

# The Historical Evolution, Scientific Connotation, and Contemporary Value of Chinese Sportsmanship

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[ **Abstract** ] As a valuable spiritual wealth of the Chinese nation, Chinese sportsmanship is rich in scientific connotation and contemporary value. Its historical evolution runs through the period of the New Democratic Revolution, the period of socialist revolution and construction, the new period of reform and opening up, and socialist modernization, and the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Under the new historical conditions, Chinese sportsmanship plays an important role in strengthening national self-confidence and cohesion, promoting the development of sports in China, and promoting the construction of a community of human destiny.

[ **Key words** ] Chinese sportsmanship; scientific connotation; contemporary value

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## 1 Introduction

In the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games, and Winter Paralympic Games summary commendation meeting, General Secretary Xi Jinping highly praised China's athletes and coaches "for taking practical actions to implement the requirements of moral gold, style gold and clean gold, to interpret the Olympic spirit and the Chinese spirit of sports, to achieve a double harvest of athletic achievements and spiritual civilization, and to win the honor for the Party and the people". Based on the new era, we should not only inherit and carry forward the Chinese sports spirit but also further explore and deepen the connotation and value of this spirit in the new era.

## 2 The historical evolution of Chinese sportsmanship

Chinese sportsmanship is rooted in the rich soil of excellent traditional Chinese culture, originates from the great practice of Chinese sports, and is the reflection of the highest values of the Chinese national spirit in the field of sports. The great spirit is nurtured, sprouted, formed, and developed in the practice of great revolution, construction, and reform. The evolution of the Chinese sports spirit is a history of the revolution and self-improvement of the Communist Party of China in the modern era for more than a hundred years.

### 2.1 The period of the New Democratic Revolution: sports for the salvation of the nation

Starting from the mid-19th century, with the invasion of the Western powers, China experienced political control, economic exploitation, and cultural erosion, and these actions resulted in deep poverty and weakness of the country and the miserable life of the people. Against this historical background, early Marxist thinkers, such as Chen Duxiu and Mao Zedong, began to explore ways to revitalize China and gained a deep understanding of the far-reaching impact of sports on national rejuvenation and national strength. In "Today's Education Policy", Chen Duxiu proposed that it was difficult for the young people of the country to bear heavy responsibilities because of their weak physique. For this reason, it was necessary to vigorously create physical education and sports education, to mold new young people who were "tenacious in their wills, good at fighting and unyielding in their fights" and "strong in their physique and strong in their ability to fight against nature", and to enhance the quality of the nation and invigorate the spirit of the nation. This would enhance the quality of the nation and invigorate its spirit. Mao Zedong proposed in "The Study of Physical Education" that the nation must do its utmost to promote sports and carry forward the spirit of sports, as sports could not only nourish the body and promote the all-round development

of human beings, but also protect the family and the country. Since its birth in 1921, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has led the Chinese people to achieve profound changes and development in many fields. In the field of sports, the Party has promoted a series of revolutionary advances, such as the establishment of the Red Sports Association of the Chinese Soviet Republic, the Yan'an Sports Association, and the Yan'an New Sports Society. At the same time, it strengthened people's physical fitness by organizing a number of large-scale sporting events, including the May 30th All-Soviet Sports Congress in 1933 and the September 11th Expanded Sports Games in 1942. On the military front, shooting, ladder-climbing, and armed walking were carried out, among other things, with the aim of upgrading the military's physical fitness and combat skills. In the educational sphere, physical education, hygiene, and labor skills were widely implemented in schools, and sports competitions such as track and field and ball games were actively organized to enhance the physical fitness of students while fostering their team spirit and sense of competition. In factories and rural areas, amateur sports competitions, such as jousting, stone-lifting, climbing wooden castles, and catching secret agents, were widely organized, which not only enriched the spare time of the workers and farmers, but also strengthened their physical fitness and ability to work in solidarity. These initiatives greatly enhanced the physical health of soldiers, people, workers, and students, and at the same time greatly uplifted the people's spirits and inspired the fighting spirit of the soldiers, making an important contribution to strengthening the cohesion and fighting strength of the nation.

During the New Democratic Revolution, faced with an extremely difficult environment, the CPC led the army and the people to vigorously promote the role of sports in national salvation. According to the actual situation, they creatively organized diversified sports activities, which not only promoted the physical and mental health of the army and the people, but also greatly enhanced their fighting strength. Under the leadership of the Party, the army and the people made concerted efforts to closely integrate sports activities with the needs of war and devoted themselves to the revolutionary cause, eventually winning the great victory of the revolution.

