
**An Analysis of Chinese Olympic and Elite Sport Policy Discourse in the
Post-Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Era**

by

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A Doctoral Thesis Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

award of

Doctoral of Philosophy of Loughborough University

February 2015

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Abstract

This thesis has sought to investigate the development of Chinese elite sport policy after the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games through examining the evolution of the Chinese Olympic discourses and elite sport policy discourses with emphasis on the power and interests reflected and constructed within and by these discourses. This study adopts a Critical Discourse Analysis approach, (founded on Critical Realist premises). The discourse analysis protocol employed is modified from Fairclough's (2005, 2009) framework, also known as *Dialectical-Relational Approach*, to examine the constitution and implementation of power at the meso and micro levels of relationships within Chinese elite sport.

The analysis is based on archival material and semi-structured interviews. Rather than providing a detailed chronology of the Chinese Olympic movement and of Chinese elite sport, the analysis, divided into two main parts, starts with identifying critical periods as the start line of the analysis and points of division that separate these periods. The analysis of the pre-2008 era starts with the year 1993, in which the first Olympic bid by China failed and the second significant reforming policy of Chinese elite sport was published. This section of the thesis consists of an analytic description of the development of Chinese elite sport policy and the analysis of Chinese Olympic discourse and elite sport discourse before the 2008 Olympics. The post-2008 section contains the analysis of these two discourses after the Beijing Games, and develops case studies of three sports, baseball, diving and table tennis, attempting to unveil the development of Chinese elite sport policy in the post-2008 era.

From 1993 to 2012, a consistent feature was the concurrent requirement of both reform and of satisfactory elite sport performance, was maintained in Chinese elite sport policy discourse. The power of discourses in relation to these dual goals has varied across the period, has been influenced by a number of factors, and has been maintained by the dominant group within Chinese society and within Chinese elite sport exercising their power over discourse. The thesis argues that the characterisation of Chinese elite sport and of its development has varied with the change in the power relationship between the two sets of goals, which has

significantly influenced the key developments and change in Chinese elite sport policy and its governance system.

Acknowledgement

This paper could not have been finished, or even initiated, without the help of many, who not only have provided guidance and assistance, but also have made me complete and made me a better self. However, with the limited length of this acknowledgement, for saving the readers' time and energy for reading the subsequent and less exciting part of the thesis, neither could I include a whole list of those good people in my life, nor fully express my appreciation to those mentioned in the following paragraphs, which is a terrible shame.

First of all, I cannot say thank you enough to my supervisor, Professor Ian Henry, who has always been so kind, considerate and helpful since the very first day we talked to each other in 2009, when I was sitting nervously at his office in the labyrinth-like Ann Packer building and was endeavouring to be recruited in the MLA project. Ian has been more than a supervisor to me, not only like a torch illuminating my journey through the tunnel of PhD research, but also the key that opened a gate leading to another way of looking at, thinking about and being in the world.

Professor Alan Bairner, my dear friend, as a perfect embodiment of the combination of wisdom, kindness and humour, has provided me a great example of teaching in the classroom and a superb experience of the lovely and enjoyable side of the authentic British life. I also want to say thank you to Dave Burke, Xuemei Deng, Ren-Hsing Jiang and Sheng-Hsing Chen (aka, the Sean and Sean), and Jian Ma and all of my friends for accompanying and helping me, and giving me so many beautiful and precious memories in my life.

Last but the least, my family has been the greatest support to any achievements I have made, not only in these years, but also all my life. I feel so regretful that my father cannot witness all these achievements and be by my side after this journey ends. He had been a tireless supporter and provided the vigorous encouragement for me to go further and to accomplish more all his life, even when he was in hospital and was suffering the enormous pain from cancer. I am sure my new title makes him much happier in heaven.

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Glossary of Terms

Even though some would argue that discourse is language-specific and therefore is untranslatable in the literal sense, throughout history and with our daily life experience, we can clearly demonstrate that linguistic systems are not ‘hermeneutically sealed’ systems, since cross-language communication and translation would not otherwise be feasible. On the other hand, it is also clear that a translated term, which may be translated based on the literal ‘denotation’ of its source language, may not have the same ‘connotation’ that it has in the original linguistic system. Take a scenario of the English word “Chair”. It is translated as ‘Yizi’ in Chinese, following its denotation of a seat for one person, typically with a back and four legs. However, its connotation (in English) of the post of a professor or the person in charge of a meeting or of an organization is not a connotation of ‘Yizi’ (Paperback Oxford English Dictionary 2006; Oxford FLTRP English - Chinese 2010; The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary 2012).

Thus, a study using cross-language discourse analysis may be challenging and subject to subtle interpretation, especially in some terminologies with subtle connotations, nevertheless is still a potentially fruitful academic area which is built upon academic analysis and explicitly justified understandings (Henry, Al-Tauqi, et al. 2007).

In order to make connotations and subtle meanings more explicit (and to signify that the Chinese word’s connotations are significant in our argument), for three Chinese terms, *Juguo Tizhi*, *Tiyu* and *Zhuanye Sport*, we employ the Pinyin form instead of translating them into English. Detailed explanation in terms of the meaning of these three terms is provided in this part of *Glossary of terms*.

1 *Juguo Tizhi*

Juguo Tizhi, often used as a byword for the system of Chinese elite sport, is normally translated and elaborated as “whole-country support for the elite sport system” (Fan,

Wu, & Xiong, 2005, p. 215; Tan & Houlihan, 2012; Wei et al., 2010). However, we would argue that Juguo Tizhi should also be understood as a framework that administers and operates Chinese sport affairs as a whole. It is Zhuanye sport that should be recognised as the sport system supported by the whole country, and is operated and governed by the government within the Juguo Tizhi framework.

For more information and the discussion in terms of the relationship between Zhuanye sport, professional sport and Juguo Tizhi, see the discussion of *Zhuanye Sport* below.

2 *Tiyu*

Tiyu, is one of the Chinese phrases for sport, which, however, embraces a number of further meanings, such as physical activities, and physical education (The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary 2012; Oxford FLTRP English - Chinese 2010). Another translation for sport is *Yundong*, which has extra connotations including mobility, movement, physical activity and political movement. (The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary 2012; Oxford FLTRP English - Chinese 2010). In the thesis, '*Tiyu*' is used when the term embraces other meanings such as physical activities, physical education in the Chinese context.

3 *Zhuanye Sport*

'Zhuanye sport' is employed as the term for the elite sport system that is supported, operated and governed by the government with administrative methods. 'Zhuanye sport' is the dominant form of Chinese elite sport.

Bao (2009, p.14) identifies two defining features that differentiate it from 'professional sport' that a) Zhuanye athletes receive payment or subsidies from government while professional athletes are mainly paid by their employer (normally professional clubs) or sponsors; b) Zhuanye athletes normally do not have full

ownership of their own human-capital, which means they are a kind of 'sporting civil servant.' More detailed analysis of the Zhuanye system and its operating framework is provided in the body of the thesis.

It is important to clarify these meanings, as firstly in the limited amount of research literature on Chinese elite sport in western academic society, Zhuanye sport is normally translated as 'professional sport', ignoring the differences that are pointed out by Bao; secondly, the professionalisation of some Chinese elite sports that were dominated by Zhuanye sport is regarded as an important part of the market-oriented reform of Chinese elite sport, and it is therefore crucial to specify the difference when analysing the development of Chinese elite sport; thirdly, by using Zhuanye Sport as a particular term, we are able to make our analysis more precise and will enhance clarity, for example indicating why the term 'professional sport' was ignored in the 1985 reform policy, in which 'Zhuanye sport' and its reform provided the major focus. If we were to use the incomplete or inaccurate translation 'professional sport', then it would become very difficult for us to argue for the significance of the appearance of 'professional sport' in the 1993 reform policy.

This understanding of the nature of Zhuanye Sport and Juguo Tizhi would lead to a better and fuller comprehension of Chinese elite sport, which has been lost in translation or even, consciously or unconsciously, omitted in the Chinese context. In *the Research on the further perfection of Juguo Tizhi of Elite Sport of China*, Li et al. (2003,p.2) provide a detailed elaboration of Juguo Tizhi indicating that:

Juguo Tizhi is the system of the organisation and administration of [Chinese] elite sport, which aims to achieve outstanding results in Olympic Games and other important international events; [it] is government-led; [its] main component is the [elite] sport system. [Through utilising] the methods of optimising the allocation of [elite] sport resources, it promotes and organises the involvement of civil society [in Chinese elite sport]. [The system] has a single goal at national level, is rationally structured, is well managed, prioritises efficiency and gives attention to different interests.

In Li *et al.*'s definition, Juguo Tizhi is identified as "the system of the organisation and administration of [Chinese] elite sport". This emphasis on its methodological and operational significance for Chinese elite sport clarifies an often-implicit nature of Juguo Tizhi. Concurring with Li *et al.*'s perspective, we recognise Juguo Tizhi as a framework that administrates and operates the sport affairs in China as a unit, especially Zhuanye sport.

We would argue the reason for this confusing understanding of the nature of Juguo Tizhi, in terms of rhetoric, lies in the relation between "Juguo" which explicitly means "whole country", and "Tizhi" that could be literally translated as "system". The term of Juguo Tizhi thus could be interpreted not only as "the elite sport system supported by the whole country", but also as "the whole-country directed by a system to support elite sport". This is to say that "Tizhi", the 'system', could be both interpreted as 'the elite sport system' and 'the organisation and administration system of [Chinese] elite sport', the second of which is advocated by Li *et al.*

This confusion in the recognition of the nature of Juguo Tizhi, as the elite sport system *per se* (including both Zhuanye and professional sport) and the system administrating and operating the elite sport system is also evidenced in the Chinese literature. The statement in Hao's (2004) in-depth study of Juguo Tizhi provides a good example, in which he argues that:

Sport system is the administration system and the [whole] system [and institutions] of sport.

Juguo Tizhi is a special sport administration system and operation mechanism in the second half of the 20th century in China.

Hao, 2004, p.7

Juguo Tizhi is a sport system that is led-by-government; it governs sport affairs with administration and distributes sporting resource with [methods based on] plan [economy].

Following Hao's interpretation, Juguo Tizhi could both be regarded as a "sport system" and "a sport administration system and operation mechanism". Given that he also indicates in the same article that the "sport system is the administration system and the [whole] system [and institutions] of sport" (2005, p.7). The statement "Juguo Tizhi is a sport system" then becomes confusing, as it could be re-written as "JUGUO TIZHI (a sport system) is Juguo Tizhi (a special sport administration system) and the [whole] system [and institutions] of Chinese sport".

Even though, it is difficult to completely isolate an administration system from a sport system, we would argue that such ambiguous conceptualisation of the nature of Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye sport influences the interpretation and implementation of Chinese elite sport policy. This is to say that implicit understanding makes the meaning of the goal of elite sport reform 'insist and refine Juguo Tizhi', become two-folded. On the one hand, it could be interpreted as the reform of JUGUO TIZHI (the Chinese elite sport system in general). This is consistent with the statement of the 1993 Policy and other pro-reform policies, parts of which had been implemented prior to the Beijing Games, such as the restructure of the training and competition system and the professionalisation of certain sports. On the other hand, it could also be interpreted as the reform to the system that administrates and operates Chinese elite sport, relating to the reform of the administrative governance system, a reform which had hardly achieved any significant progress.

According to our analysis of the pre-2008 development of Chinese elite sport, we would argue this vague understanding of the nature of Juguo Tizhi is in line with the GAS's interests. This is because it, on the one hand, protects the core of Juguo Tizhi (the administrative governance system) in the reform. On the other hand, it releases pressure for reform by employing reforming rhetoric in promoting moves in non-administration aspects of Zhuanye sport. Furthermore, some of these moves, such as restructuring of the national competition system, further reinforce the priority of the Olympic task, and thus the power of Zhuanye sport, and are in line with the interests of Sport Administration Departments.

Thus, this dual-interpretation of the nature of Juguo Tizhi effectively directed the reform to other (superficial and operational) parts of Chinese elite sport. In other words we could say that the superficial and operational reforms have been framed as a reform of the essential features of Chinese elite sport. Thus, Juguo Tizhi has remained the dominant approach in Chinese elite sport, enabling the GAS to concentrate resources for the preparation of the Olympics in “[a] closed [system] which to a degree protects against and rejects [the influence of] external ... stakeholders” (Interviewee General 3)

List of Abbreviation

ACSF	All China Sport Federation
CBA	Chinese Baseball Association
CBL	Chinese Baseball League
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
COC	Chinese Olympic Committee
CISS	China Institute of Sport Science
CTTB	Centre of Table Tennis and Badminton
CTTSL	Chinese Table Tennis Super League
DC	Development Centre
GAS	General Administration of Sport
IOC	International Olympic Committee
MLB	Major League Baseball
PCSCs	Physical Cultural and Sport Commissions
PRC	People's Republic of China
SAD	Sport Administration Departments
SPCSC	State Physical Cultural and Sport Commission

Chapter One Introduction

In spite of the controversies built up around the Beijing Games, China managed to stage what the International Olympic Committee (hereafter the IOC) President was able to describe as “a truly exceptional Games” in 2008 (Rogge, 2008). In elite sport terms, China not only achieved its best performance in Olympic history, but also maintained this momentum in subsequent international events, such as the 2010 Asian Games and the 2012 London Olympics. In the meantime, Chinese elite sport, has also confronted a variety of criticisms from the media (L. Li & Wang, 2011; Wang & Yang, 2011; Yang, 2010), and, more importantly, comments from figures at the head of the PRC (Zheng & Gong 2010; Liu 2014; Wang 2014) concerning its limited efforts in relation to reform.

It has been nearly 30 years since the first proposal for Chinese elite sport reform was documented in *the SPCSC¹'s Decision on the Reform of Sport System (Draft)* (SPCSC 1986b), while China has been transferring from “an orthodox Leninist society to a neo-liberal socialist society with a Chinese character” (Wei et al. 2010, p.2380). Even though there have been some achievements accomplished in relation to reform, the

¹ The SPCSC refers to the State Physical Culture and Sports Commission (hereafter, the SPCSC). It was established on 15 November 1952 for the administration and development of sport affairs in the PRC (Wu, 1999). It was restructured in the General Administration of Sport (hereafter, the GAS) in 1998.

traditional elite sport system (Zhuanye sport and Juguo Tizhi) has maintained its dominance (Li et al. 2003; Zhang 2009; Xiong et al. 2008; Wu 1999). Especially during the preparation for the Beijing Games, the traditional system, i.e. Zhuanye sport², and its administration framework, Juguo Tizhi³, had been to a large degree reinforced, while by contrast, voice of reform had been (voluntarily or involuntarily) muted (Interviewee General 2, Interviewee General 3, Interviewee Table Tennis 2⁴, Zhang, 2009). In the post-2008 era, the maintenance of this planned-economy based elite sport system has continuously been identified as the mainstream of Chinese elite sport in the Sport Minister's speeches in the annual All States Sports Minister

² Zhuanye sport refers to the traditional USSR-fashion elite sport system, which is based on planned economy and is administered and fully funded by the government. For more information and the discussion in terms of the relationship between Zhuanye sport, professional sport and Juguo Tizhi, please refer to the part of *Glossary of terms*.

³ Juguo Tizhi, often used as a byword for the system of Chinese elite sport, is normally translated and elaborated as "whole-country support for the elite sport system" (Fan, Wu, & Xiong, 2005, p. 215; Tan & Houlihan, 2012; Wei et al., 2010). However, we would argue that in essence, Juguo Tizhi should be understood as an administration and operation framework of Chinese elite sport, operates the nation-wide elite sport affairs as a whole. For more information and the discussion in terms of the relationship between Zhuanye sport, professional sport and Juguo Tizhi, please refer to the part of *Glossary of terms*.

⁴ We category the interviewees in this research following the cases to which they relate, then name them in sequence, for example Interviewee Baseball 1, Interviewee Table tennis 3, and Interviewee Diving 5. Those academic and officials who do not relate to any specific sport are categorised as 'General' and thus named as, for example, Interviewee General 1, Interviewee General 2.

Conference (P. Liu 2009b; Liu 2010; Liu 2012). It is claimed that the consolidation of the three components of Chinese sport, elite sport, the sport industry and mass sport will be maintained in the post-2008 era (Wei et al. 2010; Yi 2010).

Given the reforming context of Chinese society and the limited tangible evidence of change in Chinese elite sport after the Beijing Games, we are interested in scrutinising the power structure that has stabilised this system that has confronted increasing criticism, and in unveiling the intangible changes (if there is any) in it after the Beijing Games. In other words, in this research we aim to explore the power structure and relationship within Chinese sport, especially in the post-2008 era, through employing Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter, the CDA) as the primary research tool.

A policy-as-discourse approach, which has been applied in sport policy analysis by a small number of scholars (Bacchi 2000; Chatziefstathiou & Henry 2009; Piggin 2014; Henry et al. 2005; Amara & Henry 2007), is employed in this thesis. From a Foucaultian perspective, discourse is seen to be able to not only reflect knowledge, but also deliver and transport knowledge, as it “sets limits upon what can be said” (Bacchi 2000, p.48). It also produces realities and relations of power, and “legitimises social actions and relations between those who shape the normative conventions and whose life experiences may be shaped by such conventions” (Chatziefstathiou & Henry 2012, p.12). In other words, discourse has the capability to not only reflect or

shape, but also enable (social) reality and this is how/why discourses generate power. Thus, “through studying the speaker or writer’s employment of various rhetorical devices and themes ... we can understand relations of power in public policy.” (Piggin et al. 2009, p.465).

This is to say that power, which circulates within social sectors (Foucault 1986, p.234), can be investigated through an analysis on discourse that is able to transfer and deliver knowledge and construct realities. Thus, the power structure and relationship of Chinese sport is investigated, in our research, through analysing the discourses of Chinese sport “based on the study of the techniques and tactics of domination” (Foucault, 1986, p. 237). This is to say, we examine the way in which sport policies and related narratives have been “established, consolidated (and) implemented” in the time span we choose for unveiling the development (and change) of power within Chinese elite sport. In Jäger & Maier’s (2009, p. 36) words, we employ CDA as the research apparatus “to chart what is said and can be said in a given society at a given time ..., and to uncover the techniques through which discursive limits are extended or narrowed down” (Jäger & Maier 2009, p.36).

