanded to inviting private investment in sponsoring elite sports teams, and in 1986, the CCP invited universities to sponsor elite sports teams while the NSC shifted the managerial authority for elite sports teams to head coaches. Therefore, by 1985 and 1986, many elite sports teams were owned by private enterprises or universities, administered by private enterprises, universities, or sports commissions, and managed by head coaches.⁸⁴ Remarkably, Chinese athletes regularly were spotted with Coca-Cola bags, or Nike bags and shoes as Western corporations began sponsoring Chinese athletes.⁸⁵ Concisely, the “friendship first, competition second” policy of the Cultural Revolution was replaced by a “competition first” or “Elite Sport First”⁸⁶ sports policy that focused on investing in international victories with public or private funds through incentives, knowledge, training, and equipment.

Thus, through expanding sports investments, incentives, training, knowledge, and equipment, and with a “competition first” ideology, Chinese sports advanced upon the world. For example, in 1979, Chinese female gymnast Ma Yanhong won a world gymnastic championship, and Chinese female diver Chen Xiaoxia won the platform diving title. In 1980, 26 Chinese athletes competed in the Winter Olympics, and from 1981 to 1986, the Chinese women's volleyball team (CWVT) won five world titles (two

⁸² John M. Glionna and Alan Abrahamson, “The Games Plan for China: Olympic Superpower by '08,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 10, 2004, <http://articles.latimes.com/2004/aug/10/sports/sp-olychina10>.

⁸³ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 182.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 98–100.

⁸⁵ Gary Smith, “The Great Leap Upward,” *Sports Illustrated*, July 18, 1984, <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1122328/4/index.htm>.

⁸⁶ Fan Hong and Lu Zhouxiang, “China,” in *Participation in Sport: International Policy Perspectives*, ed. Matthew Nicholson, Russell Hoye, and Barrie Houlihan (New York: Routledge, 2011), 174.

World Cup victories, two World Women's Volleyball Championships,⁸⁷ and a gold medal at the 1984 Summer Olympics). In 1983, Chinese female walkers won two world titles, and in 1984, China sent 216 athletes (132 males and 84 females) to the Olympics in Los Angeles.

In Los Angeles, China won 32 medals (including 15 gold medals—five by females) and placed fourth overall.⁸⁸ In 1986, at the Asian Games in Korea, China won 222 medals and placed first overall.⁸⁹ Concisely, to define CCP elite sports policies between 1978 and 1987 a success is an understatement. Elite sports policies had accomplished a Chinese dream—to win gold medals and world recognition. On the 1984 Olympics Deng stated, “Now it looks like the impact and influence of sports are so great that they reflect a country's economy and civilization. They attract and inspire so many people. We need to improve our sports.”⁹⁰

From 1979 to 1987, apart from the pride and patriotism that Chinese athletic success produced in China with the numerous celebrations, articles, posters, and photographs praising Chinese athletes, in 1984, the NSC and elite sports transformed due to success. For example, in 1985, the Society of Strategic Research for the Development of Physical Education and Sport devised the “Olympic Strategy” that would reform China's sports system to “(1) strengthen the NSC leadership, coordination, and supervision; (2) establish a scientific training system; (3) improve the system of sports competitions; (4) promote traditional Chinese sports and pastimes; (5) promote sports science and research; (6) reform the sport and physical education system; (7) emphasize

⁸⁷ Women's World Championship—Honours, Federation Internationale de Volleyball, (n.d.), http://www.fivb.ch/EN/Volleyball/Competitions/WorldChampionships/Women/2002/General/GenI_Honours.asp.

⁸⁸ SR/Olympic Sports, “China at the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Games, Sports Reference/Olympic Sports,” (n.d.), <http://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/countries/CHN/summer/1984/>.

⁸⁹ Olympic Council of Asia, “Seoul 1986 10th Asian Games, Olympic Council of Asia,” (n.d.), <http://www.ocasia.org/Game/MWinner.aspx?CntbEpEabMSvGluADh6OG0EDm3IwYs4>.

⁹⁰ Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams*, 216.

political significance of sport; (8) improve the rewarding system of competitive sport; (9) develop flexible policies for international sports competitions.”⁹¹

Ultimately, the Olympic Strategy would hire more coaches (almost 5,000 coaches were employed by 1985), and use over 60 percent of Chinese public sports investment on elite sports where China perceived a likelihood of winning medals.⁹² Further, women began training with men, which assisted in increasing female representation in “culturally” male sports like football and weightlifting, and the CCP decreased the number of elite athletes in an attempt to increase the quality. For example, in 1979, around 18,000 elite athletes existed in China; by 1992, less than 17,000 elite athletes existed. Remarkably, although elite athletes were decreasing during this time period, the percentage of elite female athletes was increasing. The principle of “the entire nation is a chess board”—indicating, “provinces should concentrate on the sports in which they have a chance to win internationally”⁹³—summarizes the Olympic Strategy. Therefore, after 1984, the enrollment in sports colleges for coaching increased (the enrollment doubled from 1983 to 1985), the enrollment in sports schools increased, and student affiliation with sports commissions increased.

Notably, after 1984, parents began encouraging children (male and female) to strive towards elite athletics due to the previous success and monetary rewards associated with Chinese athletics—business, sport, and film became the preferred professions.⁹⁴ By the 1990s, articles entitled “Coaches and Athletes have Relatively High Social Status,” and “Opinions about the Prestige of 100 Occupations” where elite athletes ranked above business director, actors-actresses, pop singer, and fashion model, appeared in *China Sports Daily* and *China Women’s Daily*,⁹⁵ which arguably, exemplified a beginning of

⁹¹ Fan Hong and Lu Zhouxiang, “Sport and Politics in the 1980s: The Olympic Strategy,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 1 (2012): 77.

⁹² Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 105.

⁹³ Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams*, 216.

⁹⁴ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 112.

⁹⁵ Susan E. Brownell, “Sports,” in *Handbook of Chinese Popular Culture*, ed. Wu Dingbo and Patrick D. Murphy (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1994), 129.

the abandonment of athletes participating in elite sports for just the Party, and an embracement of athletes participating in elite sports for personal prestige and monetary gain.

By 1988, in the context of the Olympic Strategy, an increased population of student athletes, an increased sports budget (public and private), and mass acceptance, patriotism, and admiration of elite sports, China competed in the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, Korea. In 1988, the NSC, conservatively, based upon the results of the 1984 Olympics, projected Chinese athletes would win 10 gold medals and finish sixth overall while a *Sports Daily* poll revealed the public predicted China would win 20 medals and finish fourth overall, but few predicted the staggering defeat of Chinese athletes.⁹⁶ China fielded 273 athletes (149 male and 124 female) and won only five gold medals (Chinese female athletes won three) while placing eleventh overall.⁹⁷ Remarkably, South Korea placed fourth.⁹⁸ Therefore, the CCP's Olympic Strategy and the "competition first" ideology were rapidly under attack.⁹⁹ The Chinese sports historian Zhao Yu published an article entitled "Defeat of the Troops in Seoul"¹⁰⁰ that criticized China's policies and performance in the 1988 Olympics. Further, another Chinese writer stated, "[China had] sacrificed the whole nation's physical well-being for our Olympic strategy."¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, the CCP and NSC administrator Li Menghua, began to quell the criticism by publishing articles in *China Sport Daily* and *China Sport Weekly* discounting Zhao and claiming his data was fake.¹⁰² Further, the NSC allocated one million yuan to 48 research projects designed to improve China's performance in international competition, and insure a "1988 Olympics situation" did not occur again. Notably, Chinese athletes of the 1988 Olympics were severely criticized by the public as sports nationalism became

⁹⁶ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 116.