## **2.2 The period of socialist revolution and construction: sports for the rise of the nation**

After the founding of New China, leaders of the Party and the nation attached great importance to sports as an important means of enhancing the health of the nation. In response to the physical exertion and health damage suffered by the people during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the War of Liberation, the government took a series of measures to improve the health of the entire population by promoting sports to restore and strengthen the people's physical fitness. In 1952, Mao Zedong put forward the 12-word policy on sports of "developing sports and physical exercise and strengthening the people's physical fitness", which was interpreted in depth in *New Sports* in the same year. On May 25th, 1960, the Chinese mountaineering team climbed Mount Everest from the north slope for the first time, which was an achievement that made a significant mark in the history of mountaineering in the world. In 1971, ping-pong diplomacy became an opportunity to thaw relations between China and the United States, highlighting the important role of sport in cultural exchanges and diplomacy. These achievements have inspired the continuous progress of sports in New China, and have made important contributions to the construction of the socialist country as well as the improvement of people's physical health.

From the founding of New China to the beginning of reform and opening up, sports not only played a key role in promoting the country's economic and social development, facilitating major breakthroughs in diplomacy, and safeguarding the country's long-term stability, but also served as a powerful spiritual force, providing a solid spiritual pillar and a constant source of motivation for the country's revitalization.

## **2.3 The new period of reform and opening-up, and socialist modernization: sports for the nation**

The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC made the decision to reform and open up, which heralded a formal shift in the center of gravity of the Party and the country to economic construction. Along with the reform and opening up, China's sports industry also ushered in a new stage of development, with the focus shifting to the preparation for the Olympic Games and the launching of the Olympic Glory Programme, which aimed to raise the level of the country's competitive sports. In 1981, the Chinese men's volleyball team

beat South Korea in a decisive match to secure the all-important qualification. In the same year, the Chinese women's volleyball team won the World Cup for the first time, which was an achievement that was reported in the People's Daily under the title "Study from Women's Volleyball Team, Revitalize China", which for the first time closely linked the spirit of women's volleyball to the revitalization of the Chinese nation. At the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, Xu Haifeng made a splash in the shooting event, winning China's first Olympic gold medal in history, breaking China's record of zero gold medals at the Olympic Games, and opening a new chapter in Chinese sports at the Olympic Games. In 2008, the success of the Beijing Olympics attracted global attention, and Chinese athletes demonstrated the Chinese spirit of sportsmanship on the field of play, achieving excellent results and topping the gold medalist, and realizing China's great leap forward in the history of the Olympic Games. The sporting achievements of this period not only enhanced the national image, but also greatly strengthened national pride and cohesion.

#### **2.4 The new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics: a sports powerhouse**

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has set the construction of a sports powerhouse as an iconic cause for national rejuvenation. At the 2016 Rio Olympics, the Chinese women's volleyball team won the Olympic gold medal once again after a 12-year hiatus from the 2004 Athens Olympics. In December 2019, when the Covid-19 came out of the blue, posing a great threat to the health of countries and people all over the world, the CPC led the people in an effective response to the "courageous fight and commitment". The CPC led the whole country to effectively deal with the pandemic and successfully resumed work and production under the guidance of the sportsmanship of "courageous, responsible, united, collaborative, persistent and resolute". In 2022, under the correct leadership of the Party, the Winter Olympics were successfully held in Beijing, and the Chinese delegation achieved the best results in the history of winter sports in this grand event. This achievement not only marks Beijing as the only "city hosting two Olympic Games" in the world, but also demonstrates the country's great progress and comprehensive strength in the field of sports.

In the great journey of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, Chinese sportsmanship plays a crucial role, not only as an important driving force to achieve the first 100-year goal, but also as a strong support for the new journey towards the next 100-year goal. The vigorous promotion of national fitness activities and the rapid advancement of the strategy of strengthening the country through sports, have injected strong vigor into the country's economic and social progress and inspired people of all ethnic groups to constantly pursue excellence and breakthroughs.

### **3 Scientific connotation of Chinese sportsmanship**

Chinese sportsmanship is a concentrated portrayal and vivid embodiment of the Chinese spirit and is one of the most important driving forces for China's development. During a series of major sports events, such as the Beijing Olympic Games, the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games, and the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, General Secretary Xi Jinping has been personally present and guided the related work, and has talked about Chinese sports and Chinese sportsmanship for many times. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that "the Chinese sports spirit is learned from the long-term practice of the majority of sportsmen and women, and is mainly based on the principles of striving for national glory, selfless dedication, scientific pragmatism, compliance with law, unity and co-operation, and tenacity and struggle". General Secretary Xi Jinping's exposition on Chinese sportsmanship provides a thought guide for us to deeply understand the scientific connotation of Chinese sportsmanship.

#### **3.1 Striving for national glory**

Striving for national glory is an important spiritual motivation that inspires Chinese sportsmen and women to fight bravely in international competitions and win honors for the country. From the "ping-pong diplomacy" in the early days of the founding of New China to the Olympic Games, the Asian Games, and other international events in recent years, Chinese sportsmen and women have always adhered to the belief of striving for the glory of the country, and have won honor and respect for the country through their repeated successes on the international

playing field.

### **3.2 Selfless dedication**

Selfless dedication embodies the spirit of Chinese sportsmen and women who are unselfish in their pursuit of sports, regardless of personal gains and losses. Many outstanding athletes have given up their personal honors and interests for the benefit of the country and the collective in their careers. With their sweat and efforts, they have made important contributions to the development of Chinese sports. The spirit of selfless dedication is not only embodied in athletes, but also in coaches, referees, sports workers, and other personnel. With their hard work and selfless dedication, they have provided a strong guarantee for the prosperity and development of Chinese sports.