The implementation of CDA, in this research, is based on a Critical Realist position. This combination is not only seen as logical and sensible (Fairclough 2003), but also argued to be more productive (Sims-Schouten et al. 2007). It enables us to distinguish the reality and the knowledge of reality during our investigation of the

way in which discourse generates and shapes power of a given society, and constructs its structure. In other words, following Bhaskar's (2008) lead, it stops us from reducing the question of ontology to a question of epistemology.

This is to say that, on the one hand, the constructed social structure exists independently from individuals' knowledge, which means the social world is pre-constructed for us. On the other hand, individuals' actions are also able to modify social structures, and may serve the interests of some groups at the expense of others (Henry 2007). In sport terms, Dewar (1991, p.20) put this into a concise statement that sport activities are "historically produced, socially constructed and culturally defined to serve the needs and interests of powerful groups in society". However, it is worth noting that the constructive effects of discourse in Critical Realism are different from what they are in constructivist terms, as they are controlled and formed by materiality and are restrained by limited knowledge of the social world (Sims-Schouten et al. 2007). In other words, the ontological difference between Critical Realism and Constructivism is not in terms of 'construction', but is the acknowledgement of the restraints on construction activities. The restraints originate from the material conditions, social structure and availability of discourses in a certain society, and they limit people's knowledge both on social activities and realities as well as of themselves.

Therefore, analysis of causal power of changes from a critical realist view considers

the causal powers for social changes in both social structure and human agency. This is to say that it requires, on the one hand, investigating how social agencies interpret the meaning of social structure and shape it with discourses; on the other hand, it also requires exploring the (constructed) social restraints (or promotion) on interpreting activities. Such a dialectical relationship, which focuses attention both on the process of 'meaning construction' and the social limits on human activities from social structure, differentiates Critical Realist based CDA from those approaches which only emphasise one element of the relationship.

In line with Foucault's argument in *Truth and Power* (1980d, p.117) that "one has to ... arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject with a historical framework... [which is] a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledge, discourses, domains of objects, etc.", a study on the history of Chinese sport and Olympic movement in China are necessary to understand the historical and thus structural context of the Beijing Olympics and to understand the political changes and behaviour of Chinese sport authority.

However, rather than providing a detailed chronicle of the Olympic movement in China, the research starts with identifying the stages within which Chinese sport authorities confronted dilemma in terms of pursuing Olympic success and implementing reform. This dilemma resulted conflicts in Chinese elite sport policy. This important period spans three key events from 1993 to 2008:

-
- a) The fail of China's first bid to host the Olympic Games and the publication of the second significant reforming policy in 1993;
 - b) The development and staging of the successful bid for the 2008 Games and the publication of the first Olympic strategy to cover a decade (which, though, is the second edition) in 2001; and
 - c) The preparation, staging and aftermath of the 2008 Games themselves.

For this reason we have chosen these three critical incidents as the start point of the analysis and points of division that separate the period we focus in this study. In particular, we focus on the policy changes (and continuities), which accompany these stages, seeking to address our first and second research question, which are as follows:

I. Across the three periods in contemporary Chinese Olympic history, 1993-2001, 2001-2008 and post 2008, to what extent have Chinese elite sport policy and discursive accounts of it changed?

II. To what extent are the changes in Chinese elite sport regarded as a consequence of the experience of preparing for and staging the Beijing Olympics?

It is claimed that though the study involves a significant period of time, from 1993 to the post-2008 era, and incorporates a number of changes in elite sport policies, thanks to the stability in Chinese politics, there has been a political mainstream reflecting communist ideology running through the period (Wei et al. 2010). And it is such apparent stability in Chinese elite sport policy that leads us to pose a third

research question:

III. In what ways are policies and their interpretation of the aftermath of the Beijing Games related to explanations of the socialist features of the regime?

Thus we attempt to assess how communist beliefs, representing a feature of the political mainstream, have been consistently maintained, and/or differently interpreted and implemented, in the sport policy context. Furthermore, we attempt to explore the relationship between differences in the interpretation and implementation of such belief within different periods and the changes in the internal and external circumstances of China.

Besides looking into policy documents and interpretation of policies in the pre-2008 and post-2008 eras, three case studies respectively focusing on Chinese diving, baseball and table tennis are carried out, in order to illuminate the interpretation, and implementation, of policy. The use of case studies in policy or programme evaluation has long been suggested by scholars (Campbell 1975; Yin 2003), not only because of its ability to provide insights into the nature of the phenomena, but also because of their compatibility with explanations of 'how' and 'why' questions, which can subsequently contribute to a critical realist understanding of the causal mechanisms that generate phenomena (Easton 2000).

Through selecting our three sports, we attempt to explore Chinese elite sport not only from an orthodox Juguo Tizhi perspective, but also to address the reform of

Chinese elite sport from different aspects, i.e. the civil-society-based development of sport in the non-state sector, the professionalisation of (some) sports, and the relationship between elite sport and the HE sector.

In summary, we investigate policy changes through analysing changes in policy discourses (including statements and narrative of policy, and interpretation of policy), since these discourses reflect both the exercise of power and material changes in sport. Such changes are the outcome of both social structure and social practices. Following Fairclough (2005a; 2009; 2003), we argue that CDA is compatible with Critical Realism, as well as with our research strategy of case studies. Moreover, CDA should be carried out by reference to both synchronic and diachronic dimensions, in order to give a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon under consideration. However, it is important to note that changes in discourses do not inevitably lead to (though they may sometimes hint at or suggest) changes in social practice and social structure. Correspondingly, a maintained phenomenon in social structure can also be interpreted and implemented differently in discourses.

In order to explore (construct) the context of our research in both synchronic and diachronic dimensions, we divide the following Literature Review chapter into three parts. The role of nation states and the role of sport in the era of globalisation are briefly reviewed in the first part, which is followed by an investigation of the contingent national policies concerning the increasing elite sport arm races in

international competitions. Then we start our introduction of Chinese sport, covering both the traditional view of sport in the Chinese context and the significance of Western, Modern, sport in Chinese society after it was introduced to China as a concept of modernity and a medium for national restoration.

Chapter Two Literature Review

Sport in the era of globalisation has extended its geographic reach (Klein 1991; Maguire 1994; Mangan 1996; Wagner 1990), economic effects (Close et al. 2007; Price & Dayan 2008; Zhang 2009; Zhao 2010), political function (Bairner 2001; Brownell 2008; Cha 2009; Dong & Mangan 2008) and cultural conception (Bale 1994; Donnelly 1996; Featherstone et al. 1991; Tomlinson 1991). It has developed into a universal term, providing opportunities to transcend the broader of nations, race and cultures by offering what has been referred to as a 'global language' (Maguire 1994; Milton-Smith 2002).

Not only the economy and culture, but the governance of sport has also 'escaped', to a degree, from the hands of national and international bodies, and gradually become an outcome achieved "through the interaction between such bodies and other major stakeholders" (Henry 2007, p.7). However, the elite sport systems, which have been developed and which aim to win in competition against each other (Heinilä 1982), differ between nations, "due to the culture differences and the uniqueness of each sport system" (De Bosscher et al. 2007).

In order to provide a full picture of contextual information and related studies our literature review is divided into three sections: the first discusses briefly the nature and significance of globalisation and the role of nation states and of sport in the era; the second section explores literature which relates to the elite sport system; and the

final section focuses on the historical development of Chinese sport.

2.1 Globalisation, Sport and the role of Nation

2.1.1 Globalisation and the role of Nation

As the major feature of the contemporary world, globalisation has been studied and explained by different schools in their own area respectively (Dicken 1998; Omae 1990; Omae 1995; Robertson 1992; Hay 2000; Hay 2004). Globalisation, especially in cultural terms, has been accompanied by a trend of homogenisation, which is merely “challenged only periodically by pockets of resistance” (Bairner, 2001, p.9). However, the danger of overstating homogeneity and integration has also been highlighted by many academics (Featherstone 1990; Pieterse 1995; Waters 1995; Bairner 2001). For example, it is stated by Robertson (1992, p.18) that globalisation is “the form in terms of which the world becomes ‘united’ but by no means integrated”. Appaduarai (1990, p.125) also argues that “the central problem of today’s globalisation is the tension between cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation”. Maguire (1999, p.93) also sees globalisation, especially in cultural terms, as a two-way communication, which can be understood not only “in terms of attempts by which established groups seek to control and regulate the access to global flows, [but] also in terms of how indigenous people both resist these processes and recycle their own cultural products.”

The influence of this trend on the roles of Nation States has been viewed from different perspectives. Some writers argue for the notion of a 'border-less world' and 'the end of geography' the end of the nation state (Omae 1990; Omae 1995; O'Brien 1992). However, others maintains that the role of Nation States remains significant and argue for an increase of government control and for local government's ability to mediate the impact of globalisation (Hirst & Thompson 1998; Rodrik 1997; Robertson 1992; Dicken 1998; Appadurai 1990; Weiss 2003; Garrett 1998; Hay 2004). The interaction between local and global society has been characterised as 'glocalisation', i.e. "the particularization of universalism and the universalization of particularism" (Robertson 1992, p.135) and a reduction in the contrasts among societies in a process with increasing varieties (Maguire 1999).

In line with the advocacy of the significance of the role of Nation State, the importance of local stakeholders' interpretation of globalisation in relation to national sport policy change has been argued and examined (Henry, Amara, et al. 2007; Amara & Henry 2007; Houlihan 2009; Hay 2004). For example, in their study of the development of professional football in Algeria, i.e. a modern phenomenon in an ex-colonial context, Amara & Henry (2007) examine the influence of different local interpretations of globalisation on decision-making at various levels, such as national policy, and professional league and club management. From this perspective, our research of the development of Chinese elite sport after hosting the Beijing Games could also be regarded as a study of the influence of the interaction

between the interpretation of the Beijing Games, representing a global phenomenon, and local ideology on Chinese elite sport. This is to say that, on the one hand, during its bidding and staging the 2008 Olympic, China, to a degree, accepted and complied with global norms and practices related to this international phenomenon (Hu 2008b; Brownell 2008; Liu 2007). On the other hand, China not only maintained its characteristics in the close interaction with the global community during its bidding and preparation of the Beijing Games, but also attempted to establish and convey its image through this global event, which is interpreted in Chinese context as both “opportunities and challenges” (P. Liu 2009a; Li 2009; Song 2009; Hu 2008c, p.1).

2.1.2 Globalisation and the role of sport

Considerable research has focused specifically on the role of sport in the globalisation era, to identify “ways in which ... sport[s] ... have been either, or both, a reflection of such [globalisation] tendencies or a reaction to globalising phenomena”(Henry, 2007, p. 6; Houlihan, 2009; Klein, 1991; Maguire, 1999; Miller, Lawrence, Mckay, & Rowe, 2001). We can see that sport works both as a medium, through which globalisation permeates into local societies, and an arena in which nation states establish their own identity and value in order to respond to (or resist) globalising trends and pressures.

Elias and Dunning (1993) indicate that the establishment and diffusion of modern sport has been accompanied by the process of modernisation, which is influenced by

the structure of British life and its colonial past practices. However it is also recognised as a consequence, or a symbol, of the local acceptance of this typical, British, cultural flow (Elias & Dunning 1993; Huizinga 1970; Houlihan 1994). Such trends in sport have also been reinforced by globalisation, and have modified sport culture into a globalised phenomenon, which is closely intertwined with other globalisation processes (Wagner 1990; Jarvie & Maguire 1994)

Meanwhile, sport, more precisely modern sport, also works as a medium in the process of globalisation. Wagner (1990, p.400) argues modern sport in the globalisation era leads to homogenisation as a long-term trend. He claims that it results in, for example, “a blending and a melding together of ... American aspects, European approaches, and traditional sports among them”. Such globalising trends in relation to sport have been examined in a number of aspects, such as the manufacture of sport goods (Andreff & Andreff 2009; Jackson et al. 2008), the free movement of labour (KPC Exall 2007; Tainsky & Winfree 2010; Wallerstein 2004; Kidd 1981), and the growth of the international sport media network (Leonard 2009; Ruddock et al. 2010; H. Li 2007; Rowe & Gilmour 2010) and so forth.

Sport, it is thus argued, has become one of the most powerful cultural transfer mechanisms carrying the sociocultural code of the sender (Galtung 1991). It, on the one hand, privileges the [sport] culture of the West (Galtung 1991); while on the other hand, it “marginalises or destroys indigenous movement cultures, and as

cultural imperialism swept the globe, sports played their part in westernising the landscapes of the colonies” (Bale 1994, p.8). Of course, this globalising trend also, sometimes, works in a reverse fashion, favouring the peripheral or semi-peripheral states that are in a disadvantaged position in the ‘Western-ruled’ system (Maguire 1999). Examples can be drawn from the dominance of Jamaican sprinters, Chinese table tennis, as well as Japanese baseball. However, these ‘exceptions’ are still successes within a Western-dominated structure of the world sport system, which “entails a shift from ethnic or national cultures to “supranational’ forms, based upon either the culture of a ‘superpower’ or of ‘cosmopolitan’ communication and migrant networks” (*ibid*, p.88).

Nonetheless, the tendency of global homogenisation considerably decreases at local level, from the economic to the cultural and political domain (Bairner 2001). It is thus emphasised that the ability of ‘locals’ to reshape, resist, or simply ignore, the global trend through employing sport to “resist or, at the very least, to domesticate globalising impulses” must not be underestimated (Cvetkovich & Kellner 1997; Andrews 1997; Bairner 2001, p.164). This function of sport, especially of elite sport, has been associated with, and embodied within, the procedure of establishing national collective identity, in which members of the nation are united in highly emotional circumstances with different manifestation of nationalism (Hargreaves 1986; Maguire 1999; Bairner 2001). Sport is thus seen as “the most popular form of nationalist behaviour” (Kellas 1991, p.1991), and “the imagined community or nation

[has] become more real on the terraces or sporting track” (Jarvie 1993, p.75). For example, a number of studies have examined the utilisation of sport by sub-nation-state entities for the establishment of national identities and for the expression of alternative visions of the nation (Cha, 2009; Hwang & Chiu, 2010; Merkel, 2008; Stevenson & Alaug, 2008). In other words, in the era of globalisation, elite sport provides a transnational platform, on which the sport *per se* is divergently interpreted and utilised by stakeholders, such as, nation states.

From this perspective, our research target, the post-2008 development of Chinese elite sport, can be seen as an outcome of the local interpretation of a global phenomenon in terms of the power structure at local level. This local interpretation is empowered and constrained by the local institutional structure, cultural tradition and political ideology, which, at the same time, jointly respond to the global context (Xiong 2002; Ma 2005; Cha 2009). In the case of the interaction between China and the international Olympic movement, the local response from Chinese society is partial cooperation with the international Olympic movement. However China does not totally comply with the IOC (Kamm 2008; Bao 2008; Ma 2005; Xiong 2002). This is evidenced in, for example, the emphasis on the communist ideology and national interests during its interaction with the IOC (P. Liu 2007; P. Liu 2008; Ma, 2005; Xiong, 2002). From another perspective, it is also reflected in the criticisms from the global community of the communist regime before the 2008 Games (Kamm 2008; Richardson 2008; Kine 2008; Bao 2008).

2.2 The Convergent National Elite Sport Policy

Given the recognition of its salience in economic, political and cultural domains, elite sport has been prioritised in the national sport governance agenda across different countries for similar motivations (Houlihan & Green 2008; Shibli et al. 2007; Wang & Yang 2011; Cha 2009; De Bosscher et al. 2007; McNeill et al. 2003; Whitson & Macintosh 1988). Such cross-national emphasis on elite sport development also leads to a consistent emphasis on the Olympic Games, since the Olympics are generally recognised by many countries as one of the most significant opportunities for achieving political objectives (De Bosscher et al. 2007; Cha 2009; Wang 2014; Hill 1992; Hoberman 1986).

Besides this similar prioritisation of elite sport, there is also a convergence in the elite sport policies and elite athletes development systems (De Bosscher et al. 2007; Houlihan & Green 2008; Oakley & Green 2001). Oakley and Green (2001, p. 91) suggest that there are “common approaches to the problem of enhancing elite sport rather than responses to the social, political and economic elements in each country”, which is “a growing trend towards a homogeneous model of elite sport development”.

The convergence in elite sport policy is closely associated with the aim to pursue excellence or regain glory in the international arena. For example, the PRC’s poor performance in the 1988 Seoul Olympics is recognised as the trigger for the deep

structural reform of the Chinese Sport system, symbolised by the publication of *The SPCSC's Opinion on Deepening the Reform of Sport System* (SPCSC 1993d) in the year China lost its first bid for the Olympics (Wu 1999; Zhang 2009; Xiong et al. 2008; Xu 2008; Lu 1994; Li et al. 2003). The establishment of Australia's 'gold medal factory', the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), in 1981 is also closely related to Australia's poor performance at the 1976 Montreal Games (Magdalinski 2000). In addition, the opportunity of hosting international events, which normally leads to a growth in the need for excellent performance, also results in elite-sport-privileging policy changes and funding allocations, and leads to increasing pressure on elite sport to succeed. Researchers have focused on the examples of staging the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics (Macintosh 1996), the Sydney Games (Green 2007) and the gigantic amount of money China invested in elite sport after winning the Olympic bid in 2001 (Fan et al. 2005).

This convergent trend of elite sport policies in different countries also leads to similar conflicts between elite sport and other issues, such as the relationship between elite sport and mass sport. On the one hand, there is an increase in the understanding of the importance of mass sport, which, for example, is driven by health issues, such as obesity (Wang & Theodoraki 2007; Hanson et al. 2001; Jackson et al. 2005), as well as by the social equity and integration issues (Henry, Amara, et al. 2007; Henry et al. 2004; Zhang et al. 2008). On the other hand, there is a considerable neglect of the imbalance between the support for elite sport to succeed in

international events, and provision for sport and recreation opportunities for the general population (Muller et al. 2008; Green 2007; Wu 1999; Xiong et al. 2008). Green (2007) indicates that this imbalance is the consequence of increasing emphasis on, and privileging of, elite sport, which normally leads to the neglect of mass sport.