⁹⁷ SR/Olympic Sports, "China at the 1988 Seoul Summer Games, Sports Reference/Olympic Sports," (n.d.), <http://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/countries/CHN/summer/1988/>.

⁹⁸ SR/Olympic Sports, "1988 Seoul Summer Games, Sports Reference/Olympic Sports," (n.d.), <http://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/summer/1988/>.

⁹⁹ Glionna and Abrahamson, "The Games Plan for China: Olympic Superpower by '08."

¹⁰⁰ Brownell, *Training the Body for China*, 76–78.

¹⁰¹ Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams*, 218.

¹⁰² Hong, "Sport and Politics in the 1980s," 87.

directed at athletes. For example, Yang Xilan of the CWVT was described as “heartbroken” from harsh public criticism, which lead Central China TV (CCTV) to conclude (in the series *Heshang*), “China is a nation that cannot afford to lose anymore, even in sports.”¹⁰³

Collectively, the historical empirical data of economic reform and opening primarily suggests, first, as during the Mao era, when elite sports and elite competition investments increase in China’s social system, the CCP focuses upon “competition first” and success. Consequently, through the social system’s gender equality goals, the state increases the number of elite female athletes while producing female athletic success. Second, as during the Mao era, when investment money is spent on sports, the Party invests in research, training, equipment, recruitment, and incentivizing athletes that produces an increase in athletes, sports schools, coaches, and competitive victories. Third, and contrary to the Mao era, the NSC’s Olympic Strategy and the partial decentralizing of elite teams produced an Olympic and competitive victories focused sports policy (on a historical level) that further energized patriotism, but ultimately failed at the 1988 Olympics. Last, as during the Mao era, no specific “female sports policy” existed where female athletes received preferential recruitment or treatment to advance the CCP’s policies or Olympic Strategy. Remarkably, the opposite appears true as Chinese female football players lived in worse conditions than Chinese males. However, female athletes are increasing as a percentage of elite athletes, and are experiencing exceptional success. Arguably, gender equality still motivated CCP social and sports policies; for example, equal access to education and labor—or for athletes—facilities, coaching, and medical care.

B. ECONOMIC REFORM AND OPENING ATHLETES: URBAN AND ACCOMMODATED

Apart from CCP policies, in the 1980s and 1990s, and as economic reform and opening occurred and evolved in China, surveys on elite athletes who grew up during the economic reform period were conducted, for example, Zhong Bingshu’s *Performance*

¹⁰³ Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams*, 219.

Capital and Status Attainment: Sport and Social Mobility Among Chinese Elite Athletes. The surveys of athletes' backgrounds assisted in explaining, and possibly, dispelling hypotheses on why athletes choose sports. For example, females participate in athletics and achieve success because a male dominated society deters female advancement in business, politics, and academics, or female athletes, predominantly, came from "manual" class backgrounds that physically and mentally socialized them for athletic success. Further, the surveys assisted in examining who the majority of Chinese elite athletes gaining historic prestige and personal wealth were. Notably, as stated, the data does not explain CCP policies, but rather, briefly examines the individual athletes for background and motivations.

First, were the parents of athletes, who grew up during the economic reform period, predominantly, "manual," or peasant workers from the countryside as some academics have posed?¹⁰⁴ In 1986, Cynthia Hasbrook concluded, "a lower social class background may serve as a barrier to sport participation,"¹⁰⁵ and Zhong Bingshu's findings on PRC athletes confirmed Hasbrook's conclusions—even in a communist nation-state. About 30 percent of all Chinese female athletes' fathers came from the peasant class. About 20 percent of all Chinese male athletes' fathers came from the peasant class. Further, except for judo, wrestling, boxing, fencing, weightlifting, cycling, sculling, and yachting, Chinese athletes tended (over 50 percent) to come from households in which the father was college educated. In volleyball, basketball, and football, nearly 80 percent of female athletes came from households in which fathers had a college education, and in table tennis, badminton, and tennis, nearly 100 percent of male athletes came from households in which fathers had a college education. The only sports with a significant number of athletes from the peasant class and with fathers who had not received a college education were weightlifting, sculling, and cycling. Additionally, by the 1980s, the majority of men and women athletes were from urban environments. Nearly 100 percent of all athletes in table tennis, badminton, volleyball,

¹⁰⁴ Brownell, *Training the Body for China*, 224.

¹⁰⁵ Cynthia A. Hasbrook, "The Sport Participation—Social Class Relationship: Some Recent Youth Sport Participation Data," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 3, no. 2 (1986): 154.

basketball, figure skating, gymnastics, diving, shooting, and football came from cities. The only sports with a significant number of athletes from the countryside were weightlifting, sculling, and cycling.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the majority of Chinese athletes came from an urban and non-peasant background.

Second, based upon stated Chinese athletes' quantifiable demographics, what is deducible pertaining to individual athletes' motivations and success? Although some athletes were, undoubtedly, motivated by the desire to escape peasant labor in the countryside,¹⁰⁷ the majority of elite athletes choose sports apart from the desire to escape peasant labor in the countryside. Further, the idea that Chinese athletes succeeded because of their peasant background, for example, working in manual labor made Chinese athletes better athletes,¹⁰⁸ is the exception rather than the rule. Although some athletes attribute their success to their peasant background—for example, 1992 female Olympic 20 kilometer walking champion Ching Yuening believed running to school assisted in her success in walking—the majority of athletes were recruited before the age of 13 and from urban environments with resources like education, gyms, pools, and coaching, and parents with stable incomes.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, the motivations of athletes becomes more complex than escaping manual labor in the countryside, and success becomes more associated with access to sports knowledge, equipment, training, and coaching. Further, with the majority of Chinese athletes coming from urban backgrounds with college-educated fathers, the career options becomes more complex than athletes choosing elite sports because sports was the only choice, or the only means to “freedom” and escape from the countryside.

Third, what did Chinese elite athletes do with their abilities, prestige, and monetary gain? In the late 1980s, as Chinese athletes experienced success, they began to seek prestigious post-sports careers upon retirement. Therefore, the NSC began giving job priority to Olympic or world medalists, and about 40 percent of elite athletes became

¹⁰⁶ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 182–187.

¹⁰⁷ Brownell, “Sports,” 129.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 188.

coaches or sports commission officials—an occupation that ranked higher in prestige than business director, or actor-actress.¹¹⁰ Additionally, about 15 percent of Chinese elite athletes migrated to offered jobs in foreign nation-states while other athletes accepted club memberships, scholarships, and marriage proposals to migrate to foreign nation-states. For example, Chinese female table tennis champion He Zhili married a Japanese citizen to migrate to Japan, and later defeated her former teammates at the Asian Games while playing for Japan.¹¹¹ Chinese female tennis player Hu Na received political asylum from the United States.¹¹² Chinese female table tennis players, Chen Jing and Ji Baoxian migrated to Taiwan and Hong Kong, and competed against China in the Asian Games and World Championships. By the late 1980s, even with NSC jobs and bonuses, the situation with migrating Chinese athletes (called “overseas troops”), some returning and some finding permanent residence, became so extensive the CCP issued a directive stating that athletes must be over 26 and receive NSC permission to travel for extended periods of time to foreign nation-states.