### **3.3 Scientific pragmatism**

Scientific pragmatism embodies the spirit of scientific training, realism, and innovation of Chinese sportsmen and women in the pursuit of their sports careers. In the course of training, Chinese sportsmen and women always adhere to the principle of scientific training and focus on technological innovation and improvement of training methods. Through continuous study and practice, they have improved their competitive level and made important contributions to the development of Chinese sports.

### **3.4 Compliance with law**

Compliance with law embodies the spirit of Chinese sportsmen and women to strictly abide by laws and regulations and sports ethics in the pursuit of their sports careers. The spirit of abiding by the law is widely manifested in Chinese sports. Chinese sportsmen and women always uphold the principle of fair competition on the field of play and strictly abide by the rules of the game and sports ethics. They have interpreted what the true spirit of sports is with their own actions, and have become models and role models for the whole country.

### **3.5 Unity and co-operation**

Unity embodies the spirit of teamwork and solidarity among Chinese sportsmen and women in their pursuit of sports careers. The spirit of unity and co-operation is deeply reflected in Chinese sports. Chinese sportsmen and women always pay attention to the cultivation of the spirit of teamwork and collaboration in their training and competitions. They accomplish tasks and goals together through mutual support and co-operation.

### **3.6 Tenacity and struggle**

Tenacity and struggle embody the spirit of Chinese sportsmen and women who are not afraid of difficulties and have the courage to fight hard in the pursuit of their sports careers. Chinese sportsmen and women always uphold the belief of fighting bravely on the field of competition, defying the strongest opponents and daring to challenge them. They won competitions and honors through their efforts and struggles. This spirit of tenacity and struggle not only improves their athletic level but also strengthens their self-confidence and fighting spirit.

## **4 The contemporary value of Chinese sportsmanship**

Chinese sportsmanship not only has profound historical logic and scientific connotation, but also has important contemporary value. It is an important spiritual impetus for promoting the development of Chinese sports and an important spiritual support for realizing the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

### **4.1 Strengthening national self-confidence and cohesion**

The Chinese sports spirit is an important spiritual support for strengthening national self-confidence and cohesion. It embodies the spirit of patriotism and the spirit of unity and co-operation of the Chinese nation in the field of sports and inspires the masses of people to actively participate in sports and contribute their strength to the prosperity and development of the country. Chinese sportsmanship demonstrates the excellent quality and strong strength of the Chinese nation through the outstanding performance of sportsmen and women in international competitions. This display not only enhances the people's pride and self-confidence, but also strengthens the cohesion of the Chinese nation.

### **4.2 Promoting the development of sports in China**

The development of sports is an important measure to improve the health of the whole population, and it is also

an important part of building a strong sports country. A country's sports development level is an important reflection of its comprehensive national strength, and sportsmanship plays a unique and irreplaceable role in inspiring the overall development and health of the nation. Sports activities can cultivate people's teamwork spirit, sense of competition, and perseverance, which are important driving forces for the forward development of society and national rejuvenation. The Chinese sports spirit has inspired Chinese sportsmen and women to fight bravely in international competitions and win honor and respect for the development of Chinese sports. At the same time, it also inspires the majority of sports workers to actively devote themselves to sports and contribute their strength to the prosperity and development of Chinese sports.

#### 4.3 Promoting the construction of a community of human destiny

Chinese sportsmanship combines the cultural qualities of tolerance and openness. On the basis of inheriting the concepts of "helping the whole world" and "harmony among all nations" in traditional Chinese culture, it has absorbed and integrated the outstanding achievements of global sports civilization with an open mind. It has formed a spiritual culture that is widely recognized and accepted by the international community. This spirit has not only strengthened exchanges with other countries in the world at the ideological and cultural levels, but also injected vitality into exchanges and development in the political and economic fields. The 2008 Beijing Olympics, with its theme of "One World One Dream", demonstrated China's vision of global solidarity. In 2022, in the face of the challenges posed by the global pandemic, the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics have come up with the slogan "Together for the Future", which was an innovative declaration that once again conveyed to the world the broad-mindedness of the Chinese nation. This not only promotes interaction and exchanges among different civilizations, but also provides the impetus for global solidarity and co-operation in overcoming difficulties together, forging a global consensus, and laying a solid ideological foundation for promoting the construction of a community of human destiny.

### 5 Conclusion

Chinese sportsmanship has profound historical background, rich scientific connotation, and important contemporary value. It is an important spiritual driving force to promote the development of Chinese sports and an important spiritual support to realize the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Therefore, in the context of the new era, it is of great significance to continue to deepen the excavation of the connotation and the contemporary value of the Chinese sports spirit, to firmly take the road of socialist sports culture and self-confidence with Chinese characteristics, to show the spirit of the Chinese people, as well as to converge the Chinese spirit, the Chinese value and the Chinese power.

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