In the case of Chinese sport, Wu (1999, p.13) points out that the initial arguments against the priority given to elite sport were made from a Communist point of view at the very beginning of PRC. Elite sport was recognised as only for the elite athletes and thus represented 'capitalist champion-ism'. The balance between mass participation and elite sport had been carefully maintained until 1979, when the requirement of "rapidly climbing to the summit of competitive sport" was promoted in the 1978 National Sport Working Conference (Gu 1997; Miao et al. 2012). While based on the welfare state ideology and pre-eminence of social democracy, the GB Sports Council's Sport for All programme was started in 1972, which directed government funding at wider social objectives and subsequently became 'sport for the disadvantaged' and 'sport for inner city youth'. It is noted that "there was little discernible tension between the interests of the elite and of the mass, as there was a consensus . . . that an increase in facilities was the first priority" (Green 2007, p.936). However, from the early 1980s, elite level sport became the focus of government funding. Later, with the publication of *Sport: Raising the Game* in 1995 and *A Sporting Future for All* in 2000, central government shifted its priority away from sport development (Green 2004). Thus, while elite sport gains most of the attention and

funding, mass sport has become marginalised in the domestic sport policies in most countries⁵ (Armstrong & Giulianotti 1997; Whitson & Macintosh 1988; Green 2007; Australian Sports Commission 2011).

Other problems caused by this exclusive emphasis on elite sport has also been addressed by academics. These include, the impact on social belief systems, and the tension between the individual development needs of athletes and collective values of the country; the tension between professionalised rational-bureaucratic models of management and the voluntaristic and more sectional/political models of governance; and the tension between national objectives, regional interests and the requirements of the business sector (Green & Houlihan 2005; Green 2007; Yu & Zhang 2006; Stambulova et al. 2007; Kristiansen & Roberts 2009; Wylleman et al. 2004; Tan & Bairner 2011).

Elite sport development, for which similar approaches are employed in different

⁵ For example, according to the grant and funding report of Australian Sports Commission (2010/11), the total funding to High Performance sport was over A\$52.6 million, while the amount to Sport Participation was A\$6.0 million which is just over 11.4% of the funding to high performance. In athletics, the most funded Olympic sport in Australia, the ratio between high performance and participation is about 23.5:1 (A\$ 4,024,000 for high performance and A\$ 171,400 for participation). Within the area of High Performance sport, the top three Olympic sports (Athletics, Swimming and Rowing) receive A\$12.1 million of funding, while the top three non-Olympic sports (Baseball, Softball and Netball) collect A\$3.7 million from the ASC, which is still A\$0.4 million more than the funding of A\$ 3.3 million to Paralympics sports as a whole (Australian Sports Commission, 2011).

countries, remains the dominant feature of sport policy in many national contexts. This convergent trend of elite sport policy is generally influenced by the model that was initiated and proven to be effective in the USSR and Eastern bloc countries and subsequently adapted by Australia then more widely employed by other Western countries (Oakley & Green 2001; Green & Houlihan 2005; De Bosscher et al. 2007; Bosscher 2010)

A number of studies have focused on the convergence or similarity of policies, which lead to success in international competition. In his review of sport policy in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, Green (2007) identifies four themes in the changes of sport policy priorities towards elite athletes, which are a) an increasing central/federal government intervention in the sport policy sector, b) discursive construction of policy discourse around the language of rational/technocratic processes, c) governments' endurance of debates on the conflicts between mass participation and elite sport development, and d) "a growing realization by all three governments that, while grassroots participation rates remain persistently low, political aspirations to utilize sport... to achieve health benefits will remain problematic (*ibid*, p.941)".

There are also studies focusing on meso-level factors affecting the success rate for an elite sport development programme, which are arguably more readily controllable for Sport authorities. As shown in Table 2.1, Oakley and Green (2001) provide 10

factors which can enhance elite sport performance. Green and Houlihan (2005) identify four principal areas of elite sport development. It is worth noting that a remarkable effort has been made by De Bosscher *et al.* (2007) to provide a meso-level framework of SPLISS (Sport Policy Factors leading to International Sporting Success) based on international comparison with 9 pillars as the benchmarks of elite sport policy factors, among which funding and coaching are regarded as key drivers of an effective system.

However, it is still worth reminding ourselves of the danger of overstating the trend of homogeneity and integration. For example, even though different governments with various ideologies employ convergent elite sport policies, State-organised doping, for example by East Germany, still constitutes a key difference (Braun 2007; Kalinski 2003; Spitzer 2005). In their review of elite sport systems of nine countries, Houlihan and Green (2008) conclude that though there is an increase in the similarities among elite sport policies employed by eight nations, except the USA, variations in the rationalisation, implementation, and other common policy features are still significant. In our research on Chinese elite sport, which is influenced by the system of the USSR, the Chinese characters are not only reflected in the political narrative in, and the construction of, the system, but also the local interpretation of the Olympic Games, i.e. the political task of Chinese elite sport. From this aspect, our research aims to provide a perspective to understand the Chinese characteristic of this elite sport system *per se* that was exported from the USSR and was subsequently

modified throughout the development of the Chinese community under the communist regime, as well as the interpretation of and the less-tangible power structure of Chinese elite sport.

Factors	Oakley and Green	Green and Houlihan	SPLISS
CONTEXTUAL	An excellent culture support	Support for 'fulltime' athlete	Financial support
	Appropriate funding		Participation in sport
			Scientific research
PROCESSUAL	Clear understanding of the role of different agencies		Talent identification and development system
	Simplicity of administration		Athletic and post career support
	Effective system for monitoring athlete progress		Integrated approach to policy development
	Talent identification and targeting of resources		Coaching provision and coach development
	Comprehensive planning system for each sport		
	Lifestyle support		
SPECIFIC	Well structured competitive programmes	A hierarchy of competition opportunities centred on preparation for international events	International Competition
	Well developed specific facilities	Elite facility development	Training facilities
		The Provision of coaching sports science and sports medicine support services	

Source: Oakley and Green (2001), Green and Houlihan (2005), De Bosscher (2007), Houlihan (2008)

2.3 Chinese sport before 1993

The phrase 'exceptional' which Jacques Rogue, President of the IOC, stated at the closing ceremony of the Beijing Olympics has been officially interpreted by Xinhua News Agency into the Chinese phrase of 'Wuyu Lunbi' (Xinhua News Agency 2008). However, if translated literally, the Chinese version of Rogue's appraisal means incomparable or unparalleled. Obviously, there are differences between the denotation of *exceptional* and of *incomparable*, which could hardly be understood by those who have limited knowledge of English, for instance, a great number of Chinese people, understand '*exceptional*' as embracing a neutral adjective meaning 'unusual; not typical' besides its positive denotation of 'unusually good; outstanding' (Paperback Oxford English Dictionary 2006). The positive meaning is 'automatically' preferred and selected by the media.

It would be inappropriate to have a full discussion on the connotation of the ignorance of 'being different' in the domestic propaganda of China. However, we would like to provide a brief history of Chinese sport as an exploration of the uniqueness of Chinese sport and an introduction to the extent to which the Olympic movement in China is unique.

2.3.1 Background information of Chinese society and sports

2.3.1.1 'Tiyu' and sport in Ancient China

'Tiyu'⁶, the Chinese word for sport, is made up by two separate characters. The first means 'body', while the second stands for 'cultivation' and 'education' (Oxford FLTRP English - Chinese 2010). Even though, technically, it had existed in the premodern Chinese language system, traditional meanings were different from the modern denotation, which was imported from Japan in the 1880s and implied an emphasis on hygiene and health rather than physical exercise. Given this modern meaning was introduced in the 'century of humiliation' of China, the altered denotation of 'Tiyu' has introduced new connotations in the Chinese context, most of which are in nationalist and patriotic terms (Liu 2003; Wu 1999; Xu 2008).

Physical fitness had been stressed by social elites and realized by common people in the era of Confucius and Mencius, whilst ancient forerunners of some modern sports had appeared for a period of time in Chinese history (for more examples see Brownell, 2008; X. Zhou & Xu, 1984). However, compared to the historical accentuation of the mental and intellectual superiority of Chinese culture, neither 'Tiyu' had played an important part in Chinese culture and society nor been given

⁶ *Tiyu*, is one of the Chinese phrases for sport, which, however, embraces a number of further meanings, such as physical activities, physical education, etc. For further elaboration of this term, please refer to the *Glossary of terms*.

equal emphasis until the 1880s. For example, the statement by Mencius, “those who work with their brain rule; those who work with their brawn are ruled”⁷ (translated into English and cited by Brownell, 2008), has encouraged Chinese people to look down on physical education, even though the Mencius also stressed the significance of physical exercise. It is stated by Giles (1911, p.508, cited by Brownell, 2008, p.30) that “many sports were once common in China which have long since passed out of the national life, and exist only in the record of books.” These included horn butting, boxing, wrestling, football, and polo.

Since the Song dynasty (960-1279), with its emphasis on neo-Confucianism and the institutionalization of civil service examination (Zhang 2006), Chinese intellectuals had devoted their lives to reading the works of Confucius and other leading intellectuals. The famous poem from Zhao Heng (968-1022), the third emperor of Song dynasty, represents a good example and has remained influential in Chinese society to this day. It is composed thus

*There is no need to worry about anything, as in books, there are wealth, fame, beauties,
and other things; If you want wishes to come true, work hard in your study room.*

Cited by Zhang, 2006, translated by the researcher

Accordingly, for the following 1000 years, physical activity was down played and

⁷ Laoxinzhe zhi ren, laolizhe zhiyu ren

was regarded as an “ungentlemanly” activity from which Chinese men, especially those who were preoccupied with exam preparations, should refrain. As a popular saying, which is still in use today, expresses it, “if you could have or do everything, there is nothing that can come before studying⁸”, or “a decent man should not join the army, quality steel should not be made into nails⁹”. For this 1000-year period, a pale face from living indoor in order to study had been a true complement of, and a perfect portrait for the ideal Chinese gentlemen (Liu 2003).

A story has been told and cited in a number of western studies of Chinese sport, which indicates the mythical status of sport in Chinese society at the beginning of the 20th century is reproduced here:

At the end of the Qing dynasty, in the English consulate in Tianjing, there was a consul who once invited the highest official in the Tianjin administration – the Daotai – to dinner. After the meal, the consul wanted to play tennis to show his guest. This Daotai had never in his life seen tennis, and he was very curious, responding with enthusiasm. It happened to be a time of scorching hot weather, and although the players were wearing shorts and singlets, they were still streaming with sweat. After the demonstration, the consul asked his guest: “How do you think I played?” This Daotai shook his thumb back and forth and said: “Good! Good! Good! It’s a pity that you worked so hard; you are so tired that your whole body is covered with sweat. It would be much better if you could hire a man to play in your place.”

⁸ Wanban jie xiapin, weiyou dushu gao

⁹ Haonan bu dangbing, haotie bu dading

Z. Wang, 1987, p. 15, translated by Brownell, 2008

Xu (2008) claims that not only the civil service examination systems, but also the moral rules in China have prevented the Chinese from considering a robust body as a necessary part of a cultured gentleman. He indicates that the long believed norm of “He Wei Gui” (harmony and peace are most precious), and the adage that “Junzi Dongshou Budong Kou” (the gentleman uses words, not fists, to settle disputes) both perfectly reflect the ideal social behaviour of Chinese.

While Chinese men had concentrated on Confucian ideologies and classics, Chinese women had experienced the physical humiliation of foot-binding till the beginning of the 20th century, which had lasted even longer than the civil service examination (Ko 2005). Foot-binding also started in the Song dynasty (AD 960-1279). In the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), nearly all Han Chinese female had their feet bound, and consequently their feet bones were broken from the age of 4 or 5 years. Ko (2005) states that most adult women had bound feet shorter than 10 cm, and were therefore physical disabled. It is believed that one of the reasons for feet-binding was to create physical disability by limiting their walk speed and range. As Xu (2008) states the feminized Chinese male elites indirectly forced or preferred Chinese women to become ‘hyper-feminine’.

2.3.1.2 Social Darwinism, Nationalism and sport in China before 1949

When introducing Western sport into China at the turning point of the 20th century, more precisely 1895, [as Xu (2008) argues], China was at one of the most crucial moments in its history, traumatised by its loss in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). With the humiliation of the Treaty of Maguan (also known in Japanese as the Shimonoseki Treaty) most Chinese elites finally understood that, only by converting the traditional 'empire' into a modern state, and joining the Western-dominated world order would China have any chance of survival and of rebuilding its former glory (Cui et al. 2008).

Liang Qichao (1873-1929), one of the leaders of the Constitutional Reform Movement of 1898, dismissed traditional sport and urged the cultivating of solidarity, moral strength, and a warlike spirit in the Chinese people. He claims "to be civilized, citizens need a warlike spirit that serves as the essence of a nation. Without this warlike spirit, a nation cannot stand"(Liang 1936, p.706). To differ Western sport from the traditional physical activities, terms, such as '*Xin Tiyu*' (new sport) and '*Yang*' or '*Xiyang Tiyu*' (foreign sport), were employed, which emphasised the connotation of breaking away from the imperial and humiliating past (Brownell, 2008).

The term, "Dongya Bingfu" (the sick man of East Asian), was firstly used by Yan Fu (1854-1921) and subsequently applied by Japan and the West (Brownell, 2008; Xu,

2008) to portray Chinese people. The term was taken to heart by the Chinese, as a label of humiliation throughout the 20th century. Yan Fu wrote that:

A nation is similar to a body. It is well known that restful life makes the body feeble, while exercise makes it strong. However, if one wants instantaneously to renovate the sick body into a healthy one, a man is bound to overdo it, which will lead him to his death. Does present China look like a sick man?

Yan, 1895, cited by S. Wang, 1986, p. 13

Social Darwinism was thus introduced into China and adopted by numbers of Chinese elites to transfer the old empire into a modern nation-state (Brownell, 2008). Brownell (2008) concludes two links between Social Darwinism and the development of Western sport in China: first it forced the Chinese to reject their absence of competitiveness, seeing this a cause of national weakness; secondly, thanks to a translation by Yan Fu, the Chinese started to accept Herbert Spencer's three types of energy necessary for social survival: physical, intellectual, and moral.

As a supporter of social Darwinism, Yan Fu was anxious to cultivate "people's physical strength", not just for individuals, but also for the nation. He and other leaders of the Constitutional Reform Movement of 1898 advocated PE for women, advocating healthy women would produce strong children. He opposed foot binding and early marriage, believing that sexual excess at a young age weakened the seed and led to the degeneration of descendant (Pusey 1983; Zhang & Qu 2008).

The transformation of body culture had a close relationship with the salvation of China. It was believed by many that Physical education was the only solution to the crisis of the country. In his famous work, *Quan Xue Pian* [Encourage to learning], Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909), the former grand councillor of state (1907-1909), argued that the renaissance of China must rely on “Wugong”, i.e. Western-style exercise and military training (Zhang 1898, p.150). Though coming from a different political perspective, Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), the founding father of the Republic of China, claimed that “today we advocate physical exercise because it is crucial for us to strengthen our race and protect our nation ... if we want to make our country strong, we must first make sure our people have strong bodies” (Gu 1997, p.204). In addition, Cai Yuanpei, the first Minister of Education in the Republic of China, argued more explicitly “national strength is based on citizens. The people’s strength is decided by their physical strength. The physical strength comes from their warlike sprite” (Yuan 2011, p.57).

In his first published article, *Tiyu Zhi Yanjiu* (The Study on Tiyu), Mao Zedong (1917, p.7) clearly demonstrates his view on sport that “It is absolutely right to say that one must build a strong body if s/he wants to cultivate inner strength....physical education or exercise ... should be the number one priority.” He also criticised the lack of exercise in the education system as the scholars had no personal experience of exercise, felt no need for it, and therefore had no interest in it.

Brownell (2008) indicates that sport also worked as a social leveller in the Chinese society in the early 20th century, managing to reduce the differences not only between social classes but also between genders. Eugene Barnett, director of the Hangzhou YMCA, wrote in his diary that “the spectacle of mandarins, department chiefs, and clerks, tearing in scanty attire after a basket or volley ball over the yamen¹⁰ law[sic], persuades me that Old China is passing away” (Barnett & Lutz 1990, p.89, cited by Brownell, 2008, p.58). Furthermore, with some records of the competition between female athletes in the sixth National Games, Barnett also portrays some new physical activities in Chinese women’s life, who did not bind their feet anymore (*ibid*).

With the permeation of new body culture and emphasis on physical education, the first National Games took place in Nanjing in 1910, in which the Nationalist government stated that “China is living under multiple threats from abroad; it will have trouble surviving as a nation if most of its citizens don’t have war-like spirit” (Wang 1987, p.20). Four years later, spectators were invited to the second National Games, which were held in the Temple of Heaven in Beijing. This two-day event successfully attracted over 20,000 spectators, who observed the progress the country had made in sports and “shown their appreciation and admiration for the war-like

¹⁰ Yamen is the name of any local bureaucrat's, or mandarin's, office and residence during the period of the Chinese Empire. The term has been widely used in China for centuries, but appeared in English during the Qing Dynasty

spirit [of competitors]" (*idib*, p.140).

Furthermore, this war-like spirit was also portrayed in media coverage of international events. It is noted in a report of the 1921 Far Eastern Championship Games (also known as Far Eastern Games) that "the spirit of struggle in athletics is the same as in war. If one is defeated in war, territory is lost. If one is defeated in athletics, reputation is lost. And of territory and reputation, no one yet knows which is more important... We need to be able to perform in athletics before we can talk of war. A nation needs to be able to fight before it can talk of peace. Would peace begin with athletics" (Morris, 2004, p. 96).

The YMCA made a remarkable contribution to the introduction of modern sport into China. From 1899 till 1922, forty branches of YMCA were operating across China, promoting western sport to its Chinese members (Xu, 2008). The 1910 National Games was under the YMCA's leadership. When the far Eastern games took place in Japan in 1923, J.H. Gray, the director of the YMCA's PE department, was the leader of China's team and gave a speech at the games on behalf of China.

As stated above, since the original point at which modern sport was introduced to China, this Western phenomenon has been given more political significance and connotation than amusement and play in Chinese context. It was embraced in the debates about the nature of the Chinese nation and nationalism, and was portrayed as a crucial element closely associated with the future and the international status of

the nation.

2.3.1.3 *The Olympics and Old China*

Like its common pattern at the beginning of the 20th century, the YMCA systematically introduced the modern Olympics to its Chinese audience. On 24 October 1907, Zhang Boling, as the first Chinese national who seriously promoted the Olympic movement in the country, expressed the hope of taking part in the Olympics in his speech on the Olympics and China as well as the imminent London Games (Wu, 1999). One year later, an article was published in *Tientsing Young men* bringing up three questions, which have become the cornerstone of the Chinese Olympic Dream. These questions, which take more than a century to be fully answered, were a) When could China be able to send a winning athlete to the Olympic Games? b) When could China be able to send a winning team to the Olympic Games? c) When could China be able to host an Olympic Game? (Xu 2008; Yi 2008).