Collectively, the survey and historical data primarily suggests, first, during the economic reform and opening period, Chinese elite athletes come from predominantly urban and educated families—with a few sports serving as the exception. Second, athletic success is more linked to the availability of sports knowledge, equipment, training, and coaching than the physical and mental stress of the peasant lifestyle. Third, generally (over half), Chinese athletes are using athletic success and the prestige and monetary rewards to secure post-sports careers in coaching, the NSC, or migrating to foreign nation-states. “Competition first” and international sports in China were establishing an individualism in sports, on a scale, historically not experienced. Chinese athletes were becoming more attached to competitive victories, accommodation, and post-sports stability, and less attached to the Party.

¹¹⁰ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 194.

¹¹¹ Yan Xueling, “Ye Yonglie Unwittingly Became a ‘Chinese Traitor’ on Behalf of He Zhili,” *EastSouthWestNorth*, March 8, 2007, http://www.zonaeuropa.com/20070310_1.htm.

¹¹² Smith, “The Great Leap Upward.”

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IV. THE JIANG ZEMIN AND HU JINTAO ERA

A. MARKET REFORM AND FEMALE SPORTS: DECENTRALIZATION, INDIVIDUAL SPORTS, AND FEMALE SUCCESS

By 1989, economic reform had produced both astonishing achievements like China's performance at the 1984 Olympics, and disappointing results like China's performance at the 1988 Olympics. Sports nationalism had rallied the Chinese population behind the NSC's Olympic Strategy, and had produced a devastating backlash through Chinese defeats; for example, Zhao's anti-elite sports publications, Chinese outrage at the CWVT's defeat in the 1988 Olympics, and the "5.19 Soccer Riot in 1985" when the Chinese men's football team lost to Hong Kong.¹¹³ As Su Xiaokang in *The River Elegy* stated, "When the five-star flag rose, people began to jump and cry. But what if they lose the match? People would swear, smash and make trouble."¹¹⁴ Further, the CCP's economic reform and Olympic Strategy had inconsistently stressed a combination of politics and sports, or sports as a political tool to prove economic and civilization power, and decentralization and opening. Therefore, elite athletes became both political figures that excited patriotism, and meritocratic actors consumed with individual victories, accommodation, and post-sports stability. Athletes became both burdened with the CCP's political objectives like winning Olympic medals for Chinese nationalism, and consumed by sports victories; for example, athletes began using performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) in the 1980s,¹¹⁵ and abandoned their education to achieve victories.¹¹⁶ Ultimately, the emerging market economy would lead to further decentralization and reform, and the undeniable rise of the Chinese elite female athlete.

¹¹³ Hong, "Sport and Politics in the 1980s," 84.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

By 1990, following the Tiananmen Square crisis and tensions with the West, China hosted the Asian Games and won 341 medals¹¹⁷ while continuing the legacy of economic reform and opening in concentrating, primarily, on the Olympics. Notably, in 1989, the previously mentioned ACAF, a non-governmental affiliate to the NSC, began to address the sport system failures of “satisfy[ing] the needs of the people in terms of leisure and cultural life . . . [and] suit[ing] the development of the socialist market economy”¹¹⁸ while addressing the educational deficiency amongst professional athletes. The NSC responded with the “Combine Elite Sport with the Education Sector” seminar and the “Regulations on School Physical Education” declaration that sought to improve athletes’ education, mass sports, and decentralization. However, by 1991, the NSC was more entrenched in the Olympic Strategy than mass sports. In 1991, the NSC labeled 16 sports like track and field, swimming, and gymnastics as “key Olympic sports” that would receive preferential investment and training.¹¹⁹ Moreover, the 1991 National Games were postponed to 1993 because the NSC believed Chinese athletic success during the 1987 National Games deterred focus from the 1988 Olympics. In 1993, the NSC directed the National Games to compete only in Olympic sports or martial arts, and by 1994, the NSC had reduced the number of professional athletes from 17,000 to around 13,000 with approximately 92 percent in Olympic sports. Further, individual sports received preferential treatment and the number of professional athletes in track and field, swimming, table tennis, shooting, gymnastics, badminton, and cycling were not reduced as much as basketball, volleyball, and football. Notably, the number of Chinese athletes increased in handball and weightlifting. Concisely, in the early 1990s, the NSC, with the help of the ACAF, understood the deficiencies of China’s sport system, and sought to improve the system, but ultimately, became more deeply entrenched in China’s focus upon Olympic success, particularly, in individual sports—although an increase in mass sports and mass exercise was witnessed during the 1990s.

¹¹⁷ The Times of India, “1990 Beijing Asian Games,” October 28, 2010, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/sports/1990-Beijing-Asian-Games/articleshow/6830129.cms>.

¹¹⁸ Hong, “Sport and Politics in the 1980s,” 89.

¹¹⁹ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 122.

In 1992, amidst the rising cost of sports and the partial decentralization of the 1980s, the NSC devised the previously stated extension to the Olympic Strategy that concentrated on individual sports. Moreover, the NSC further decentralized team sports, and would eventually dissolve into the State General Administration of Sports (SGAS) by 1998. Notably, the SGAS would continue the NSC's close ties with the ACSF and the Chinese Olympic Committee. In 1992, the Chinese Football Association (CFA), prompted by the NSC, became the first club system with professional league competitions. The club system became a market-oriented sport system with registered players (Chinese and foreign), advertisement, ticket fees, and sponsorships. The government invested in the CFA, but primarily, the 10 million yuan annual budget came from private investment. By 1995, Chinese basketball, tennis, and volleyball had formed club systems like the CFA, and eventually, the NSC administered a comprehensive sports reform and decentralization that established professional sports as “public entities instead of government or Party agencies.”¹²⁰ Further, in the mid 1990s, the elite sports department of the NSC was disbanded, 41 sports associations (comprised of 56 sports) affiliated to 12 administrative departments, 23 sport competition management centers, and 19 service institutions came into existence—a sports system structure that presently endures.¹²¹

Additionally, the Law of the PRC on Physical Culture and Sports, and the “Plan for Olympic Glories” (from the Chinese Olympic Committee) assisted the NSC and the forming SGAS through providing a legal framework for sports, and a strategy, while NSC budget bargaining became both a means of control and decentralization. First, in 1995, the Law of the PRC on Physical Culture and Sports stated, “Measures for the administration of local comprehensive sports games and local individual sports competitions shall be formulated by the local people’s governments;”¹²² therefore, historically establishing the legal authority of local governments, provinces, and cities to

¹²⁰ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 126.

¹²¹ Yong Jae Ko, Di Xie, and Kazuhiko Kimura, “Sport in Northeast Asia,” in *International Sport Management*, ed. Ming Li, Eric W. MacIntosh, and Gonzalo A. Bravo (Champaign: Human Kinetics 10%, 2011), 209–210.