Xu (2008) points out that though China was prepared to take part in the 1916 Berlin Games, its Olympics debut was delayed until the 1932 Los Angeles Games. In order to defeat Japan's conspiracy to legitimise the status of its Chinese colony as an independent state through sending two athletes to the 1932 Games, China's official sport body decided to send the two athletes to the Games in China's name. However, only Liu managed to take his ship from Shanghai, as the other athlete, Yu, was

arrested by the Japanese to prevent him from representing China in the Games (Yi, 2008). Accompanied by his Coach, Liu Changchun, “the lone representative of four hundred million people” (LAOOC, 1932, cited by Xu, 2008, p.42) left for Los Angeles on 8 July with some sponsorship and a national flag. He arrived on 29 July, which was just one day before the opening ceremony. Despite winning nothing in his races, Liu completed his historical mission, the most important aspect of which was to signal the beginning of a new era of Chinese and Olympic history (Xu 2008; Yuan 2008).

Four years later, the Nationalist government successfully utilised the 1936 Berlin Olympics to enhance its international engagement through sport. Chiang Kai-shek’s government not only funded the entire cost of the Chinese delegation, in which there were 65 athletes, but also sent a 42-member study group to study sports in Europe. Even though the Chinese team failed to win any medals and was harshly criticised for losing to Japan in basketball, it is remarked by Shen Siliang that “the achievement of international recognition alone is worth millions to us ... I believe [the athletes] have accomplished more for China than several ambassadors could have achieved in years” (Morris, 2004, p. 176).

Before the significant regime change in 1949, the Nationalist government sent its third, also the last, delegation to the 1948 London Games (Hua 1993). Though winning no medals in these three Olympics, Chinese athletes had completed, to a

certain extent, the original mission of Western sport in the China context, “as an avenue to national renewal ... and a means to achieve their desire to be recognized as a respected power” (Xu, 2008,p.27). Brownell (2008, p.62) concludes that:

Sports, like the nation-state, arrived in China with the appearance of being an “empty form” governed by (seemingly) universal principles like democracy and science.

Chinese people embraced modern sports, as they did the form of the nation, because of their desire to take their place on the global stage of modernity.

2.3.2 Tiyu, the Olympics and the People’s Republic of China before the Policy of ‘Opening-up’

2.3.2.1 The new China and the political connotation of elite sport

The political connotation of Western sport in Chinese society changed little after the People’s Republic of China (hereafter, the PRC) was formally established on 1st October 1949 (Wu, 1999). Wu (1999, p.11) notes that “though there have been great endeavours by the democratic revolutionists, the requirements of improving the national physique, rebuilding our image as well as national dignity are far from complete. It is the social legacy, as well as the historical mission of the PRC” .

With its communist ideology and neo-democratic theory, the PRC government claimed to establish a ‘neo-democratic sport’. Feng¹¹, the then-Secretary of the

¹¹ Feng Wenbin, then-Secretary of the Chinese New Democracy Youth League, was nominated as the chief of the preparatory committee of the All-China Sports Federation.

Chinese New Democracy Youth League and the chief of the preparatory committee of All-China Sports Federation, employed a number of terms that were consistent to the political climate in the new-born communist regime in his specification of the characteristic of the 'neo-democratic sport'. He stated this 'neo-democratic sport' is "united with progressive sports of other countries, as a part of new sport of the world," and is "combined with political learning. ... Generally, (we should) make it gradually belong to all the people, permeate it among all the people" (Feng 1950, p.8, cited by Wu, 1999, p.3).

Consistent with the 'war-like spirit' that was linked with Western sport by the reformists, the PRC government also accentuated the militarist spirit and 'protection of the country'. This emphasis is evidenced in institutional terms, as in the establishment of the Central National Defence Sports Club on 4 May 1954; as well as in discursive terms, such as the policy statement that *Tiyu* should "serve production and national defence" (The Central Committee of the CPC 1958). Sports with military usefulness, such as swimming, shooting, radios, and mountain climbing, were also officially promoted, for example, in this document published in 1958.

It is worth noting that education, more precisely physical education, has been a significant element of *Tiyu*. *The Interim Regulation and Standard of the Sport System "Preparing for Labour and Defence of the Country"* (SPCSC, 1954) published by the State Physical Cultural and Sport Commission (hereafter, the SPCSC) was regarded as

“the basement of the education system of the PRC”. In 1956, after consulting the USSR guidelines for a 10-year physical education curriculum, the Ministry of Education published the first Guidelines for PE for Primary Schools, as well as one for middle schools. In the higher education sector, China also learnt from the USSR establishing a number of specialised sport institutions¹², with theories of Marxism and Leninism, as well as other the modules of political education as compulsory in these sport institutions.

Tiyu in the education system had been emphasised till the *Culture Revolution*¹³. And during this ‘ten years of chaos’, physical education in schools and universities was replaced by military training, academic staff of the sport institutions were sent to rural areas. Though there were some recoveries in the beginning of 1970s, with the political struggle of ‘Fighting Back against the Rightist’s Verdict-Reversal Movement’¹⁴, *Tiyu* in the education system went back to an anarchic situation. The

¹² The first sport institution, East China Sport Institution, was founded on 8 November, 1952. By the end of 1956, there were six major specialised sport institutions in PRC. (Wu, 1999)

¹³ The cultural revolution started in 1966, and ended in 1976. Please see Roerick MacFarquhar & Michael Schoenhals, 2006, *Mao's Last Revolution*.

¹⁴ ‘Fighting Back against the Rightist’s Verdict-Reversal Movement’, also known as ‘Attacking Deng, Fighting Back against the Rightist’s Verdict-Reversal Movement’ is a political campaign starting in 1975 in the Cultural Revolution, which was used by the ‘Gang of Four’ to attack Deng Xiaoping. In January 1975, Deng was re-nominated as the ‘Deputy Prime Minister’ by Mao Zedong, as the

chaos in *Tiyu* and physical education in the education system ended in 1978 when the development of the physical condition of youth was affirmed again as a goal during the National Sport Working Conference (Gu 1997).

Another essential phenomenon which related to sport during the early stage of the PRC was hygiene. It was officially stated, in the report of The Party Group of the *Tiyu Yundong*¹⁵ (sports) Committee's of the People's Central Government on reinforcing the sporting life of people (Party Group of the PCSC of the Central Government of People 1954 cited by Wu 1999, p.502), that "the health condition of

then-Prime Minister Zhou Enlai had terminal bladder cancer and was in hospital at that time and Mao tried to use Deng to balance the power of the 'Gang of Four'. However, some policies of Deng, such as prioritising economic development and investigating problems of the Cultural Revolution, dissatisfied Mao, who regarded the Cultural Revolution as an exploit in his later years. Meanwhile, the 'Gang of Four' kept persuading Mao that Deng was trying to reverse verdicts in the Cultural Revolution. Mao was subsequently convinced. At the meeting on 20th November, 1975, Mao asked Deng to make a public decision of affirming and supporting the Cultural Revolution, which was refused by Deng who was immediately deprived of the responsibility for domestic affairs. On 26th November 1975, Mao defined Deng's behaviour as a 'Verdict-Reversal Movement'. From 25th February, 1976, all of Deng's policies were negated subsequently abolished, and the political attacks and public criticism of Deng started. However, though the attack was initiated by the 'Gang of Four', Deng was still an object of attack after the arrest of the 'Gang of Four' until his return to power in 1977. (For more detail, please see Ye Yonglie, 2009, the Rise and Fall of the Gang of Four; and Roerick MacFarquhar & Michael Schoenhals, 2006, Mao's Last Revolution.

¹⁵ 'Yundong' is another Chinese word that has a more specific (athletic) meaning of sport. Meanwhile, it also often indicates movement, especially political movement.

people is not able to meet the demands of work. In order to improve the situation ... sport is one of the most positive and effective methods." Mao Zedong further pointed out that "*Tiyu* is a crucial issue which is linked to the hygiene of 6 million people" (Liao et al. 2011).

In contrast with the contemporary dominance of elite sport in Chinese sport, there had been little special emphasis on, and significant activity in, elite sport in the PRC until 1979, the year in which the PRC re-joined the IOC. Argued from a communist point of view, elite sport was blamed as serving only minor elite athletes and thus representing 'capitalist champion-ism' (Wu, 1999, p.13).

However, the period from 1952, when the communist regime sent its first Olympic delegation to the Helsinki Games, to 1958, when China officially withdrew its place in the IOC because of the 'two Chinas' issue, provided an exception, in which elite sport had been highly emphasised by the PRC government.

The 1952 Helsinki Games is regarded as a boost to elite sport in China, changing the national sport policy from 'popularisation and routinisation' to 'popularisation with improvement' and putting "the matter of efficient and rapid improvement of athletic level on the agenda" (Wu, 1999, p. 13). On 25th November 1951, the All China Sport Federation (hereafter, the ACSF) organised a 'central sport training course', which later became the National Sports Training Centre of the General Administration of Sport (hereafter, the GAS). The objective of the 'training course'

was to develop elite athletes, and to rapidly increase their skill, in order to win glory for the country in international events. The first 58 members on the course were selected from the national basketball and volleyball championships, and subsequently became the members of the national team. In 1956, ACSF successfully organised national teams in 7 different sports¹⁶ (Lu et al. 2007; Yan 2009).

Though there was fierce debate about the 'improvement' of elite sport, focusing on its 'capitalist tendency', at the beginning of 1956, the year of the Melbourne Games, the SPCSC urged the development of elite sport and emphasised the objective of catching up with the international level. However, on 6 November 1956, ACSF announced that the PRC would withdraw from the Melbourne Games because a delegation from the ROC in Taiwan was also allowed to participate to the Games. Two years later, on 19 August 1958, because of the same 'two Chinas' issue, ACSF (also the Chinese Olympic Committee) officially announced its withdrawal from the IOC¹⁷. The withdrawal was less than half year from the proposal of *'The Outline of China's 10-year Development of Sport'*, in which the SPCSC proposed a leap mainly in

¹⁶ They were the national teams for basketball and volleyball (1951); athletics (1953); table tennis, swimming, badminton (1954); gymnastic (1955).

¹⁷ For the same reason, ACSF also withdrew from FINA (Fédération Internationale de Natation), IAAF (International Association of Athletics Federations), FIBA (International Basketball Federation), IWF (International Weightlifting Federation), ISSF (International Shooting Sport Federation), UCI (Union Cycliste Internationale), and ATTU (Asia Table Tennis Union).

elite sport terms (Xu, 2008).

For the next two decades, from 1959 till 1979, the PRC, which had experienced a number of political campaigns and crises, such as the Great Leap Forward and the Great Famine, and the Cultural Revolution etc., had remained outside of the Olympic movement. Even though elite sport had suffered during this period, some progresses were made in the gaps, for example, from 1963 till 1966. The fundamental training system of 'Juguo Tizhi', three-level training network, which is composed of amateurs sport schools, sport schools (also known as the sport technical school) and elite athletic teams, and the hierarchy of athletic standards was initially established and improved in the 1960s¹⁸. The training theory of 'three requirements and heavy load'¹⁹; 'three fearless and five masteries (mostly at the psychological level)'²⁰ were founded in the same decade. Furthermore, the national competition model of "Practising domestically, fighting consistently with the externals" and development model of "shrinking the battleline, ensuring development points" were also initiated

¹⁸ The initial national hierarchical standard of athletes, coach and referees in China were all officially documented in 1963 (Gu, 1997).

¹⁹ The three requirements and heavy load training theorem was developed in 1960s, it stands for the requirement of hard, strict and practical training, involving heavy load training.

²⁰ 'Three fearless' stands for no fear of harshness, no fear of exhaustion and no fear of difficulty. 'Five mastery' stands for the mastering of mind, physique, skill, training and competition.

(Cui et al. 2008; Gu 1997; Liu 2003). The 2nd National Games was held in 1965, in which 9 world records were broken²¹ (Gu, 1997).

Chaos broke out in elite sport in 1967. Training and competitions were replaced by political struggles, the whole governing system was abolished, and the training and competition scheme collapsed. Sadly, a number of world champions, among them those who returned from foreign countries, committed suicide because of false charges, public criticism and personal abuse. In general, Chinese elite sport was in 'paralysis' till 1971 (Wu, 1999). Though there was slight recovery from 1971, such as the famous 'Ping-Pong diplomacy' in 1971 and the 3rd national games in 1975, the social atmosphere of political struggle was still the dominant feature of the elite sport system. During that period, there were only three events of athletics in which Chinese athletes achieved the Olympic Standard A requirement, and none of them ranked in the world top 10 (Gu, 1997).

After the National Sport Working Conference in 1978, elite sport went back to the track. The role of "carrying out national sports events" and the requirement of "rapidly climbing to the summit of competitive sport" were promoted at the conference. Elite sport soon became the most significant part of *Tiyu* in the PRC. It is officially noted in the Summary of National Sport Working Conference in 1978 that

²¹ There were 2 new world records in weightlifting, 2 in archery, 3 in shooting, 2 in parachuting.

the PRC aims to “become one of the most developed sport nations in 20th century” and “in 1979 and 1980, the national and provincial PCSCs should place extra emphasis on elite sport” (Wu 1999, p.268). It was officially required that all the sports, disciplines and rules of national events had to duplicate what they were in the international events at that time, in order to be successful in the world sport (Gu 1997).

In addition, thanks to the severe political environment beginning in the 1960s, the emphasis on ideological and political education of athletes began to be made explicit and to be highlighted in government documents. Gu (1997) notes that the strengthening of ideological and political education became one of the keynotes emphasised in the 1960 national training conference held by the SPCSC. In practical terms, for example, it was compulsory for athletes and coaches to study the works of Chairman Mao²², and they were required to undertake manual labour in farms factories and military camps for a half to one month every year. There were also personnel who were specially designated for political studies (Cui et al. 2008).

Collective values were overwhelmingly emphasised. Wu (1999, p, 152-153) demonstrates that there were “positive effects” in the political work of athletes; “they were able to prioritise national and collective value, to make individual values

²² There were 10 works of Chairman Mao that was compulsory for athletes and coaches, and more were required for senior officials.

subordinate to collective values, to make partial values subordinate to the unified values, and to ignore their own individual interests.” Other significant elements which were stressed in elite level sport included “calling for collaborative progress”, “fighting against champion-ism and gamesmanship”, as well as “being a good winner and a good loser”, etc. Even after the Cultural Revolution, the political consciousness of communist ideology was still stressed in the elite sport system. Being “‘red and professional’ (both socialist-minded and professionally competent)” was not only a requirement for athletes, but also for all *Tiyu* personnel (SPCSC 1978).

2.3.2.2 *The Institutional Transformation in the PRC*

In the early days of PRC, *Tiyu* had been combined with a number of social issues, and had been consequently governed by different institutions. Before the official establishment of ACSF, it was the Chinese New Democracy Youth League²³ that was in charge of *Tiyu* issues²⁴. It was approved at the first sport (*Tiyu* more precisely) meeting of the PRC on 26 October 1949 that the former Chinese Olympic Committee (hereafter, the COC) and the China National Amateur Athletic Federation, both of which were formed by the Nationalist government, were to be unified and reformed into the ACSF. The ACSF was subsequently founded in June 1952. Ma Xulun,

²³ It changed its name into ‘The Communist Youth League of China’.

²⁴ Feng Wenbin, then-Secretary of the Chinese New Democracy Youth League, was nominated as the chief of the preparatory committee of All-China Sports Federation.

then-Minister of Education, became the first chairman of the ACSF. Like other NGOs, there were a number of important sports figures who lived in the KMT regime area becoming members of the ACSF. For example, Dong Shouyi, the only IOC member who was in Mainland China, was accepted into the ACSF by the then-Premier Minister Zhou Enlai (Hua 1993).

On the 15 November 1952, the Sports Committee of the People's Central Government was established. He Long, a Military leader, was nominated as the Chief Director. The Committee was responsible for the administration of both the ACSF, which was planned to be under the Ministry of Education, and the Central National Defence Sports Club²⁵. Two years later, the Committee changed its name into the SPCSC, and was identified as "the department of the People's Central Government, which was chiefly in charge of *Tiyu*, and was also responsible for leading, coordinating and governing the national *Tiyu* issues." (Wu, 1999, p. 50)

It is claimed by many that the establishment of the SPCSC symbolised the institutionalisation of the tri-partite sport governance system (Wu 1999; Gu 1997;

²⁵ The Central National Defence Sports Club was formed by the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China in 1952. The organisation was similar to the *Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Fleet* of USSR, which was a mass voluntary military education and training organisation. Huang Zhong, the then-Minister of Military Affairs and *Tiyu* of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China was nominated as the chief director of the club. It then changed its name to the People's Defence Sports Association of China in 1956 (Wu, 1999).

Xiong et al. 2008). In parallel with the SPCSC, the elite sport issues in the military system were separately governed by the General Political Department of the Central Military Commission, while the People's Defence Sports Association of China became the organisation of mass defence and sport. The third part of the sport governance system is the social sport system, which was made up of the ASCF, social organisations (such as All China Federation of Trade Unions, The Communist Youth League of China, etc.), and other mass sport organisations (Gu, 1997).

This system was seriously damaged during the Cultural Revolution which started in 1966. Even though the national sport administration system generally went back to work in the aftermath of the nomination of Wang Meng on 8 July, 1971, who was a General of the PRC, as the Chief of the Revolutionary Commission of the SPCSC, there were still fierce political struggles in the system, especially since the 'Gang of Four'²⁶ started 'criticising Lin Biao and Confucius' in *Tiyu* in 1974.

The re-establishment of the sport administration system was prioritised by the PRC

²⁶ 'Gang of Four' included Jiang Qing, Mao's wife; Zhang Chunqiao; Yao Wenyuan; and Wang Honwen. It was a controversial political group in the history of Cultural Revolution. It has been usually portrayed as an anti-revolution group in the official media of China, and the arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976 is regarded as the symbol of the end of the Cultural Revolution. However, some scholars argue that Mao used them as his ideological praetorian guard, to defend the ideals of the Cultural Revolution. See Ye Yonglie, 2009, *The Rise and Fall of the Gang of Four*; and Roderick MacFarquhar & Michael Schoenhals, 2006, *Mao's Last Revolution*.

government as the precondition of the restoration of *Tiyu* from the rubble of the Cultural Revolution. The replacement of Zhuang Zedong²⁷ by Wang Meng, as the secretary and director of the SPCSC in 1977, was regarded as signalling the recovery of the *Tiyu* system (Wu, 1999). After the National Sport Working Conference in 1978, it was understood that “All of the *Tiyu* issues must follow the leadership of the CPC; all of the *Tiyu* regulations and institutional system must be realistically rebuilt; all of the personnel of *Tiyu* must be ‘red and professional’ (both socialist-minded and professionally competent)” (SPCSC 1978). Subsequently, a number of *Tiyu* regulations and institutions were amended and redrawn. By 1979, the sport governance system had fully reinstated.

2.3.2.3 *The Olympics and the ‘Two China’ dilemma*

Political significance and usefulness has been as inherent element in Chinese elite sport discourse. For instance, *Tiyu* is recognised as “an important element of Chinese diplomatic patterns, which has particular effectiveness and advantages” (Song 2009, p.160). It has thus been well implemented in the diplomacy of China to enhance the domestic development of sport, as well as to serve the diplomatic affairs of the CPC and the country (*ibid*, p.160).

²⁷ Zhuang Zedong (born 1942) was a Chinese table tennis player, as well as a well-known political personality during the Cultural Revolution. He became a favourite of Jiang Qing, wife of Mao Zedong and leader of the Cultural Revolution in 1973, and was subsequently named as the secretary and director of the SPCSC. After the downfall of the Gang of Four, Zhuang was jailed in October, 1976.

As noted previously, the PRC was enthusiastic about becoming involved in the Olympic movement in its early days. Less than a month after its official announcement of the sovereignty of the country, the communist regime put the reform of the COC on the political agenda. This is because the 'Taiwan issue'²⁸ was the main problem with which the PRC government was concerned in terms of seeking to retrieve its place in international organisations (Wu, 1999). And, it was evidently particularly important for the newly in power PRC to replace the ROC on the IOC as the legitimate representative of China, in order to declare its sovereignty to the world

The PRC threw its first strike in the bidding for the international legitimacy of its membership of the IOC and of the international Olympic movement on 5th February, 1952. The ACSF mailed the IOC expressing its willingness to take part in the 15th Olympic in Helsinki. More importantly for the PRC government, it was a declaration of its right as the only representative of China, though there was only one of the

²⁸ "Taiwan Issue" refers to the controversy regarding the political status of Taiwan that whether Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu should become unified with the territories now governed by the People's Republic of China (PRC), or should remain as the territory of the Republic of China (ROC) that went to Taiwan from the mainland in 1949 and has maintained its regime there since that date, or whether it should formally declare independence and become the Republic of Taiwan. This is bound up with the question of whether its existence and status as a state ("country") is legitimate and recognized by the international community (see, Sheng Lijun, 2001, *China's Dilemma: The Taiwan Issue*).

three Chinese Olympic committee members who remained in the Mainland²⁹. When the IOC was trying to solve the dilemma, the PRC government wasted no time in replacing its political competitor in international sports federations. During the period of waiting for the IOC's decision, newly formed sport associations in the PRC succeeded in joining a number of international federations, such as the IAAF, FIFA, and FIVB etc. However, the IOC had vacillated in deciding between the 'two Chinas', and was not able to resolve the political standoff until only a few days before the 1952 Games³⁰. Its final decision was to invite athletes from both the PRC and the ROC, the latter being the then-recognised member of IOC (Wu 1999; The Chinese Olympic Committee 2008; Xu 2008; Song 2009).

It was clearly that neither of the two would send their athletes to any Olympic Games if the other regime was also invited. Hence, though the PRC's top leaders gave their agreement to participating in the Games, the PRC delegation was kept in Beijing until they learned that Taiwan had withdrawn from the Games on 24 July, 1952, which was the 6th day of the Helsinki Games. It took the delegation four days

²⁹ The other two, Wang Zhengting and Kong Xiangxi, chose to leave mainland China, when the PRC was founded. Kong lived in the United States after 1949, and Wang spent the rest of his life in Hong Kong. (Xu, 2008)

³⁰ It is recorded in the official webpage of the Chinese Olympic committee that it was on 17 July, 1952 (http://en.olympic.cn/china_oly/china_olympic/2008-11-04/1665784.html); however, Xu (2008) states that it was on 18 July, 1952.

to arrived at Helsinki on 29th July, just one day before the closing ceremony. Even though there was only one swimmer who took part in a preliminary competition and he was unable to go further than the first round, it was still regarded as a victory by the PRC government. Zhou Enlai, the then-PM, told the delegation before they left Beijing that 'it is a victory for China, even if we could do nothing but just fly our flag in the Olympic village.' (Wu, 1999, p.220) Of course, the flag of the ROC was not there in 1952.

The PRC government's progress did not slow down following this initial victory in the Olympic movement. Rong Gaotang, vice president and secretary general of the ACSF, telegraphed the IOC as soon as the PRC delegation left Helsinki, expressing his anger that Taiwan was also invited and urging the IOC to admit the legitimacy of the ACSF as well as to expel the representative from Taiwan (Xu, 2008). Nevertheless, the second round of the *Olympics Game* did not favour the communist side. Though the ACSF was successfully accepted as a member of the Olympic family in 1954, they found out to their surprise that their competitor was also welcomed by the new president, the American Avery Brundage (Wu, 1999).

Though Taiwan chose to withdraw from the 1952 Helsinki Games in order to protest the "unlawful" decision of the IOC, it did not work as hard as the people from Beijing in the 'Chinese civil war' within the Olympic Family. Kong Xiangxi, who was one of the two IOC members who left mainland China, resigned from the IOC in

1955, and the other one, Wang Zhenting sent his resignation three years later (Xu, 2008). The fading out of the voice of Taiwan in the IOC did not provide the PRC any benefits. On the contrary, Beijing's efforts to keep Taiwan away from the Games had been ignored, if not rejected, by Brundage. Hence, when the PRC delegation arrived in Melbourne and found that the Nationalist flag was hanging in the Olympic Village, Beijing decided to emulate what Taiwan had done four years previously in Helsinki (Song, 2009). For the next two years, the PRC gradually obtained a better understanding of the power of the IOC in international sport, as more and more international federations followed Brundage's tactic and recognised its competitor in their organisation. One year after Wang Zhenting's resignation, Dong Shouyi sent a letter to Brundage expressing "indignation" at some "unfriendly and distorting remarks" by the President of the IOC which were seen as "insulting" (Xu, 2008, p.85). The resignation of Dong from the IOC was demanded by Brundage, which he subsequently submitted sending a letter to the American accusing him of adopting an imperialist attitude and anti-Beijing position. On the same day, the PRC terminated its relationship with the IOC, and this was not reinstated until the Nagoya session in 1979. Though Beijing was attempting to express its anger to the IOC, it lost the second round of its *Olympics Game*, however, to the Cold War international relationship rather than to the ROC (the Chinese Olympic Committee, 2008; Xu,2008; Song, 2009).

2.3.3 Emergence of sports reform 1979-1993

Wu (1999) points out that before 1979, Chinese *Tiyu* was administered and operated via administrative orders. However, with the introduction of economic reform in China in the late 1970s, the maladies of this development approach gradually unfolded to the public and politicians.

After restoration from the impact of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese *Tiyu* started its reform in the mid-1980s with a principle of “prioritising elite sport, then leading subsequent general development” (Wu, 1999). The first policy concerning Chinese sport reform, *The SPCSC's Decision on the Reform of Sport System (Draft)* (SPCSC 1986b), was published in 1986. Even though it was named as a policy for sport in general, nine out of ten parts of the document were closely related to elite sport. However, the reinforcement of *Juguo Tizhi* and *Zhuanye* sport system is regarded as the most significant achievement in the implementation of the 1986 policy (Xiong et al. 2008; Yang et al. 2002; Zhang 2009).

Further reform, which focused not just on patching the existing *Juguo Tizhi*, but also on fundamental restructuring of its framework, was thus announced (Wu, 1999). The second reforming policy in Chinese elite sport in macro terms, *The SPCSC's opinion on deepening the reform of the sport system* (SPCSC 1993d), was published in 1993, which is recognised as the start point of our pre-2008 analysis and is investigated later in Chapter 4.

2.3.3.1 *Elite Sport and Institutional reform*

Elite sport successes, which have been accentuated in the Chinese context, immediately became the dominant voice in Chinese sport when the sport administration system had fully recovered from the Cultural Revolution which ended in 1976 (Liu 2003). At the 1978 National Sport Working Conference, “rapidly climbing to the summit of elite sport” was exclusively emphasised and prioritised by the SPCSC, as the under-developed elite sport was regarded as the weak point of the Chinese *Tiyu* (Wu, 1999). A resolution was subsequently passed at the 1980 Conference that “(we) attempt to join the top 10 in the 1980 Olympics medal list, and top 6 in the 1984 Games...(and seek) to completely change the under-development of (Chinese) elite sport in the 1980s” (SPCSC 1981, p.1).

Wu (1999) states that developing elite sport was the mainstream activity of the Chinese *Tiyu* in the 1980s, because firstly, the government was not able to supply an overall development of *Tiyu*; secondly, elite sport became a crucial method for the country to establish national identity, after it re-joined the international community. A number of moves were carried out in the 1980s (Guo, 2009). For example, the SPCSC listed 13 sports as the main targets for development, the national teams for which were trained together throughout the whole year, and special funding, facilities and supplements were also provided. The national three-level training network was also correspondingly refined. The modification of the National Games, matching the National Games sports with the Olympic sports, provides another

good example, though this had a significant negative effect on non-Olympic sports (Gu, 1997).

The reform in the 1980s is interpreted as a move with unclear direction and methods, and is thus viewed in essence as a reinforcement of *Zhuanye sport* and *Juguo Tizhi* (Xiong et al. 2008; Yang et al. 2002; Zhang 2009). However, this superficial reform was recognised as an effective one in the immediate period after its introduction, given the 15 gold medals China won at the 1984 LA Olympics. The accentuation of elite sport was thus approved by the Party whose leadership argued that “we need to concentrate our resources and power on the sports in which we are good, and focus on those (sports) in which we will be able to catch up with the advanced world level” (The Central Committee of the CPC 1984). The financial support to elite sport and investment of infrastructure for its development were also officially required to be included in the national economy and social development plan of all level of governments (The Central Committee of the CPC 1984).

The division of *Tiyu* was consequently emphasised by the SPCSC, which, to a degree, enable it to release the responsibility for developing mass sport. However, the PCSCs at every level still maintained administrative power, since “the operation of all kinds of mass sport groups have to be under the leadership of Sport Administration Departments or competent authorities” (SPCSC, 1986, p.1). These reforms of the functions and responsibility of PCSCs enabled the institutions to

concentrate on elite sport without ceding their governing power (Guo, 2009). As Wu (1999, p. 295) states “the reform ... institutionally supports the development of the national strategy of *Tiyu* development that is ‘focusing on youth sport in mass sport terms, and prioritising the Olympic Games in elite sport terms’.”

The reformed competition system was argued to be a reflection of the ‘refinement of the traditional governance system’ (Zhang, 2009). The national level events, which were segmented into 3 categories, were all recognised as ‘practices and rehearsal’ for the elite athletes, enabling them to “win more medals in international events, consequently completing its mission for the Party and people ”(Wu, 1999, p. 292). The SPCSC was responsible for the National Games and Youth Games, which were all ‘Olympicised’. National Federations were responsible for the national championships and leagues of particular sports, while the national events within particular social sectors, such as the Students Games, were organised by the governing bodies in the social sectors.

However, there were still some suggestions and arguments relating to the reform and the system raised by scholars and politicians. Zhao Yu (2011) argues that most of the problems of Chinese *Tiyu*, such as the conflicts between patriotism and frenzied nationalism, the less-educated athletes who had a miserable life after retirement, and the unscientific training methods, were rooted in the elite-sport-prioritising policy which was the polar opposite of mass sport. He

advocated a complete reform of Chinese *Tiyu*, and argued that over-emphasis on gold medals had corrupted athletes, the sport governing system, and sport *per se*.

Zhao received harsh criticisms, which, however, were silenced by the poor performance in the 1988 Seoul Olympic (Yi, 2008). This sporting disaster is regarded as a turning point from which the Chinese started to rethink the structural problems and consider further reform (Zhang, 2009). In comparison with the overall reform in China, Wu (1995, p.357) points out, the *Tiyu* reform in the 1980s was superficial, ignoring some deep conflicts, especially the “conflicts between the *Tiyu* administration and operation system rooted in the planned-economy and the demand of era”.

After Deng Xiaoping’s second visit to south China in 1992, another round reform of the *Tiyu* system was carried out, which aimed to transmute the traditional structure and system (Wu 1999; Xiong et al. 2008; Yang et al. 2002). It is from this second wave of reform, symbolised by the publication of *The SPCSC’s opinion on deepening the reform of sport system* (SPCSC 1993d), that we start our analysis in chapters which follow.

2.3.3.2 *The PRC and the Olympic Movement 1979-1991*

The PRC re-joined the IOC in 1979, 2 years after the end of the Cultural Revolution, following considerable diplomatic effort (The Chinese Olympic Committee 2004;

Liang 2005; Liu 2003; Cha 2009).

In 1973, one year after being recognised by the UN, the PRC was accepted by the Asian Games Federation³¹ as its member, and then took part in the 1974 Asia Games in Iran (Gu, 1997, Wu, 1999). On 9 April, 1975, the ACSF handed in its application for the membership representing China to the IOC. This was obviously unacceptable to Taiwan, the National Olympic Committee of which was recognised as representative of China at that time. The 'two China' dilemma was once again put on the table in Lausanne.

Before the IOC made any decision, it was Canada who 'invented' the initial form of the resolution that the IOC was to adopt three years later in 1979 (Xu, 2008). The formal diplomatic relationship between Canada and the PRC was established in 1970. Following its acceptance of the one China policy by the PRC government, the Canadian government declared that it would not allow Taiwan's team to compete in the 1976 Montreal Games if the delegation sought to use its officially designated name, flag, or anthem, all of which referred to the 'Republic of China' (Wu, 1999, Xu, 2008).

Needless to say, Beijing was pleased by the action taken by its new friend in North America. However, predictably, neither the IOC nor the US government (who

³¹ It transformed into the Olympic Council of Asia in 1982.

nonetheless duplicated this policy in the 1980 Winter Games) were pleased with it. However, the IOC, which worried about the potential 'political pollution' of the Games, did not sanction a cancellation of the Games to punish the Canadian government (Xu, 2008). This was a consequence of the concern of the financial impact of cancelling the Olympics and of the IOC's understanding of the inevitability of solving the 'two China' quandary. Meanwhile, the United States, which was working on rebuilding its diplomatic relationship with the PRC, also did not want to offend Beijing and thus did not go any further than expressing criticism to Canada (Wu, 1999).

The Canadian government made some concessions right before the Games, on 15th July, which was just two days before the opening ceremony, proposing that it would follow the IOC's Rome formula, which meant the flag and anthem were available to use by the Taiwan delegation, but not its official name (Xu, 2008). The IOC accepted this compromise, which also satisfied the White House, but the Nationalist government in Taiwan chose to withdraw from the Games on 16th July (Brownell, 2008). After the Games, the IOC President Lord Killanin and Vice-President J. A. Samaranch visited China in September 1977 and April 1978 respectively (The Chinese Olympic Committee 2004).

Both the domestic and international political environment considerably changed for the PRC in 1979. On 1st January, 1979, the PRC and the US government normalised

their relations. The US government transferred diplomatic recognition of China from Taipei to Beijing. The news of diplomatic 'ice-breaking' shocked the world as well as the IOC (Zhang 1996, p.132). On the same day, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress promulgated the "Letter to Compatriots in Taiwan," promoting reunification, which in terms of rhetoric was a more peaceful phrase than its former discourse of 'liberating Taiwan'. Subsequently, the COC representatives who were invited to attend the 81st IOC session in Montevideo in April 1979 brought up the new 'Olympic Model' for resolving the 'two China' dilemma that:

There is only one China in the world, and that is the People's Republic of China. Taiwan is part of Chinese territory. Based on this principle, the IOC should recognize only one NOC for China, and that is the Chinese Olympic Committee with its headquarters in Beijing and representing the amateur athletes of the whole country.

The Chinese Olympic Committee agreed that the sports organization in Taiwan might stay in the IOC, on condition that it would not attach "Republic of China" to its name, nor use the appellation of "Taiwan" independently. Nor would it be allowed to use its "national flag" and "national anthem" and anything symbolic of the "Republic of China."

The Chinese Olympic Committee, 2004, p. 1

In mid-October 1979, the PRC was re-admitted by FIFA, and the football organisation in which Taiwan maintained its place by changing the name into the 'Chinese Taipei', as well as its logo, flag and anthem (Song, 2009).

On 25th October, 1979, the IOC Executive Board passed the resolution of the 'two

China's dilemma at a meeting held in Nagoya. The COC was officially admitted as the NOC representing the Olympic Movement in the whole of China using the national flag and national anthem of the PRC, while the Olympic committee in Taiwan, as one of China's local organisations, could only use the name "Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee" with its flag, anthem and emblem different from the original ones pending the IOC's approval (The Chinese Olympic Committee, 2004). The resolution was subsequently passed after a postal vote by all the IOC members, and was announced on 26 November, 1979. Two years later, He Zhenliang was co-opted as the first IOC member in the PRC (Liang 2005). The PRC was finally reinstated in the IOC at the beginning of the 1980s (Brownell, 2008; The Chinese Olympic Committee, 2008).

During the procedure of returning to the IOC, the PRC governments and sport authorities had made a number of domestic institutional and theoretical changes in addition to their diplomatic endeavours. In 1979, the COC became an independent institution from the ACSF (the relationship among the SPCSC, COC and ACSF is analysed in Chapters 4-6), and was then recognised by the IOC as the NOC of China (Yi, 2008). A number of national federations of different sports were also established, which were regarded as another part of the institutional foundation of the Olympic movement in China (Wu, 1999). In addition, some regulations, facilities and timetables were altered mapping onto the Olympic schedule as well.

The Olympic Games, as Cha (2009) argues, have always had political significance for China and Chinese people. For example, the first Olympics in which the PRC competed after its return to the IOC, the 1980 Winter Games in Lake Placid, USA was the Olympic Games hosted in the territory of the arch “evil imperialist”, which, nonetheless, had just announced its recognition of the PRC and its establishment of diplomatic relations with the sole legitimate government of China. By contrast, the first, and only, Summer Games which the PRC boycotted after 1979 was the 1980 Moscow Games hosted by its former big brother (Wu, 1999; Brownell, 2008). 4 years later, Xu Haifeng won the first Olympic gold medal in Chinese history in the Los Angeles Games, which was the first Summer Games China attended after its readmission, as well as the Games boycotted by the most of the socialist countries except China, Romania and Yugoslavia (Yi, 2008). Song (2009, p.173), the Director of the External Affairs Department of the CAS, notes that

... though being under great pressure, because of the national fundamental interests, we decided to attend the 1984 Games. And it was subsequently proved that the decision not only, to a great extent, rescued the Olympic Movement, but also won a diplomatic reputation for the country.