¹²² China Trade in Services, “Law of the People’s Republic of China on Physical Culture and Sports.”

manage and administer sports activities within their jurisdiction, and beyond State Council control. Notably, although the Law of the PRC on Physical Culture and Sports historically took steps to decentralize sports, much of the law on competitive sports continues the legacy of the NSC in professional sports. For example, the state will control registration, participation in international competition, the National Games, athletic records, promote mass sports, and “win honors for the country.”¹²³

Second, in 1995, the NSC and the Olympic Committee released the new “Plan for Olympic Glories,” which established, “(1) [the] restructuring [of] . . . elite sport training and management; (2) enhancing the elite athlete delivery pipeline and system [including sport school]; (3) maintaining the nation’s leading position in world sport competition, particularly the Summer Olympic Games.”¹²⁴ Ultimately, the “Plan for Olympic Glories,” by 1996, was revealed as an aggressive NSC investment program that included 65 million yuan for Olympic related special projects to athletic facilities, research, and health. Over 200 academics would research 56 projects while twice the number of necessary athletes (over 960 athletes) had been recruited and trained for the Olympics. As Dong states, “Although the details of the investment for the 1996 Olympic Games are not available, it has been alleged that the expenses were double of those for the games four years earlier.”¹²⁵

Third, the NSC, and in due course the SGAS, through the ACAF and the affiliated Chinese Athletic Association (CAS) began budget negotiations (beyond private investment) with provinces and local sports commissions. As stated, the Law of the PRC on Physical Culture and Sports established the legal authority of local governments, provinces, and cities to manage and administer sports activities, but to maintain athletic excellence in the mixed (hierarchical but decentralizing) sports system, the CAS began budget negotiations on training and performance quotas. Provinces and local commissions were not forced to sign agreements with the state through CAS, but to receive training and performance money, the provinces were compelled to bargain. For

¹²³ China Trade in Services, “Law of the People’s Republic of China on Physical Culture and Sports.”

¹²⁴ Ko, “Sport in Northeast Asia,” 210–211.

¹²⁵ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 128.

example, if provincial local sports commissions projected an athlete would win an Olympic gold, the state would pay the local sports commission 100,000 yuan (60,000 yuan for a silver projection, and 30,000 yuan for a bronze projection). If the projected victory did not occur, the local sports commission would be compelled to pay all, or a percentage, of the investment received back to the state.¹²⁶ Further, based upon Olympic, Asian Games, and World Championships contracted performance quotas with sports commissions, CAS devised the training budgets received by the commissions. Therefore, the state budgeting mechanism evolved beyond mere socialism, but not to laissez faire capitalism—the budget awarded the provinces the ability to govern centralized control while awarding the state a means of still exhibiting control.

By 1998, although rewarding more autonomy to associations, provinces, and cities, and through management and budgeting, the newly formed SGAS, like the NSC, exerted a degree of hierarchical control over sports in China. As stated, the SGAS liaisons with the ACAF and the Chinese Olympic Committee to devise athletic strategy, development, budgeting, and implementation. The SGAS was tasked with “(1) creating a national sports framework; (2) promoting physical activity and exercise participation in schools and local and regional communities; (3) organizing national sporting events; (4) organizing international sporting events in China; (5) enforcing antidrug and anticompetitive measures; (6) liaising and cooperating with Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan; (7) supporting research into the development of sport; (8) implementing regulations governing the sport industry, sport market, and sport-related business activities; (9) implementing national physical training standards and supervising public health in coordination with the Ministry of Health; (10) overseeing sport activities with foreign associations and teams, and sport-related cooperation and communication with countries and regions outside the mainland.”¹²⁷ Further, the SGAS, with an overwhelming focus upon elite sports, produced professional athletes for international competition through a system starting at the district bureau with sports schools, and moving through the city and provincial bureaus to the national level.

¹²⁶ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 267.

¹²⁷ Ko, “Sport in Northeast Asia,” 210–211.

Ultimately, the athletic institutional reform of the 1990s, which endures to the present, monumentally, produced female victories in international athletics. For example, by 1992, Chinese women in the Olympics outnumbered Chinese men (132 to 118), and won 12 of the 16 gold medals. Notably, the athletes received 80,000 yuan for a gold medal, 50,000 yuan for a silver medal, and 30,000 yuan for a bronze medal. Gymnast Lu Li received a one million yuan sponsorship, and at auction, a gold medal was worth over 600,000 yuan. Further, in 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012, Chinese female Olympic athletes comprised 62, 66, 64, 52, and 57 percent of the Chinese Olympic team while accounting for 56, 59, 60, 53, and 54 percent, respectively, of all Chinese gold medals. Since 1988, Chinese female athletes have accounted for 89 percent of all Winter Olympics medals, have won China's (and Asia's) only tennis Grand Slam (2011), and have won China's only major golf tournament (2012). Notably, Chinese male golfer Guan Tianlang may have been the youngest male player to qualify and make the cut at the 2013 U.S. Masters in Augusta, Georgia, but he is eight professional wins, including one major golf tournament victory, and is over five years behind his counterpart Chinese female golfer Shanshan Feng. Additionally, the Chinese Women's Football Team (CWFT) has placed second at the World Cup (1999), won silver at the Olympics (1996), and won eight Asian Cups. Concisely, elite female athletics have done exceptionally well in the 1990s institutional reform era and beyond.

Notably, although the CWFT experienced success in the 1990s, decentralization, and an emphasis upon individual sports by the NSC and SGAS produced competitive failures in international team sports. For example, the Chinese Women's Basketball Team (CWBT) dropped from second in the 1992 Olympics to ninth in the 1996 Olympics to not qualifying for the semi-finals in the 2012 Olympics. In 2000, the CWBT did not qualify for the Olympics, and in 2004, did not qualify for the quarterfinals. The CWFT dropped from second in the 1996 Olympics to not qualifying for the semi-finals in the 2000 and 2008 Olympics to not qualifying for the Olympics in 2012. Additionally, in the 1990s, although the CWFT had placed second in World Cup and Olympic competitions, the team received less sponsorship, less pay, and less public interest than the Chinese Men's Football Team (CMFT). CMFT has qualified once for the World Cup (2002), but

has never scored a goal in World Cup competition, and has qualified once for the Olympics (2008) due to host nation automatic qualification, but has never won a match in Olympic competition. Further, the CWVT dropped from world champions in the 1980s to seventh in the 1992 Olympics to losing in the quarterfinals to Japan in the 2012 Olympics. Notably, in the 1990s, the number of professional team athletes decreased by 40 percent from the 1980s, and the number of professional team coaches decreased by 28 percent.

Collectively, the historical data primarily suggests, first, during the current era in Chinese elite sports, non-governmental federations, committees, providences, sports associations, and local sports commissions, are increasingly responsible for producing revenues, and liaising with private and public administrations for budgeting and competition quotas. Second, although Chinese elite sports are decentralizing, the legacy of hierarchical control persists due to state functions in sports, for example, registration, research projects, budgeting, and the new Olympic strategy that focuses upon individual sports. Third, state support and investments in training, research, coaching, recruitment, and education are still linked to competitive success. For example, as the NSC or SGAS focused investment upon individual sports at the expense of team sports, the performance of elite teams declined. Last, empirically, the current era remains consistent with previous eras in that the CCP's sports policies were not designed specifically to target female athletics, although females are encouraged by the Party to advance in athletics and elite sports. A comprehensive preferential female sports policy is indiscernible as Chinese female athletes are more represented in international competition (for China) while less represented as a percentage of Chinese professional athletes and coaches (in China) than men.¹²⁸ Providences and commissions "widely" produced athletes, both male and female, for maximum representation and investment capital,¹²⁹ but women through qualifications are filtering to international competitions, and succeeding at international competitions more significantly than their male counterparts.