Even though suffering a poor performance in Seoul, China was hugely encouraged by the success of the 1990 Asian Games, which was not only “a victory of the reform and opening up policy”, but also “a diplomatic triumph that remitted the political pressure and convinced foreign countries that China was maintaining its route to reform” (*ibid*, p. 175). Subsequently, with the support from Deng Xiaoping and other

high profile politicians, the COC handed in its bid for the 2000 Olympic Games in the first year of the 1990s. Unfortunately, this bid was rejected in 1993, which is chosen as the start point of our analysis.

Chapter Three Methodology

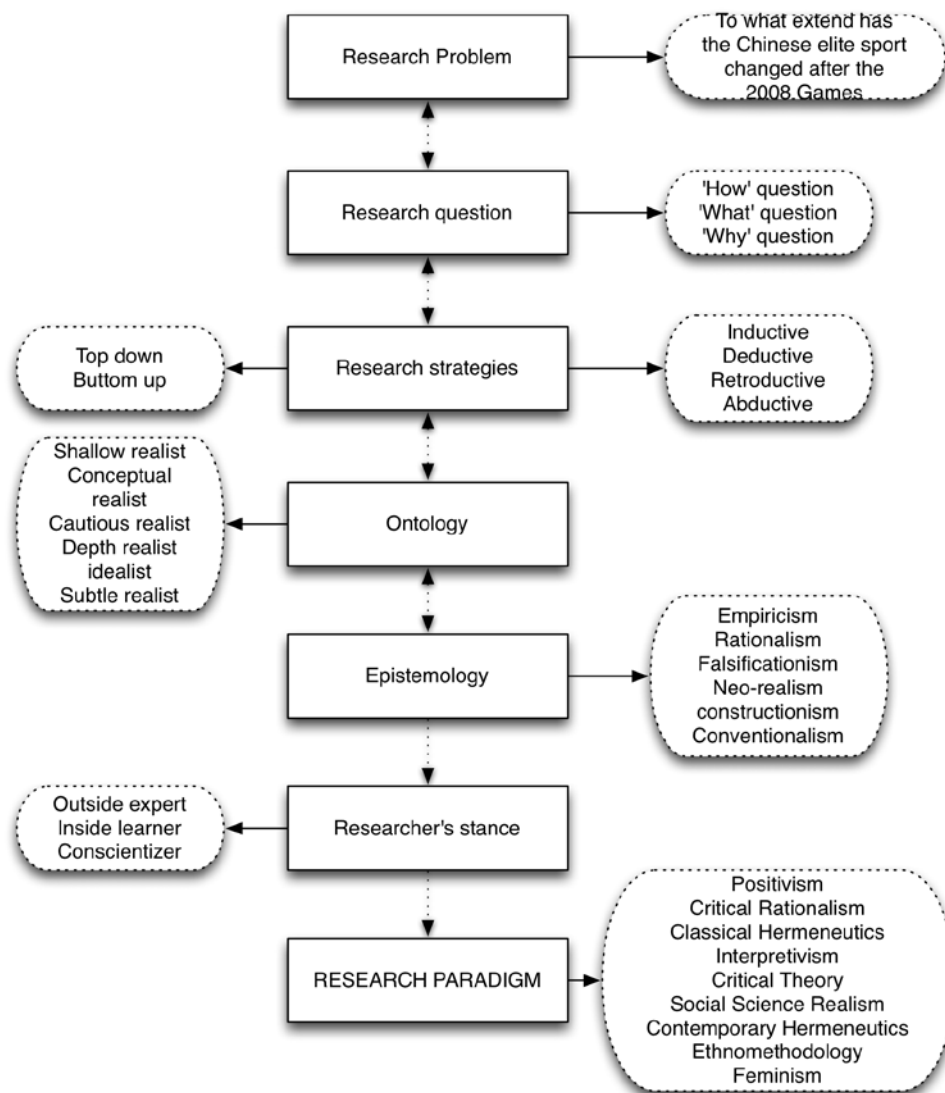
3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we aim to connect the theoretical concepts with methods employed in our research through providing an outline of the philosophical position, research method adopted in, and the process of empirical work of, this research. We start with discussion of our ontological and epistemological positions, which lay at the heart of a paradigm and affect other assumptions we have taken (Blaikie 2007; Sparkes 1992). The theory employed to answer our research questions and corresponding analytic framework are subsequently discussed in the third and fourth section. Following a demonstration of the rationale for the selection of the three sports addressed as cases and of interviewees, we finish this chapter with a short elaboration of the protocol of data analysis.

3.2 Philosophical Considerations

Prior to initiation of a research project, researchers must have a certain number of basic assumptions, as “we cannot, and do not, enter the research process as empty vessels or as blank slates that data imprints itself upon” (Sparkes, 1992, p.14). Blaikie (2007) elaborates the nature of, and relationship between, such set of assumptions through a flow chart, which is illustrated as Figure 3.1.

Figure 3. 1 Research Choices



Resources: Blaikie, 2007 p.27

As shown in the chart, the interrelationships between the *research problems*, *research questions*, *research strategies*, *ontology* and *epistemology* are indicated with double-headed arrows emphasising the dialectical nature of the relationship between elements. The contents linked with horizontal arrows exemplify decisions that need

to be made in each category. These are basic philosophical assumptions of a researcher, referring to the nature of reality, of truth, and of the social world, and are influential to the *technical* steps and aspects of research (Earls 1986).

Critical realism (CR), adopted in our research, is located between the *positivist* and *interpretivist* position. On the one hand, CR, like positivism, claims the existence of a real social world, which includes not only observable events and entities, but also unobservable objects, structures and mechanisms (Bhaskar 1978; Bhaskar 1998; Collier 1994; Blaikie 2007). This distinction can be illustrated in the example of the difference between policy statements and the mechanism of, and power relationship within, the publication of such policy. For instance, the addition of the content in relation to the professionalisation of Chinese elite sport (in the statement of Chinese elite sport policy) is not only a consequence of the discussion of policy makers, but also an outcome enabled by the economic reform of Chinese society after 1979. On the other hand, in contrast with Positivism, CR places emphasis on the constructive role of social agency, which, at the same time is facilitated and constrained by social structure. In other words, social structure is regarded as the outcome of human agency's construction (Bhaskar & Hartwig 2010). This is to say that, CR emphasises the dialectic relationship between structure and agency. For instance, policy makers in Chinese sport are not only restrained and enabled by the Chinese context, such as the institutional and ideological setting of Chinese sport, but also proactively (re)produce it through framing the nature of practice and the relationship between

different institutions. This dialectical relationship is evidenced, on the one hand, in the socialist narratives well employed in the policy statement; on the other hand, in the portrait of the consistency (and/or contradiction) between the socialist ideology and social phenomenon (example may be drawn from the construction of the nature of professional sport in the Chinese context, “as a product of capitalism” (Xiong *et al.* 2008, p.83) or as a “accelerator of [Chinese] elite sport reform” (GAS, 2011, p.1)). Thus, both a] the structural restraint over constructive practices, and b] the constructive effects of social agencies’ framing of ‘reality’, need to be borne in mind.

Marsh (1999, p.13) elaborates six major assumptions of the Critical Realism:

- 1) The world exists independently of our knowledge of it;
- 2) There are (deep) structures that cannot be directly observed;
- 3) There is necessity in the world-objects/ structures do have causal power, so it is possible to make causal statements;
- 4) CR proposes that peoples’ discursive knowledge about ‘reality’ (which exists independently of their knowledge) will have an impact on the outcomes of social interrelations;
- 5) Structures do not determine outcomes, rather they both constrain and facilitate actions and may be modified by the actions of agents;
- 6) Social science, thus, involves the study of reflexive agents who are capable of constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing social structures

We thus claim that Chinese society and Chinese elite sport are a real, stratified and

only partially observable³², and are independent of social actors' knowledge. This is to say, for instance, the events experienced post-2008 and the developments in Chinese elite sport, as well as policy changes are merely the observable part of social reality. These events and phenomena are real, and are 'viewed' or experienced from a superficial level. Underpinning these events and policy modifications are the unobservable structures and mechanisms that are not directly visible but have causal power in relation to these observable events (Bhaskar 2008). In order to reveal the stratified reality, and to improve the imperfect knowledge of it, an analysis of the tangibles and of the agencies' interpretation of as well as of the historical development of the research target is required, since social structure is not only dependent on social agents' *activities* but is also reliant on *space-time* (Bhaskar 1989, p.203). Thus, we address the first research question, "*across the three periods, 1993-2001, 2001-2008 and post 2008, to what extent have Chinese elite sport policy and discursive accounts of that policy changed?*" aiming to identify sport policy change throughout the period we look at.

We also explore the dialectic relationship between social actors and context. In doing

³² Also known as *depth realist ontology*, Critical Realist claims that social reality consists of three levels: the level of *empirical*, *actual* and *real*. The structures and mechanisms exist within *real* domain and in addition some events are located in the *actual* domain are unobservable to social actors. Please see, Bhaskar, 1978, 2008; Blaikie, 2007

so, we, on the one hand, consider the extent to which the discourse and the experience of staging the Beijing Games has influenced the patterns of policy change. On the other hand, we also investigate the extent to which the framing of and the impact of the 2008 Olympics has been manipulated and absorbed by Chinese society and the Chinese elite sport system.

This is to say that the second question, *“to what extent are the changes in Chinese elite sport argued to be a consequence of the experience of preparing for and staging the Beijing Olympics”*, focuses on the relationship between changes in Chinese elite sport, as a structure, and agency’s activities which provoke changes in, and reproduces, the structure (Benton & Craib 2011). This is to say that, in essence, the second question is to look at the social actors’ activities, for example, the experiences of preparing for and staging the Beijing Olympics, and to assess the extent to which they reproduce and/or reinterpret the structure.

However, as social agents operate within a structure, their capability to modify social structure is affected by the existing structural context (or their interpretation of it). Given our particular interest in the role of political factors in the Chinese context, such as that of communist ideology, our third question, i.e. *“in what ways are the policies and their interpretation of the aftermath of the Beijing Games related to explanations of the socialist features of the regime”*, gives emphasis to the effects of the political and ideological structures on policy interpretation, such as Chinese nationalism,

socialism, etc.

3.3 Adequacy of Theory

3.3.1 Policy as discourse and a Critical Realism based approach

Classical definitions of policy include defining policy as what governments do or do not do (Goldsmith 1980; cited by Henry 2001), or as what governments say they do (Henry, 2001). Such focuses on the discursive side of policy, for instance policy statements, enable us to view policies as both the indication of intention and (implicit) statements of omission, which, though, may be intended or unintended (Henry, 2001). Piggin *et al.* (2009) argue the policy content is able to indicate the struggle over the production of meaning as well as the privilege and control in the dissemination of this meaning. From a Foucauldian perspective, they (Piggin et al. 2009, p.465) claim, “through studying the speaker or writer’s employment of various rhetorical devices and themes ... we can understand relations of power in public policy”.

This relationship between policy discourse and power relations is in line with our interest in, and research aim of, exploring power and relationship changes in Chinese elite sport. We, consequently, employ a CR based approach to interrogate policy discourses, in order to bridge the less-tangible side of, i.e. the power structure of, Chinese elite sport.

It is worth noting that we not only look into *discourse of policy*, i.e. what government say they do, but also *discourse about policy*, for example, what they say about why they do, what others (including perhaps oppositional voices) say governments actually do. Embedded in this distinction and the discussions which relate to it are questions of the '*power of discourse*' – how dominant is any one account related to policy; and '*power over discourse*' – that is whose voice is (allowed to be) heard in discussions about policy, and whose voice is weak or absent. The CDA and its usefulness in investigating the relationship between discourse and power is discussed in the following part, *Critical Discourse Analysis, a theoretical method*.

3.3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis, a theoretical method

As a theoretical method, Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter, CDA) theoretically constructs the object of research, i.e. 'discourse', which is seen as a manifold phenomenon. It exceeds the *linguistic* and *semiotic* term, further embraces and embodies a dialectical social process from three aspects: a way of *acting*, *materializing* and *being* (Fairclough 2009; Wodak & Meyer 2009). This is to say that the policy discourse *per se* is regarded, from a CDA perspective, as a manifestation and construction of social practice, social representation/construction and social identity (Fairclough, 2009). In other words, the framework of CDA enables us to explore the different facets of discourse, and subsequently highlight the dialectical relationships between semiosis (including language) and other elements of the society.

Recognising discourse as a multi-aspect phenomenon, Wodak & Meyer (2009, p.5-6) suggest that discourse analysis must focus on “a dialect relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it”. This implies that CDA shares accordance with CR adopted in our research. It is also in line with our intention of highlighting the dialectical relationship between Chinese sport policy discourse and Chinese society, since discourse is a socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned phenomenon.

Fairclough (2005, 2009) indicates that through investigating the manifestation of social structure, e.g. discourse, one is able to disclose the structural features of society, such as the constitution of power relationships between different groups. The relationship between power, as a systemic and constitutive element and characteristic of a society, and discourse has been investigated and discussed by many (Hall 2001; Foucault 1980a; Foucault 1980d; Fairclough 2005a). Given its concerns with power as a central condition in social life, CDA provides us with a useful instrument to discover the power relationship within Chinese elite sport, and to understand the social dynamics and control (of action, at both individual and collective level), through analysing discourse of, and about, policy (Foucault 1988; Foucault 1980a). In addition, our investigation does not stop at the level of the production of social domination, but also looks into the interpretation of social domination by the powerful (over the less powerful) groups, which is regarded as the main feature of CDA (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). This is to say, through adopting

CDA, we explore not only the dominating discourse and power in Chinese elite sport, but also the way in which such dominance is legitimised and interpreted by the dominant and less-dominant groups, such as the diverse interpretation of why and in what way the Chinese sport authorities (are able to) do what they do.

Ideology, another important phenomenon of this thesis, is recognised as “[a] representation of aspects of the world which contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation through representing events, positioning people and constructing social structures” by Fairclough (2003, p.218; cited by Wodak & Meyer 2009, p.9). The phrasing of the definition implies the discursive feature of ideologies, which, on the one hand, is considerably affected by discursive practices; and, on the other hand, is also able to influence social power relationships. Moreover, it is worth noting that ideologies reflect the values that are promoted by certain groups based on their interests. And the mainstream ideologies of a given society usually manifest sets of interests of the group that sits at the summit of social power hierarchies. For instance, the ideological elements of Chinese elite sport discourse can be found in the promotion of collective value, for example of the Chinese table tennis and women’s volleyball teams (F. Liu 2009; P. Liu 2008); and in the criticism and regulation of commercial activities of Chinese elite athletes (GAS 2006a; Liu 2007; Gao 2005). Therefore, through analysing discourse, which is “an important aspect of ideological analysis and critique” (Fairclough, 2009, p.218), we are able to unveil the discursive construction and the influence of ideologies, not

only of the communist but also others (such as nationalist) philosophies, in Chinese elite sport discourse.

To summarise, we employ CDA (which mainly focuses on the implementation and interpretation of power in a given society), as a theoretical research method. It is associated with a general method, arguing that the invisible power relationship and social structure can be investigated by analysing discourses; however, specific methods can be also used for a particular research based on the theoretical construction of its object (Fairclough, 2009). The analytic framework for this research is discussed in the part of *Protocol*, after the following part of *the appropriateness of method and reliability of data and data collection*.

3.3.3 Power, Knowledge and Discourse

In investigating the effectiveness of the operation of power within Chinese elite sport, we have been enlightened by Lukes' (2005) informative concept of the three dimensions of power, for it not only incorporates the tangible practices of power (including the situation of decision making and non-decision making) but also, most importantly, invites us to consider the way in which obedience to the decisions of the power becomes habitual and thus less-noticeable.

Following this concept, we define power via the effect when it is utilised and/or applied, and see it as a capacity obtained by different groups of actors in a society.

The effect of power and the power relationship within Chinese elite sport is thus investigated from three dimensions. For the first dimension, power is normally defined as “involving a successful attempt by A to get B to do something he would not otherwise do” (Dahl 1957). Polsby accordingly suggests (1963, cited by Lukes, 2005, p. 18) that the best way of examining power of different social groups is to investigate “who prevails in decision-making”. Following this one dimensional view, power is associated with the observable conflicts of interests and decision-making procedure. Such contending interests could be evidenced in policy preferences (Lukes, 2005). Examples in Chinese elite sport in relation to this dimension include the regulation, and sanction of, Chinese elite athletes participating in the commercial campaigns of organisations in private sectors.

At the same time, Lukes (2005, p.20) also indicates that power is viewed by many as the capacity of “creat[ing] and reinforc[ing] barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts” (Bachrach, P. and Baratz 1970, p.8). This is acknowledged as the second dimension of power emphasising the effect of power in non-decision-making, which is “a means by which demands for change in the existing allocation of benefits and privileges in the community can be suffocated before they are even voiced; or kept covert; or killed before they gain access to the relevant decision-making arena; or, failing all these things, maimed or destroyed in the decision-implementing stage of the policy process’ (Lukes, 2002, p. 44)”. Our quotation from Liu Peng’s (2007, p.1) speech (on page 239) provides a good example of the first instance Lukes exemplifies,

in which the Sport Minister openly admits the GAS's neglect over "suggestions that ... [might be] harmful to the interests of the majority of all institutions and organisations." While the second ways in which the effects of power are manifest in this second dimension is evidenced in the establishment of, and the portrayal of the significance of, the Centres during the procedure of the independence of Sport Associations. In addition, it is important to emphasise that an observable conflict of interests is still seen as a compulsory condition for identifying power from this dimensional view (Bachrach and Baratz 1970). This is to say that there is one party that realises its interests, but their voice is 'drowned out' in the decision making procedure or policy agenda.

The third dimension, or as Lukes (2005, p.27) terms "the supreme exercise", of power enables the dominant to secure others' "compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires", preventing conflicts of interests from arising in the first place. In order to do so, the dominant group shapes others' perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things (Lukes, 2005). Tilly (p.1991, p.954) describes this continuous obedience as "a result of mystification, repression ... [for] subordinates remain unaware of their true interests". This is very close to the unconsciousness and the construction of knowledge from a Foucauldian (Foucault 1980a; Foucault 1980d; Foucault 1986; Hall 2001) point of view, which is introduced subsequently. It also is related to the conceptual foundation of Chinese Olympic strategy and thus of Chinese elite sport,

and to an important account of Chinese Olympic discourse, i.e. the necessity of winning Olympic gold medal.

The production of truth, to which social actors are subjected, is seen by Foucault as a necessary condition of the exercise of power in a given society, for “we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth” (Foucault 1986, p.230). Here, ‘truth’ (in a given society), on the one hand, is recognised as a product of the construction of social actors via their discourse concerning ‘truth’, i.e. knowledge (Gary Gutting 2005). Thus, Foucault (1986, p.229) emphasises that power relations cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. On the other hand, ‘the truth’ is also viewed as a structural element constraining and facilitating the practices, or constructive activities, of social actors, as “it is truth that makes the laws, that produces the true discourse which, at least partially, decides, transmits and itself extends upon the effects of power” (Foucault, 1986, p.230).

In terms of the relationship among the trio, i.e. discourse, knowledge and power, in a given society, Carabine (2001, p.275) argues in his Foucauldian study of unmarried mothers that “discourses are historically variable ways of specifying knowledge and truths, whereby knowledge is socially constructed by effects of power and spoken of in terms of ‘truths’. In other words, knowledge both constitutes and is constituted through discourse, while power constrains and produces ‘the truth’ through

manipulating the 'discourse of truth' (Foucault, 1986, 2002). This is to say that discourse, as stated by Bacchi (2000, p. 48), "sets limits upon what can be said... legitimates social actions and relations between those who shape the normative conventions and whose life experiences may be shaped by such conventions". Our analysis of the changes in the portrayal of professional sports in Chinese elite sport discourse, which regulates the identity and function of professional sport among different eras, i.e. before and after the opening-up of Chinese society in 1979, during the preparation of the 2008 Games, and in the 'Sport Power'-emphasised post-2008 era, provides a good example of the relationship between power, knowledge and discourse in Chinese elite sport.

It is worth noting that there are two types of power in the above discussion of the relationship between power and discourse. On the one hand, we have identified the *power of discourse*, which is the constructive effect of discourse constituting a particular view of society at a particular moment (Carabine, 2001). For example, different discourses concerning Chinese elite athletes respectively produce different 'truths' in terms of their role, identity and thus 'appropriate behaviour'. On the other hand, there is also *power over discourse*, i.e. which discourse is 'selected' or 'heard' in a given society. This is the structural constraint on the constructing activities, and is often a function of the social context and is not necessarily examined through discourse *per se*. An extreme example could be noticed in the extreme 'left' communist discourse in the Cultural Revolution, during which other accounts were

excluded, neglected and unconsidered in Chinese society. In other words, one dominant discourse of Chinese elite athletes, constructing 'the truth' of their role, position and thus appropriate behaviour, is made heard in Chinese elite sport, while other accounts concerning the same topic are, to a degree, repressed, silenced and/or invalidated.

The power of discourse varies among different discourses, reflects and frames the point from which respective reality is produced. It manifests the effectiveness of a particular account, which frames reality, constructs truth and thus produces a particular knowledge constructing what counts as real. Considering the scenario of battles between policy groups at discursive level (for example in policy statements), it is not about what happened, but about what is said and how it relates to the portrayal of the situation and reasons which lead to what happened. It thus is in line with the interests of the group employing such an account.

The power over discourse varies from one society to another, and regulates the point from which 'the reality' of the given society should be produced. It, for example, is evidenced in the availability of discourse in a given society, and suggests the influence of social context on the interpretation (in our research) of sport policy. It is thus in line with the interests of the group which is in the position of controlling the dominant discourse in a given society. In the case of battles between policy groups during the production of policy statements, power over discourse is concerned with

whose voice is (allowed to be) heard in discussions about policy, and whose voice is weak or absent.

In sum, while discourses produces (a variety of) knowledge, the dominant discourse establishes the 'truth', in our study, of Chinese elite sport. This knowledge or 'the truth' generated in Chinese society produces "what is 'normal' and 'natural' whilst establishing the boundaries of what is acceptable and appropriate" (Carabine, 2001, p.279). However, it thus is also important to bear in mind, especially for those employing CDA, that "knowledge must itself be understood as a form of error" (Gary Gutting 2005, p.74), for its nature as a 'product' of construction.

3.4 Appropriateness of method and reliability of data

3.4.1 The Consistency of research framework

The appropriateness of methods needs to be verified, in order to demonstrate the relevance of data collected, i.e. its consistency with the philosophical position and with the theory of the research. Based on the previous discussion, we aim to explore the way in which Chinese elite sport has changed in the post-2008 era through answering three questions, which are:

- a) Across the three periods in contemporary Chinese Olympic history, 1993-2001, 2001-2008 and post 2008, to what extent have Chinese elite sport policy and discursive accounts of it changed?

-
- b) To what extent are the changes in Chinese elite sport regarded as a consequence of the experience of preparing for and staging the Beijing Olympics?
 - c) In what ways are policies and their interpretation of the aftermath of the Beijing Games related to explanations of the socialist features of the regime?

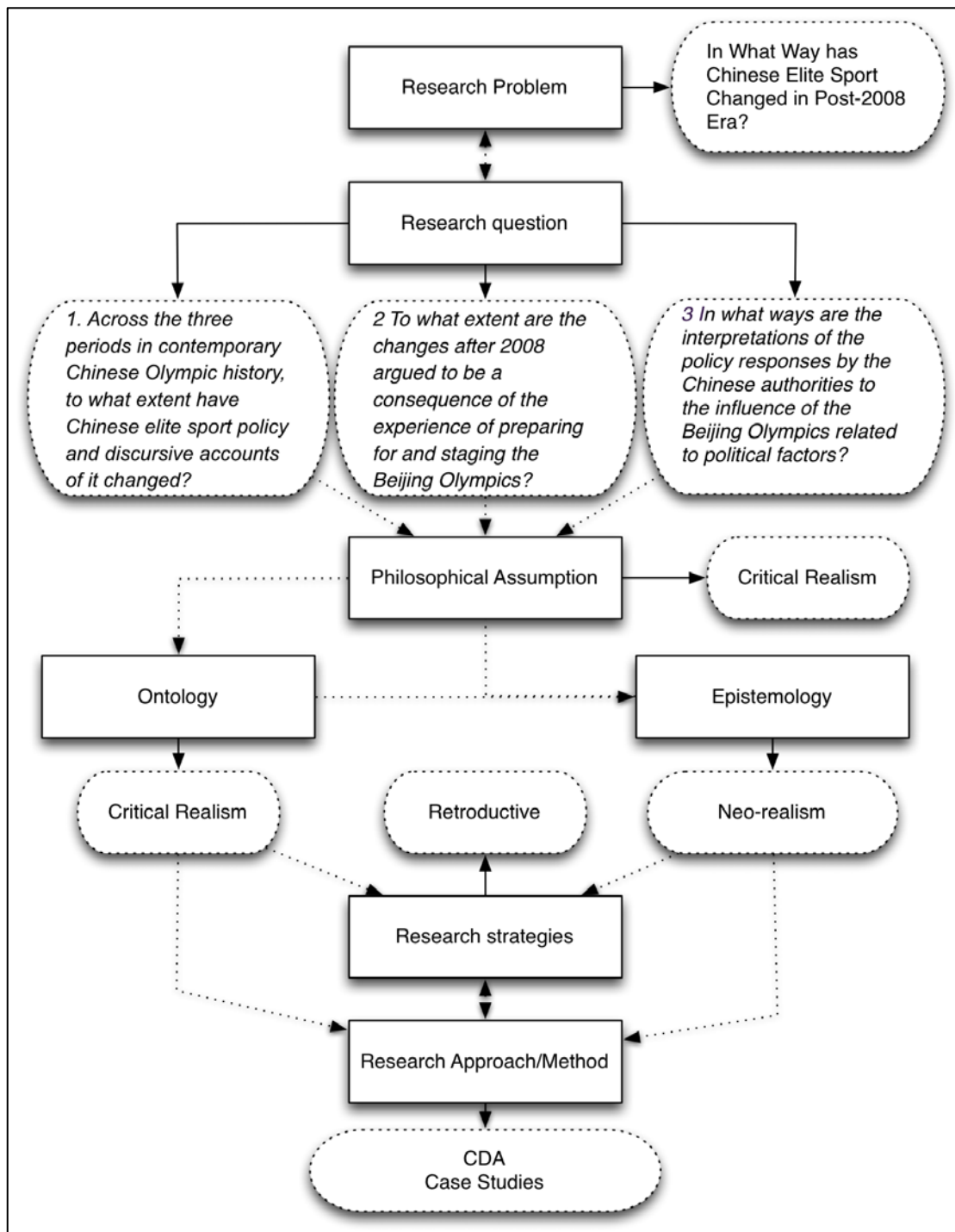
Following our CR stance (Bhaskar 1978; Collier 1994), we argue for the existence of real but 'invisible' social structures, which, nevertheless, are (at least partial) products of social action. This invites us to consider, on the one hand, the production of social structures by social actors, and on the other hand, the effects of those structures on both enabling and constraining the constructive practices. Discourse, which we analyse in the research, can both help to shape social structures and also reflect their consequences. In other words it both (re)produces and reflects realities.

Following our review of Lukes' (2002) three dimension of power and our interests of power over/of discourse in the construction of knowledge and of reality in a given society. We see the effect of power in the non-decision making (second) dimension as a manifestation of the power over discourse, regulating the eligibility of certain types of account of entering the policy agenda of Chinese elite sport discourse. While the third dimensional view of power is associated with power of (the dominant) discourse to frame, transfer and produce knowledge, and thus to shape, manipulate and convert the obedient groups' preference of and their understanding of interests. Thus, from a Foucauldian perspective, it could be argued that those who hold power over discourse linguistically frame what others want and what their interests are

with the constructive power of their discourse. In other words, these interests and needs do not exist independently from the construction of them, while such construction is also constrained by the social context. Thus, by employing the Critical Realism based Critical Discourse Analysis, which dialectically considers the effect of discourse and of social structure, we are able to unveil of the power relations within Chinese elite sport through interrogating its discursive production, and subsequently understand the way in which the impact or the legacy of the Beijing Games is leveraged and Chinese elite sport has developed in the post-2008 era.

In practical terms, we collect empirical data from two main resources: a) archival documentary material in relation to Chinese elite sport, and b) interviews with stakeholders in three case studies, i.e. Chinese baseball, diving and table tennis. On the one hand, such a qualitative research strategy provides data for application in case studies (Yin, 2003), in both diachronic terms (such as the trends and characteristics of the development of Chinese elite sport since 1993) and synchronic terms (for instance, the emergence of new discourse in Chinese elite sports after the Beijing Games). On the other hand, firstly, consistent with CR, the case study approach provides insights into the nature of the phenomena and further investigation to the invisible structural mechanisms beyond specific cases (Easton 2000; Easton 2009). Secondly, this problem-oriented approach is also

Figure 3. 2 Illustration of Methodology discussion



recognised as a preferred method in CDA, which usually starts with identifying and describing a specific social problem and subsequently leads to a stepwise procedure

to uncover the critical features of the social phenomenon under review (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Yin (2003) indicates that case studies are the preferred research strategy for the investigator who wants to cover the real-life context of contemporary phenomenon but has little control over it. In this study, for instance, though the researcher is able to investigate the development of three Chinese elite sports, he is not able to influence anything except the interview procedure. Yin (*ibid*, p.15) suggests that such research strategy is multi-functional, since it is able to “explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions... describe an intervention and the real-life context ... illustrate certain topics ... explore those situation in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes”.

3.4.2 Reliability and Validity

As a number of authors point out (Wood & Kroger 2000; Sarantakos 1998; Blaikie 2007; Easton 2000; Kirk & Miller 1986), given the differences between natural and social science, it is difficult, if not totally inappropriate, to apply the classical concepts of ‘validity’, ‘reliability’ and ‘objectivity’ in the way that they are used in scientific research or in the application of quantitative methods in some social science research, in particular those employing qualitative methods such as CDA.

In terms of the reliability and validity of this discourse analysis approach, following Wood and Kroger (2000, p.164), we argue for using “alternative conceptions of reliability and validity”, i.e. warrantability. On the one hand, the concept of reliability, which is originally a concept from natural science, is questionable, if not inapplicable, in social science. This is to say that because meaning is contextually specified in the social world, the significance of identical movement may be interpreted differently from one context to another. A different movement may also be assigned the same meaning in different contexts, let alone the development or the changes in the constructed knowledge of what is ‘appropriate’ in one society, then repeatability of findings is less likely to be achieved, or the significance of repeatability across different contexts becomes questionable.

On the other hand, in terms of validity, which concerns whether [the research] reflects the ‘truth’, or the true state of the world, given discourse is both constructing the world and is part of the world, we could argue that the analysis of discourse *per se* is an analysis of the social world and a medium constructing truth and realism of the society. This significance of validity is thus also remarkably devalued than it is for nature science. However, this is not to say that we deny “reality”, but question whether reality should be regarded as the primary criterion for evaluating research employing discourse analysis. In addition, in order to realise its emancipatory function, CDA brings to the fore voices and sets of interest which otherwise remain under- or un-considered or are labelled as ‘false’ and ‘inappropriate’. We would

argue that this makes the requirement of validity 'reflecting the truth' more questionable, for it suggests a position which opposes simply following the stereotype of 'the truth' constructed by the dominant voice.

Blaikie (2007) suggests that the aim of social research is, thus, to improve this imperfect knowledge through progressively revealing stratified reality through investigating tangible facets, i.e. discourse in the context of this research. Even though analysis may only involve the study of a number of 'cases', it is still effective, as long as "the process involves thoughtful in depth research with the objective of understanding why things are as they are" (Easton, 2010, p. 119).

Researchers, especially those who employ qualitative approaches, are recognised as research instruments (Blaikie 2009; Sarantakos 1998). For example, using semi-structured interview as one of the data collecting methods implies that the researcher, as the interviewer, actively involves with the data collection procedure as an insider rather than maintaining a position external to the research target, i.e. Chinese elite sport.

Blaikie (2007) further argues that social researchers are not able to achieve a neutral or external 'observer' position in the social hierarchy of power and status, since they are subject to this structure. For instance, the researcher's former working experience as a sport journalist in China, on the one hand, benefits him in approaching interviewees and in understanding certain assumptions and connotations in the

conversation. On the other hand, this background also affects his ethical standards, research interests and values, which he is unable to discard. At the same time, the researcher's academic background in the UK has helped him to understand the western literature as well as introduce and translate the empirical data from Chinese, his mother tongue, into English, his academic 'tongue' (despite the obvious difficulties in translating the confusing and subtle meanings between corresponding words in the two languages). In contrast, the UK academic background of the researcher is also recognised by interviewees, who viewed the researcher as an 'outsider' and thus as a potential 'danger' to Chinese sport society or to themselves.

It is undeniable that both our research object and the researcher's accessibility of data influence the selection of data resources, which, accompanied with the 'insider' position, could be criticised as against the requirements of objectivity. In addition, since the uniqueness of, and the rapid change of, the Chinese context and the limited possibility of repeating interviews, our data might be assessed as non-replicable. However, the issue is perhaps less one of replicability than warrantability of the claims made on the basis of the data, i.e., how convincing is the researcher's account rather than would somebody else have obtained the same data and derived a similar account based on that data.

Sarantakos (1998) argues that because obtaining the same data is not (always) achievable in social science, as long as validity is assured (especially in qualitative

research), research should be regarded as reliable and objective. It is also indicated by Wodak and Meyer (2009, p.8) that given the infeasibility 'value free' social research, researchers employing a critical discourse approach should "make their position, research interests and values, explicit and their criteria as transparent as possible", rather than apologising "for the critical stance of their work".

The key concern of qualitative research, especially that involving interview data, should thus be the 'transparency' of the research, which is whether a) the elements of research process are overtly stated and open to judgement; b) interviews obtain frank and open responses; c) conclusions are sensible and seek to avoid bias (Sarantakos, 1998). Thus, instead of labelling the conflicting, but frankly responding, accounts as 'false' or 'fake', we crosscheck them with other relevant data, such as the identity of source, and social context in order to explore casual factors and less tangible structural elements that provoke such divergences. By doing so, we are able to unveil an inner coherence of respective voices conflicting against one another, and scrutinise consistently conflicting power and interests of different stakeholder groups. In addition, it is worth reminding that the emancipatory function of CDA brings to the fore voices and sets of interest which otherwise remain under- or un-considered as being labelled as 'false' and 'inappropriate'. This makes the requirement of validity 'reflecting the truth' becomes more questionable.

3.4.3 Assessment of data

It is important to assessing the quality of data, which significantly affects the quality of analysis and of the thesis. We employ Scott's (1990, cited by Bryman 2004) four criteria for assessing the quality of documentary data (authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning) as the 'standards' for the quality control of the empirical data.

Authenticity concerns the origin of the documents, especially the credibility of evidence of authorship. We use publicly available transcripts of government archives, speeches and statistical reports relating to Chinese sport. In relation to interviews, we are fully aware of the identity of the interviewees in relation to the sport he/she involves, and are also familiar with his/her background, which fulfil the requirement of authenticity.

Credibility refers to whether the data is free of error or distortion. In our research, we employ two criteria for credibility assessment. The first is relatively 'factual' data, such as, the time and date of critical events, governmental personnel etc. Government documents and reports are used as benchmarks for these relative facts. It is worth noting that apart from these well known / widely held 'less culturally mediated facts', divergent accounts and the more culturally mediated 'soft facts' (for example, the extent of accomplishment of Chinese elite sport, and causal factors influencing the direction of Chinese elite sport development) are tolerated and

presented in the thesis. This is because we are concerned about why and how different parties represent the 'facts' differently, offering dissimilar portraits, experience and accounts of certain events or of sport policies would, thus, rather provide a more panoramic vision and interpretations rather than cause credibility concerns. A more tolerant standard is thus implemented in assessing the data.

However, this is neither to say that credibility is disregarded, nor that everything from the media and interview sources are to be regarded as reliable data. Thus, the relationship between data and the identity of source is regarded as the second criterion for credibility assessment. This is to say that we evaluate whether and to what extent the interviewees speak sincerely and seriously through assessing the relationship between the data *per se* and the identity of the interviewee and the interests of the corresponding stakeholder group in Chinese elite sport.