¹²⁸ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 199.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

B. DO THE CHINESE WIN BECAUSE THEY USE PEDS?

During the 1990s and beyond, PEDs have cluttered academic research on the effectiveness of China's hierarchical national sports system and training. For example, has the hierarchical sports system been effective in producing elite athletes through scientific training, research, and recruitment, or has the sports system merely appeared effective due to PEDs? As stated, the practice of prescribing Chinese athletes PEDs began during the Deng Xiaoping era and economic reform and opening, but arguably, became a universal issue in 1998 during the Jiang Zemin era, when Chinese female swimmer Yuan Yuan was caught with 13 vials of Human Growth Hormones (HGHs) in the Sydney airport.¹³⁰ Consequently, in the 1990s and beyond, as exemplified during the 2012 Olympics with Chinese female swimmer Ye Shiwen's PED allegations, arguably, because her 50-meter freestyle time was faster than U.S. gold medalist Ryan Lockte,¹³¹ questions persistently arise as to how far reaching PEDs are in Chinese athletics. Do the Chinese win because they cheat? Notably, age scandals exist in female gymnastics, but due to only involving one sport and never receiving a conviction by the IOC, is not addressed by this examination.

In 1968, the Summer and Winter Olympics began administering drug tests, by 1972, "full-scale" testing was administered, and by 1988, athletes were continually disqualified for drug use, for example, Canadian track and field gold medalist Ben Johnson.¹³² Therefore, in 1989, China announced an anti-drug policy that focused upon "strict prohibition, strict examination, and strict punishment,"¹³³ but in 1990, when 165 Chinese athletes were examined and 1.82 percent tested positive for PEDs, the athletes

¹³⁰ The New York Times, "Swimming; Chinese Swimmer's Bags Held Banned Hormone," January 10, 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/01/10/sports/swimming-chinese-swimmer-s-bags-held-banned-hormone.html>.

¹³¹ Hannah Beech, "As a Teenage Chinese Swimmer Strikes Double Gold, Doping Allegations Swirl," *Time Olympics*, July 31, 2012, <http://olympics.time.com/2012/07/31/as-a-teenage-chinese-swimmer-strikes-double-gold-doping-allegations-swirl/>.

¹³² BBC News, "1988: Johnson Stripped of Olympic Gold," (n.d.), http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/27/newsid_2539000/2539525.stm.

¹³³ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 143.

were neither punished nor exposed. Remarkably, from 1990 to 1998, nearly half of the world's positive PED tests in swimming came from China.¹³⁴

In 1992, a state sponsored Anti-Doping Commission was devised by the NSC, and in 1993, 1.56 percent of all Chinese athletes examined by the commission tested positive for PEDs, but the first exposure and punishment did not occur until 1994—nine coaches, five from swimming, and 24 athletes were suspended. Notably, 1.3 percent of all global athletes examined by the IOC tested positive for doping in 1993. At the 1994 Asian Games, 11 Chinese athletes (seven from swimming, two from canoeing, one from cycling, and one from track and field) tested positive for PEDs,¹³⁵ and by 1995, the Chinese swimming team was not allowed to compete in the Pan-Pacific Swimming Championships while the International Swimming Federation (FINA) began investigating China.¹³⁶

Further, in 1995, following the 1994 Asian Games PED scandal, the previously stated, Law of the PRC on Physical Culture and Sports, included two articles (Article 34 and Article 50) on drug testing and punishment while NSC director Wu Shaozu announced the “Four Nos and Five Unsuitables.” Wu Shaozu stated, “(1) No drugs even if it means no gold medals. (2) No drugs even if others use them. (3) No drugs even if they are not detectable. (4) No drugs even if other people allow you to use them. Drug use does not suit (1) Marxism-Leninism, (2) socialism, (3) the people's best interests, (4) the athlete's best interests, or (5) the nation's best interests.”¹³⁷ However, in 1997, 24 Chinese athletes tested positive for PEDs, and 18 of 24 positive PED cases were women from track and field and weightlifting. By 1998, as stated, Chinese athletes and PEDs were universally connected causing National Athletic Center director Duan Shijie to

¹³⁴ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 143.

¹³⁵ Bruce Kidd, Robert Edelman, and Susan Brownell, “Comparative Analysis of Doping Scandals: Canada, Russia, and China,” in *Doping in Elite Sport: The Politics of Drugs in the Olympic Movement*, ed. Wayne Wilson and Edward Derse (Champaign: Human Kinetics, 2001), 173.

¹³⁶ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 144.

¹³⁷ Kidd, “Comparative Analysis of Doping Scandals,” 176–77.

state, “If drug abuses occur again in athletics, especially in the Ma Family Army, China’s sport would collapse. This is not an exaggeration.”¹³⁸

Irrespective of Chinese shame, or the Western media’s excessive attention upon China’s PEDs test failures,¹³⁹ PEDs existed in certain sports at higher percentages than global athletes. Therefore, the NSC took measures to diminish PEDs in Chinese sports, while ultimately, reducing Chinese success in certain sports. First, generally, PEDs usage existed in Chinese swimming, track and field, cycling, and weightlifting—proved by the athletes testing positive for PEDs. Further, success in “power” sports like swimming, canoeing, or weightlifting could be assisted by PED usage while “coordination” sports like badminton, gymnastics, table tennis, diving, or shooting had essentially no use for PEDs.

Second, after the 1998 Yuan Yuan HGH scandal, the SGAS began aggressively testing athletes. For example, conducting 317 blood tests in 1998, and amidst FINA pressure in 1999, the SGAS conducted 646 tests on Chinese swimmers.¹⁴⁰ In 2000, 27 Chinese athletes, six from the Ma Family Army, which is discussed later, and 13 Chinese coaches were banned by the SGAS from the 2000 Olympics while the SGAS established a predominantly “drug-free” legacy through strict testing and punishment that has drastically reduced the amount of Chinese PED scandals since 1998. Further, Chinese national weightlifters are tested once a month, and before the Olympics, all athletes are tested—some with an advanced blood test developed to detect Erythropoietin (EPO)—EPO increases red blood cells and oxygen transport.¹⁴¹

Third, undoubtedly, the diminishment of PEDs in Chinese power sports like swimming, track and field, and cycling, has generally reduced China’s success in power sports—weightlifting remains the exception. For example, at the World Championships in 1991, Chinese swimmers won four gold medals. At the Olympics in 1992, Chinese swimmers won four gold medals, and at the World Championships in 1994, Chinese

¹³⁸ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 145–146.

¹³⁹ Colwin, *Breakthrough Swimming*, 213.

¹⁴⁰ Cecil Colwin, *Breakthrough Swimming* (Champaign: Human Kinetics, 2002), 213.

¹⁴¹ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 156.

swimmers won 12 gold medals. Conversely, at the Olympics in 1996, Chinese swimmers won one gold medal, at the World Championships in 1998, Chinese swimmers won three gold medals, and at the Olympics in 2000, Chinese swimmers did not win a gold medal. At the Asian Games in 1998, Chinese swimmers ranked below the Japanese, and at the World Athletics Championship in 1999, China won one gold medal in the 20-kilometer walk. Further, at the Olympics in 2008 and 2012, China won one and five gold medals in swimming, respectively, while winning zero and one gold medal in track and field. Therefore, the numbers tell the story, in the 1990s, when China won numerous medals in swimming and track and field, PED testing was minimal (if conducted at all). After 1998, strict PED testing has dramatically reduced the number of Chinese medals in swimming and track and field. Additionally, during the 1990s, international sports organizations administering PED tests revealed Chinese athletes were using PEDs more than other nation-states.

Do the Chinese win because they cheat? As proven, historically, in swimming and track and field, China has won due to the assistance of PEDs. For example, China's swimming success in the 1994 World Championships, where China won 12 gold medals. China's track and field success in the 1993 International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) World Championship in Athletics, where China won four gold medals (three by the Ma Family Army), second to the United States—all experienced before strict SGAS PED testing and international pressure. However, power sports like swimming, track and field, canoeing, rowing, cycling, and weightlifting, if weightlifting is subtracted because Chinese weightlifters win regardless of PED usage, accounted for four gold medals, out of 51 gold medals, or 8 percent of China's gold medals in the 2008 Olympics. Notably, with weightlifting, power sports accounted for 12 gold medals, or 23 percent of China's gold medals. In the 2012 Olympics, power sports, if weightlifting is subtracted, accounted for 15 percent of China's gold medals, and with weightlifting, accounted for 28 percent of China's gold medals. Further, in the 2008 Olympics, China won 51 gold medals while the second place nation-state (the United States) won 36 gold medals, and in the 2012 Olympics, China placed second with 38 gold medals while the

third place nation-state (Great Britain) won 29 gold medals. Concisely, without power sports, China's standing would have remained first (in 2008) and second (in 2012).

Historically, China has had impressive showings at the Olympics through athletic performances in diving, gymnastics, table tennis, badminton, shooting, and weightlifting. For example, in the 2012 Olympics, diving, gymnastics, table tennis, badminton, shooting, and weightlifting accounted for 71 percent of China's gold medals. Therefore, since the 1990s, sports assisted by PEDs, and sports involved in Chinese PED scandals, have had minimal effect upon China's world Olympic standing—China does not need to cheat to win.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

A. WHY DID CHINESE ELITE FEMALE ATHLETES RISE AND SUCCEED?

Since 1949, historical data have continually connected China's elite female athletic population and representation in international competition to CCP gender equality policies that targeted culture, education, and labor. These policies simultaneously exposed men and women to a hierarchical national sports system that invested in research, training, equipment, recruitment, and incentivizing athletes "to win honors for the country."¹⁴² Generally, with few exceptions, under the Party's social system and hierarchical sports system, when national sports investment increased the population and success of elite female athletes in international competition increased. When national sports investment decreased the population and success of elite female athletes in international competition decreased.

One hypothesis posits that Chinese female athletes succeed apart from government policies. According to this view, women are culturally socialized different from men. Confucian values encourage women to be more obedient and work harder than men, and women are therefore culturally inclined to achieve athletic success. This view does not hold up. First, the data indicates that Chinese female elite athletes succeed in relationship to government policies rather than apart from government policies. For example, as CCP sports investments advanced research, training, equipment, and recruitment during the heyday of the Sino-Soviet alliance and the GLF, the number of elite female athletes increased and women began to succeed in competition. During the Cultural Revolution, as sports investments decreased and the Red Guard targeted the NSC, the number of female athletes decreased and women failed to succeed or compete in competition. Moreover, during the Deng Xiaoping era, as the CCP increased

¹⁴² China Trade in Services, "Law of the People's Republic of China on Physical Culture and Sports, China Trade in Services."

investments, Chinese women and teams, like the CWVT, experienced success. During the Jiang Zemin era, as the NSC decentralized team sports and investments were diminished, the CWVT was less successful in competition.

Second, CCP policies were not Confucian. Notably, the assertion of a “Confucian Hypothesis” is not an in-depth examination of Confucianism, but rather, a questioning of the significance of Confucianism in a nation-state and culture in which data suggest the Party sought to alter traditional habits, for example, the Anti-Confucian Campaign (1973–74). Confucianism stresses, “[the] home [was] a microcosm of the state,”¹⁴³ and “Five Relationships [exist] . . . ruler/subject, parent/child, husband/wife, elder sibling/younger sibling, and friend/friend,”¹⁴⁴ where each relationship, with the exception of friend/friend, are hierarchical in nature, and women are “required to obey their fathers . . . obey their husbands . . . and as widows . . . obey their grown-up sons.”¹⁴⁵ Since 1949, data indicates that CCP social, education, and sports policies are not Confucian. For example, the 1950 marriage law, mass sports, and the “socialist liberation of women,” stressed gender equality in labor, marriage, sports, and education—not hierarchical Confucian norms. Women were incentivized to rebel against the state during the Cultural Revolution, women were incentivized to gain economic independence from their husbands, and women were incentivized to disobey the desires of their parents to compete in sports for the Party. Remarkably, without the CCP’s un-Confucian policies of marriage, education, and labor equality, the NSC might not have been capable of exposing women to training, equipment, recruitment, or the national sports system.

Third, undoubtedly, remnants of Confucian culture existed in Chinese elite women sports, but the data questions the significance of Confucian culture in international competitive success. It may be argued further that CCP socialist ideology and policies do not exemplify Confucian culture, but the hierarchical national sports system, and the “spirit,” obedience, or work ethic of women, do exemplify Confucian

¹⁴³ Jeffrey Richey, “Gender and Sexuality,” *Patheos Library*, (n.d.), <http://www.patheos.com/Library/Confucianism/Ethics-Morality-Community/Gender-and-Sexuality>.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

culture and produce athletic success. Data do indicate that the CCP bureaucracy and the national sports system were hierarchical and remain generally hierarchical, but over emphasizing the hierarchical national sports system or the hierarchical coach-athlete relationship places sports in a void. It discounts the rampant abandonment of Confucian culture in Chinese relationships that affect sports. For example, CCP policies on gender equality in labor and the ability of women to gain economic independence affected athletic migration during the Deng Xiaoping era.

Notably, apart from the possible difficulties in measuring women's obedience and hard work to men's obedience and hard work, if Confucian women were more prone to athletic success because of obedience and hard work, then the same phenomenon may be expected in the Confucian cultures of Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. Contrary to China, in 2012 the Republic of Korea (ROK) fielded 248 athletes, 113 women, and 135 men for the Summer Olympic, and Korean men won eight of 13 gold medals. In 2004, Chinese-Taipei fielded 50 men and 39 females, and both genders won one gold medal. Examples can be found to disprove the Confucian hypothesis in Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. Further, this thesis's examination of Chinese elite female athletics is not a comparative examination, but the data do suggest an explanation not focusing upon Confucianism is more useful.

Typically, proponents of the Confucian Hypothesis cite the work ethic and obedience of the Liaoning Women's Running Team, named the Ma Family Army after their coach Ma Junren, as an example of how hard work and obedience displayed by Chinese women produces success. Ma, a former PLA soldier who possessed a primary school education, had attended a brief sports training course before serving as a physical education teacher in Liaoning province, where he experienced a degree of success in coaching during the 1980s. Coach Ma was known for his sacrifice and dedication. For example, to assist in funding two athletes for the 1992 Olympics, Ma donated half of his annual salary. Additionally, he was also known for harsh training methods. On one occasion, for example, Ma stated, "I would scold and even beat them when they were lazy or disobedient, but I did this for their own good. If we were not prepared to suffer

pain how could we win world championships?”¹⁴⁶ The Ma Family Army won a bronze medal at the 1988 Olympics, four gold medals at the 1992 Junior Championships, and as stated, a historic three gold medals at the 1993 IAAF World Championships. The data seemed to suggest a Confucian relationship of women’s hard work, determination, and obedience to a harsh, but sacrificing and dedicated coach could produce astounding success, but at closer examination, the data is more complex. For example, the Ma Family Army was suspected of PED usage as early as 1993, and in 2000, it was banned from the Chinese Olympic team. Further, in 1993, female athlete Liu Dong refused to lose to a teammate while openly disobeying Ma. By 2000, as athletes received sponsorships, bonuses, and endorsements, the Ma Family Army disbanded and Ma began promoting commercial products, such as turtle extract.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, the story of the Ma Family Army, from the fragmented data, does seem to suggest a minor Confucian relationship between coach and athlete. However, primarily, it suggests the willingness of a coach and athletes—during the Deng Xiaoping and early Jiang Zemin reform eras, and in the absence of substantial PED testing—to cheat, sacrifice, and endure pain for quick athletic glory, celebrity status, and monetary accommodation.

Another hypothesis asserts that Chinese female athletic success is a consequence of government and social policies that deter female societal advancement and encourage inequality. Women thus participate in athletics and achieve success because a male dominated society deters female advancement in business, politics, and academics. Chinese men have numerous career options while females have few. Women therefore need to succeed in athletics. This hypothesis also does not stand up. First, as stated, the data suggests that the majority of athletes from both genders were recruited before the age of 13. Almost all sports, with the exception of “strength” sports, such as weightlifting, “combat” sports, such as judo, and swimming, recruited over 50 percent, or almost 50 percent of their athletes before the age of 13.¹⁴⁸ Historically, sports in China are both a young girl’s endeavor and a young boy’s endeavor, predominantly, decided by

¹⁴⁶ Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 167.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 171.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

recruitment rather than individual choice. The evidence suggests body composition may matter more than gender while business, politics, and academics is as foreign to a 13-year-old girl recruited by the sports system as a 13-year-old boy. Therefore, the data indicate sports recruitment does not target women to keep them from business, politics, and academics.

Second, the evidence suggests that the majority of boys and girls, if they possessed the maturity to choose their occupation, may have been, along with their parents, incentivized to choose sports. For example, as stated, CCP policies and the Chinese population's embrace of sports made athletics a prestigious occupation that generously rewarded athletes while minimally rewarding academics. Further, with the majority of Chinese athletes from urban backgrounds with college-educated fathers, a career options assessment becomes more complex than athletes choosing professional sports because professional sports was the only choice, the only means to "freedom," or the only method to escape inequality. Therefore, the "Single Option Hypothesis" becomes less useful as questions arise as to the ability of recruited individuals, boy or girl, truly to choose professional sports, and the complexity of career options in relationship to demographics and sport's occupational incentivization.

A final hypothesis stipulates that Chinese female athletic success results from government policies fostering admission, opportunity, equality, and general male support towards female athletics and female equality. This argument tends to be more useful. First, as mentioned, data consistently suggest that men and women were simultaneously populating the CCP's educational and economic institutions under new gender equality ideologies that sought to alter traditional culture while concurrently exposing men and women to a hierarchical national sports system that invested in research, training, equipment, recruitment, and incentivizing athletes. For example, as gender equality laws allotted girls to attend schools in extraordinary numbers, girls became exposed to the State Education Commission bureaucracy connected to the NSC, and NSC resources and incentives, and elite female athletes increased in relationship to CCP investments. Further, as gender equality laws allotted women to participate in economic production in

extraordinary numbers, women became exposed to the ACFTU bureaucracy connected to the NSC, and elite female athletes increased in relationship to CCP investments.

Second, male support for female athletics and equality are difficult to measure, but presupposing fostering equal representation is a measure of support or equality, sports may suggest a general male support or equality, or at a minimum elite male political support. For example, in the 1950s, the Soviet assisted shift from mass sports to elite sports coupled with the founding of the hierarchical NSC and the gender equality propaganda campaigns of the Marriage Law suggests that the CCP deliberately fostered women's participation in national endeavors—including international sports. Additionally, since 1949, the percentage of female elite athletes among the Chinese elite athlete population has continued to increase even during periods of reduction in overall elite athlete population. Currently, the percentage of elite female athletes is nearly equal to the percentage of elite male athletes in China. Chinese men may or may not support comprehensive female equality—for example, national CCP political leadership does not illustrate the same nearly equal representation. However, professional athletics does appear to enjoy a degree of fostering equal representation or fostering female equality in sports.

Notably, elements of the “CCP-Male Support Hypothesis” and the historical conclusions explains the rise and success of female athletics in China, and the rise of elite female athletic populations and representation in international competition. However, since 1949, the examination has argued, compelling data supporting a true difference in the female elite athlete production system and the male elite athlete production system is lacking. Therefore, the examination argues against claims of CCP favoritism regarding female athletics for national objectives at the expense of male athletics. The limits of an examination focused upon CCP policies is, if sports policies are essentially similar for both genders, the data can explain an internal rise and success, and suggest a strong link to international success, but cannot explain the success of one gender over the other in international competition. When women are experiencing more success than men in international competition under similar CCP policies than an element relating to a foreign

nation-states' elite athlete production system exists. Therefore, women are succeeding more than men because of important CCP policies relating to equality and sports coupled with an unexamined element relating to a competitor's policies.

B. IMPLICATIONS

Historically, academics studies have related international sport to national power and “self-image,” or the image a nation-state desires and has the ability to portray to the world. Occasionally, power and image relates to hosting sporting events like the Olympics, but additionally, power and image relates to the ability of a nation-state to succeed in competition. For example, if China desires a rising power image, China must possess the ability to produce rising success in sports competitions.¹⁴⁹

Second, academic studies have related international sport to the interconnected desires of nation-states as athletes travel, participate in sport federations like the IOC, and influence the world as they are influenced by the world.¹⁵⁰ For example, “status quo” nation-states desire interconnectedness in established sport federations while “revisionist” nation-states desire isolationism or the establishment of competing sport federations.

Third, academic studies have related international sport to national identity and patriotism. For example, when citizens rally behind flags, national athletes, and competitive successes, patriotism, national identity, and cohesion are formed.¹⁵¹ Therefore, by reasonably presupposing international sport is a prism for national power and image, interconnectedness, patriotism, and identity, China's policies and athletic success—linked to female athletic success—reveal an imbalanced and plateauing power, a nation-state that embraces a form of controlled interconnectedness, and likewise, a nation-state that embraces a form of controlled patriotism and national identity.

¹⁴⁹ Victor D. Cha, “A Theory of Sport and Politics,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 26, no. 11 (2009): 1583.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Notably, it is not necessary to prove that sports truly assist, or only assist national power, interconnectedness, and patriotism. National identity is not defined in a nuanced manner, but merely relates to assisting citizens to identify as Chinese through athletic success, or to the possible cohesion in identification through athletic success. Further, it is merely presupposed sports assist power, interconnectedness, and patriotism, while briefly providing possible implications based on historical evidence. For example, if sports assist a nation-state's power through victories and hinders power through defeats, history shows China's power has expanded, and in the future, it might be expect to plateau.

As sports often reflect a nation-state's power and image and the hybrid of a nation-state's desires and abilities, CCP policies and the historical success of Chinese elite female athletes implies an imbalanced but rising power, while short-term future prospects imply China might be a declining or plateauing power-sports power.

First, beyond the answered questions, or addressed accusations, for example, did the CCP systematically produce a more successful international female sports program to "medal grab?" Does the state invest more in female sports than male sports? Does China recruit more heavily for female sports? Historically, as shown, CCP policies have produced an exceptional rise in China's Olympic success. Further, while producing more elite male athletes in China, CCP policies have consistently produced greater elite female athlete qualification, representation, and success in international competitions. As the data reveal, for nearly three decades, Chinese women have qualified more, are represented more, and experience more success in international competitions than men. Therefore, since 1984, the consistency of the data implies a rising but imbalanced system of sports production, or concisely, China's power-sports power has been rising but is imbalanced.

Second, the current data reveals that within China's social system and hierarchical national sports systems where female athletic success is connected to Party investment, the CCP has begun to deal with the rising cost of sports through decentralization. Since the late 1980s, as the CCP has decentralized team sports, the success of elite national teams in international competition has diminished. Therefore, generally, the fate of sports decentralization in the Chinese social system is a diminishment of success and power. If

in the future China decentralizes individual sports, diminished success may be expected in Olympic competition—to include diminished female success. Primarily, decentralization implies a decrease in Chinese power and success in sports.

Third, if the CCP does not decentralize individual sports, the data indicates a general plateauing of Chinese Olympic success due to the general plateauing of female athletics—the backbone of China’s Olympic success. Since 1992, on average, Chinese elite female athletes tend to represent 60 percent (plus or minus 4 percent) of the Olympic team and win 56 percent (plus or minus 4 percent) of Olympic gold medals—usually equating to about 18–20 gold medals. The 2004 and 2012 Olympics were perfect examples, as Chinese females comprised 64 and 57 percent of the team, and won 60 and 54 percent of the gold medals, or 19.5 and 20.5 gold medals. Unless state investments in individual Olympic sports noticeably increases as the Chinese GDP decreases,¹⁵² or China is the Olympic host nation, the data reveals a general plateau in female success. For example, for nearly a decade, Chinese women have consistently won around 20 gold medals—enough for China to place second in most Olympics, but not enough to surpass the usual U.S. performance. Concisely, without more male success, or an unforeseen increase in female medal production, China is stuck in second place. The 2008 Beijing Olympics for China, like the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics for the United States, is the exception to the rule, or the exception to the mean. Therefore, an examination of CCP policies and Chinese elite female athletic success reveals a plateauing of female success and a general plateauing of China’s athletic success and sports power.

As sports often reflect a nation-state’s level or desire of interconnectedness, CCP policies and the historical success of athletes reveal a form of controlled interconnectedness. The hierarchical CCP bureaucracy and the national sports system continually embrace and struggle with interconnectedness. For example, as stated, female athletic migration during economic reform and opening, and FINA pressure or infringement in PED testing during the 1990s; conversely, the Chinese lobbying for IOC admittance in the 1970s, the Chinese lobbying to host the Summer Olympics in the 1990s

¹⁵² Richard Silk and Tom Orlik, “China GDP Growth Slows to 7.7%,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 14, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323346304578423431110506270.html>.

and 2000s, and generally, China continually desiring representation in the Olympics and World Championships. In short, the evidence reveals that China both desires to participate in, and is wary of infringement by international athletic organizations—for example, the CCP fearing IOC opposition to censorship during the 2008 Olympics.

However, beyond mere wariness, the CCP sports policies reveal a form of controlled interconnectedness through examining the differences in international athletic organizations and athletes. For example, as stated, Chinese Olympic athletes are supported, promoted, and sponsored by the Party, as athletes must earn money through the state and beyond the IOC. Conversely, elite “professional” athletes like Chinese female tennis player Li Na are not generally supported or promoted by the State because they are predominantly non-state-sponsored and can earn money through an association like the Women’s Tennis Association (WTA) and private sponsorship. After Li Na’s historic 2011 French Open victory, the “Central Propaganda Department issued a news media directive ‘to stop hyping Li Na’s win.’”¹⁵³ Thus, it is at this point that skepticism and controlled interconnectedness are magnified. If athletes are sponsored by the state, the Party supports their endeavors because the national sports system, through various forms of incentives, controls the athletes and China’s relationship to the International Organization (IO). If an athlete is a professional, the CCP is skeptical of that athlete’s endeavors because the national sports system does not control that athlete’s incentives and admission in, or interaction with an IO. Therefore, policies reveal an embrace of controlled interconnectedness, beyond mere athletic success and participation in international competition. Further, controlled interconnectedness implies China is neither a status quo nor revisionist power, neither an internationalist nor isolationist, but a power that desires participation, Party power, and citizen influence control that deters China from a full realization of its athletic abilities or successes.

Similarly, as sports and success often reflect a nation-state’s level of patriotism and national identity, CCP policies reveal both an embracement and distrust of patriotism

¹⁵³ Dan Levin, “Chinese Athletes Say No to the System,” *The New York Times*, August 18, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/19/sports/chinese-athletes-begin-to-challenge-governments-tight-grip.html?pagewanted=all&_r=5&.

and identity through sports, therefore, favoring a controlled patriotism and identity. For example, athletes supported a CCP embrace and manufacturing of patriotism and identity during the GLF to produce short-term athletic success. Arguably, athletes still support a CCP embrace and manufacturing of patriotism and identity. Conversely, in 1988, following China's Olympic failures, a nationalistic backlash targeted the Party's elite sports focus in favor of a more socialistic mass sports focus. Further, nationalism targeted CCP stability (and Hong Kong) in the 1985 5.19 Soccer Riot. Ultimately, both the Olympic backlash and soccer riot were suppressed by the state, and thus, distrust and control become magnified. In a hierarchical national sports system, failure and success (rightly and-or wrongly) are attributed to the system, therefore, causing moments of Party legitimacy as populations embrace patriotism, identity, and cohesion through victory, and moments of Party illegitimacy as patriotic citizens blame the CCP and the national sports system for failure. Therefore, state policies reveal an embracement of Party manufactured-controlled patriotism and identity, and a distrust of "decentralized" patriotism and national identity, or patriotism and national identity not manufactured by the CCP—ultimately, they reveal a level of distrust in Chinese citizens. Notably, if as stated, Chinese sports are plateauing, the patriotic implications may be troublesome for an "embracing and controlling" party. Citizens may search beyond state sponsored athletes and sports to "kindle the flames" of patriotism and identity while challenging CCP control, or the control of sports patriotism. An example was witnessed when U.S. professional basketball player Jeremy Lin, a Harvard educated Christian-Asian-American athlete of Taiwanese descent, ignited a Chinese following in 2012—"Linsanity" in China—through his basketball success and was a target for censorship.¹⁵⁴

C. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, history generally reveals that Chinese elite female athletes were successful due to the CCP nurturing female representation in international competition through gender equality policies that targeted culture, education, military service, and

¹⁵⁴ G. E., "Stop the Linsanity?" *The Economist*, February 20, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/analects/2012/02/chinas-new-sports-problem>.

labor, while simultaneously exposing men and women to a hierarchical national sports system that invested in research, training, equipment, recruitment, and incentivizing athletes “to win honors for the country.”¹⁵⁵ Additionally, although CCP policies can generally explain female success, an unexamined element relating to the competitor’s policies exists for future consideration. The principal implications have deduced, first, China’s system is imbalanced with plateauing power. Second, the Party embraces a form of controlled athletic interconnectedness that reveals China is neither a status quo nor revisionist power, and the CCP desires participation, power, and citizen control at the expense of broader athletic success. Last, the Party embraces a form of controlled patriotism while revealing distrust in Chinese citizens. Undoubtedly, the rise of Chinese female athletic participation and success in international competition, which has been the backbone for China’s rise to sports relevance, has been historic, but sports fans must wait to see if policies, female success, and the national sports system are sustainable.

¹⁵⁵ China Trade in Services, “Law of the People’s Republic of China on Physical Culture and Sports, China Trade in Services.”

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