Representativeness refers to the extent to which the evidence is typical of its kind, or, if it is not, whether the extent of its uniqueness is known. In terms of the archival material, though we attempt to implement a full range review of government documents, some of documents may not be accessible due to confidentiality and other reasons. However, Scott (1990, p.7) also indicates that full representativeness is not always required, but "what is important is that the scientists should know how typical the available evidence is in order to be able to assign limits to the application of any conclusions that are drawn from it". The representativeness of the sports (and

their federations) in respective case studies is discussed in following section on *Data collection*.

The last criterion, 'meaning', which refers to what the text actually says, is a twofold phenomenon including literal meaning and the interpretative understanding. The data is analysed in Chinese, the crucial part of which is presented in the thesis in English. In order to fulfil the requirement of the consistent literal meaning, the Chinese version is read by a third-party proof-reader and the English version presented in the thesis is checked by an expert in the researcher's area. To address the interpretative meaning issue, four interviews are fully translated and then thoroughly coded by both the researcher and supervisor in order to ensure the consistency and reasonableness of analysis. Consistency and reasonableness are in part reflected in the attempt to represent or at least acknowledge both denotative and connotative aspects of the meaning of the Chinese data in the English language script of this thesis. Examples may include the reforming connotation of 'civil-society-based development' in Chinese elite sport and the political significance of 'left' and 'right' in different stages of the recent history of the communist regime, which are discussed in the analytic chapters.

3.5 Data Collection: the selection of resources and cases

Two types of empirical data are collected in the research: 1) archival material, such

as governmental documents, memoirs of significant sport figures and media coverage, 2) semi-structured interviews. The archival material covers the period from 1993 to 2012, and is separately analysed in the subsequent 'pre-2008' and 'post-2008' chapters. There are two types of archival material collected for the research. The first is government documents, including documents published by Sport Administration Departments, for instance, the *Law of the PRC on Physical Culture and Sport*, the *Strategic Plans for Winning Olympic Glory*, *Sport Minister's reports at the All States Sports Minister Conference*, etc. and those documents relating to, or which have impact on, sport issues from other government organs, for example the State Council, the Ministry of Education, etc. The second part of archival material contains 1) speeches and memoirs of important political or sport figures on Chinese elite sport, and 2) comments on the development of and the policies of Chinese elite sport by academics, media.

A two-step procedure has been employed to ensure the 'quality' of policy documents analysed in our study. Firstly, we logged in the database of the GAS and looked through all policy documents to which we had access. In order to provide a full picture of the development of Chinese elite sport, we focused on documents providing strategic guidelines for the overall development of Chinese elite sport at macro level, rather than on policies merely concerning concrete practices, unless we use those practical documents as supporting evidence. Examples would be documents relating to the ideological education of Chinese elite athletes and

regulation of their commercial activities. Secondly, we also reviewed both the comments within and outside Zhuanye system in terms of the significance and implication of those macro level policies, which we have selected in the first step. After finishing this 'quality check' of Chinese elite sport policies, we have selected five documents, which were respectively reviewed in the subsequent analysis chapters, as the main material accompanied by a number of documents concerning related 'niche issues' of Chinese elite sport.

The second type of data is collected through semi-structured interviews with stakeholders of the three elite sports, i.e. baseball, table tennis, and diving, which are selected as three cases studies respectively focusing on different perspective of Chinese elite sport development.

Chinese baseball is a peripheral sport in the Zhuanye sport system, and has become further marginalised after the sport was excluded from the Olympic programme after the Beijing Games. In contrast to its gloomy future in Zhuanye sport system, organisations in the commercial and voluntary sectors have become increasingly active, and have organised different campaigns and promotions of the sport at non-elite level, after the loss of its Olympic identity. However, the increasing resources invested in, and the cumulative attention paid to, baseball from these sectors have limited relation to, and only slight interest in, Zhuanye baseball. For example, despite the growing campaign of baseball in Chinese cities and increasing

number of baseball teams in HEIs, the elite baseball league (CBL) was terminated in 2012 due to insufficient sponsorship. We investigate such development of baseball to scrutinise the civil-society-based development of Chinese elite sport from the perspective of a weak, if not the weakest, link of the chain of Zhuanye sport, and to explore the change in the power balance between the Sport Administration Department and other stakeholders in Chinese baseball.

Table tennis is recognised as the national sport and as one of the main symbols of Chinese elite sport. It also is the only professionalised Chinese Olympic sport in which Chinese athletes have been dominant. The introduction of professionalisation to table tennis began in 1995, which aimed to explore another source of income for elite table tennis players and thus to stop the draining of talent to foreign countries. However, after nearly 20 years, the Chinese professional table tennis league remains recognised as a “fake professional league” and as greatly influenced by the traditional planned-economy based sport system. In this case, we investigate the root of the dominance of the Zhuanye sport system and Juguo Tizhi in the professionalisation of Chinese table tennis, and the perceived impact of the Beijing Games and of a significant reforming move in 2012.

Diving is the most ‘productive’ Olympic sport in China, which has provided the most Olympic medals for the communist regime. Zhuanye diving has been stable within its system, however, it had been challenged by another elite diver

development system outside Juguo Tizhi from the HE sector. This challenge is recognised as an example of ‘a combination of [elite] sport [development] and education’, which has been promoted as an approach that would lead to the “healthy, sustainable and rapid development” of Chinese elite sport (Yu & Zhang 2006, p.79). A number of Chinese divers competing in the Beijing Games were from this new system, which, however, has been greatly hindered since a policy change in 2001. In the case of Chinese diving, we inspect relationships between Zhuanye sport and the HE sector as well as the factors that influence the power between the two.

The interviewees include not only policy makers and those who are influential in the policy making process, but also the relatively less powerful groups in policy making or those who are recipients of policy changes, such as athletes, coaches and journalists. This is consistent with the traditional definition of stakeholders as a group or individual “who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984. p, 25).

Freeman (1984) points out that the categories of stakeholders vary due to 1) their relative power (power over), and 2) their potential to cooperate or threaten (power to). It is suggested by Savage *et al.* (1991) that a stakeholder’s capacity to expand his/her dependence with the organisation positively correlates with the potential to cooperate, while his/her power of threat is determined by resource dependence, the stakeholder’s ability to form coalitions, and relevance of the threat to particular

issue.

By selecting interviewees from different stakeholder groups with different levels of influence, we aim to explore the discursive construction from different perspectives about: a) what they do, b) how they perceive what they do, and c) why they do as who they are, in the post-2008 era, and the role of Beijing Games and political factors in these discursive construction.

Figure 3. 3 Stakeholder categories and related strategies



Modified from Freeman (1984) and Savage et al. (1991)

The interviewees are hence categorized firstly according to their power over and of discourse relating to Chinese elite sport; secondly, from both the 'cooperative potential' part and the 'competitive threats' (as illustrated in Figure 3.3) of Chinese elite sport. In addition, it is suggested that when being applied in a sport or sport event, stakeholder theory must relate to the wider environment irrespective of whether or not the stakeholder is within the Zhuanye sport system (Andersson & Getz 2008). Thus the key criterion of stakeholder group identification is whether the

stakeholder is 'affecting or being affected' by the system rather than their 'position within the system'. Therefore, interviewees from both in and outside of the Chinese elite sport are selected.

From 11th March 2013 to 16th April 2013, 28 interviews were conducted with the following interviewees:

Table 3. 1 The selection of interviewees

Categories	General	Baseball	Table Tennis	Diving
Academics	2			
Administrators	1	2	2	3
Athletes		2	2	2
Coaches		2	2	2
Journalist		1	1	1
Other		2 (Commercial)	1 (Senior advisor)	

In order to gain frank responses and explore further unexpected perceptions from these interviewees, the researcher informed them that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous. However, there were still a number of interviewees who appeared to remain suspicious of the real aim of the researcher and declined to have their interview recorded.

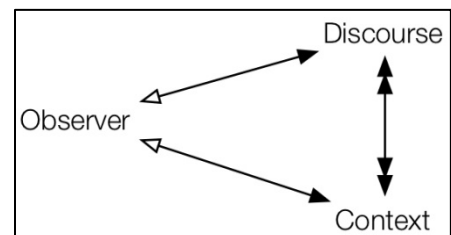
The questions designed in the interviews were 'open ended' since it is recognised as desirable to give the interviewees the opportunity to reveal their perceptions of the

development of sport policy (for interview questions, please refer to Appendix). Indeed the open-ended questions allowed the interviewee take the interview in the direction they wished, selecting from his/her full repertoire of possible responses those which were most salient, and to use their own mode of expression, which disclosed their perspective and their manner of discursive construction.

3.6 Protocol

As indicated in Figure 3.4, we aim to explore the dialectical relationship between social structure and social agents' constructive activities (the double black arrows) in terms of the post-2008 development of Chinese elite sport via exploring the discourse of and about Chinese elite sport policy after 2008.

Figure 3. 4 The relationship between researcher and objects



We start our analysis with inspecting the structural constraints on the constructing activities, namely *power over discourse*, which is often a function of the social context and is not necessarily examined through discourse *per se*. For instance, the availability of discourse in any given societies suggests the influence of social context on the interpretation (in this case) of sport policy. On the other side of coin, we also investigate the constructive effect of discourses, namely *the power of discourse*, for example, the (different) ways in which discourse defines the effect of the

experience of staging the Beijing Games on the development of Chinese elite sport. The power of discourse varies among different discourses, reflects and frames the point from which the reality is viewed.

Although what is addressed in the thesis is the researcher's interpretation on both discourse and context (the single black arrows in Figure 3.4), it is important to bear in mind that the two also synchronously influence the observer (the single hollow arrows). For example, as a Chinese citizen, and former sport journalist, there are certain contextual factors (such as the emphasis on dialectical materialism during his education in China) that the researcher has (consciously or unconsciously) been affected by. Meanwhile, his interpretation(s) also, to a certain extent, reframe the context, for example, in a language community.

In order to investigate this dialectical relationship between context and discourse, we adopt and modify Fairclough's (2005, 2009) CDA framework, also known as *Dialectical-Relational Approach*, with less focus on linguistic analysis. The main strength of this approach is its emphasis on the dialectical relationships between semiosis (including language) and other elements of social structure (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Because, from a CR perspective, analysis of causal power of changes requires, on the one hand, investigating how social agencies (re)construct social structure with discourses; while on the other hand, exploring the social restraints on these constructive activities, such as the material resources and available discourse

in a given society. This recognition of, and emphasis on, the dialectical relationship, between the process of 'meaning construction' and its structural constraints, differentiates this CR based CDA from approaches whose focus of analysis only emphasises a one-sided effort (Fairclough 1992; Fairclough 2009; Wodak & Meyer 2009).

In order to examine the relationship between power and discourse, leading to organisational and social changes, Fairclough (2005a, p.916) peels 'discourse' from three facets of society (as shown in Figure 3.2):

- a) Linguistic and semiotic elements of social events,
- b) Linguistic and semiotic facets of social structures, and
- c) Linguistic and semiotic facets of social practices'.

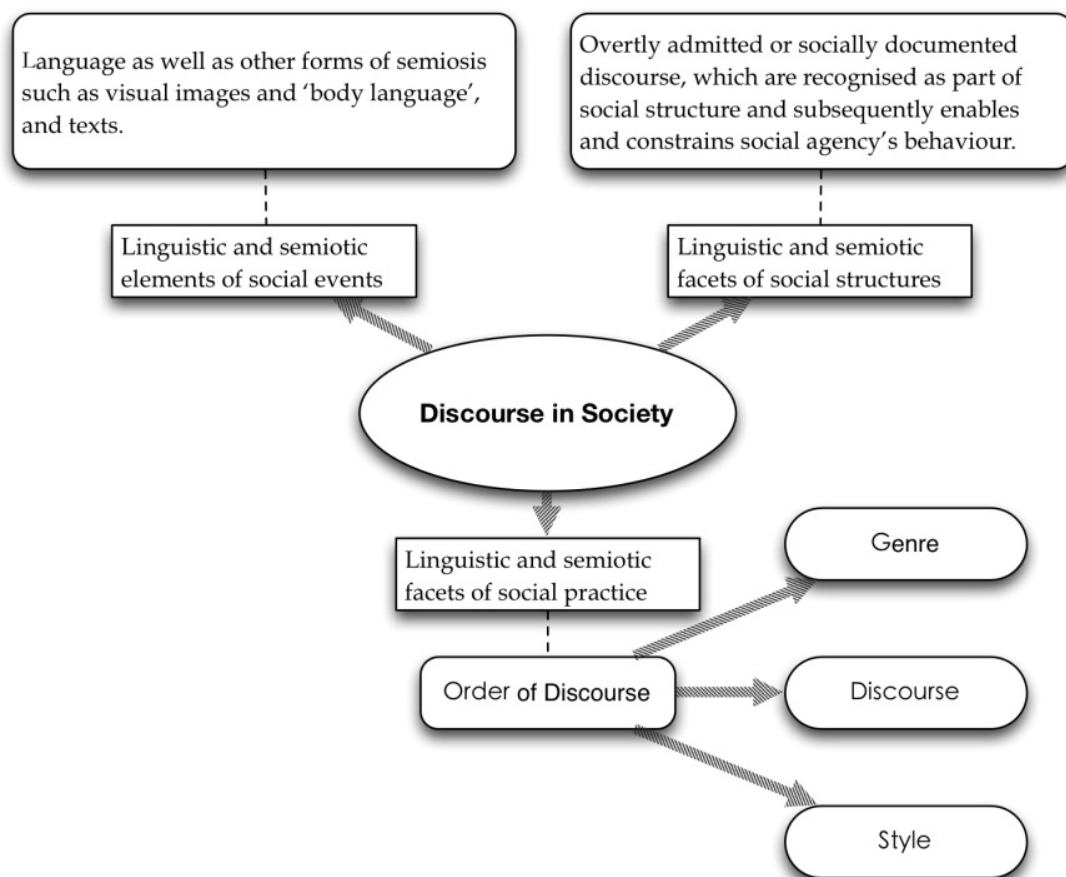
For the first of these facets, the term of linguistic and semiotic elements of social events refers to "language as well as other forms of semiosis such as visual images and 'body language', and texts" (*ibid*, p.916).

The second of these facets refers to discourses which are well admitted in a given society, such as a certain ideology or policy. It is recognised as part of social structure, influencing actors' behaviour.

Thirdly, Fairclough points to the discourse of social practices relating to the phenomenon of *order of discourse*. The order of discourse, "can reflect structural

feature in a certain society” (Fairclough 2003, p.37; Fairclough 2005a; Fairclough 2009), and is “a relatively stabilised and durable configuration of discourses that is a facet of a relatively stabilised and durable network of social practices” (Fairclough, 2005, p. 921). It is comprised of the particular ways of ‘acting’, ‘presenting’ and ‘being’, which, in other words, are the three aspects of a dialectical process through

Figure 3. 5 Discourse in Society



Modified from Fairclough, 2005

which discourse is *operationalized* or ‘put into practice’ (Fairclough, 2009). Fairclough

(2005, 2009) labels these three aspects as *genre*, *discourse* and *style*, and further elaborates this trio respectively as

- a) Actions in semiotic aspect, such as 'to argue' or 'to explain', or even the form of discourse, for example, interview or advertisement;
- b) Semiotic construal of the world from different perspectives, such as different interpretation and evaluation of the Beijing Games, and;
- c) Identities in the semiotic aspects, for example, the semiotic construct of 'a Chinese elite athlete'.

This is to say that the changes in the dialectical relationship between social structure and discourse of social agents needs to be explored with concern given to shifts in the aspects of genre, discourse and style (Fairclough, 2009). It is acknowledged that this three-dimensional conception of discourse emphasising the relationship between structure and agency as "a helpful approach to bridge the polarities of Foucauldian sociopolitical analysis and more linguistic-oriented studies" (Van Dijk 2001, p.263), even though both of them acknowledge the constructive effect of discourse (Fairclough 1992; Fairclough 2003; Foucault 2002; Foucault 1980d). Even though, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, p.32) acknowledge the acceptance of post-structuralist perspective of discourse analysis, they emphasise the degree of such adoption, which should avoid "either post-structuralist reductions of the whole of social life to discourse, or post-structuralist judgemental relativism." This acknowledgement of the effect of structure is also evidenced in Fairclough's attempts to 'put Foucault's perspective to work' (Fairclough, 1992: 38), leading to his retention of normativity, which is seen as contradictory to "the non-normative

parameters and purposes of Foucault's thought (O'Regan 2006, p.229; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999). For instance, McKenna (2004) suggests that it is the aim of the Fairclough's studies to investigate the way in which subordinates might be emancipated from the consistent modality. In contrast, Foucault (1982, p.777) aimed to "to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects".

As indicated in Table 3.2, our analysis is divided into two main parts according to *chronological periods* (pre- and post-2008). This is a product of our previous analysis of the significance of prior events which is a prior discursive analysis in its own right. Even though we aim to explore the constructivist aspect of discourse, there are transcendent terms (though some of which are also discursively constructed) which exist as both the object and context of construction. For instance, a date or an event becomes discursively constructed as soon as it is 'picked' and thus associated with a phenomenon (e.g. the year of 1066 in English history, and the notion of '18th September' for Chinese). However, the key point is not whether the term is 'interpretation-free', but is that it becomes a premise that is established from the prior construction which act as premises for subsequent analysis or studies.

In the subsequent step, objects of discursive construction are analysed. *Topics* refer to the objects of discursive construction, including the Olympics (e.g. the Beijing Games and other Chinese Olympic discourse) and elite sport development (e.g. the

discourse related to Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye sport, and that concerning the reform of Chinese elite sport).

Table 3.2 Protocol of CDA

Chronology	Pre-2008		Post-2008	
Topic	The Olympics	Elite sport development	The Olympics	Elite sport development
Genre as medium	Documents & Archives		Documents, Archives & Interviews	
Genre as action	The action implied in discourse (relationship with, and attitudes towards, others; action over others)			
Discourse	The perspective and presentation of topics (knowledge about event & structure; control over things)			
Style	How the identity is constructed (Knowledge about, relations with self, e.g. Zhuanye system and reformists)			

Modified from Fairclough (2005,2009)

Genre is recognised as “the specifically discursal aspect of ways of acting and interacting in the course of social event,” and can be variously defined or categorised according to the different level of abstraction (Fairclough, 2003, p.66, 2005, 2009). For instance, it can be abstractly classified into categories that transcend particular networks of social practices, such as narrative, discussion, dispute and so forth. This is labelled as *pre-genre* by Fairclough (2003). It could also be more concretely grouped as *disembedded genre* (*ibid*), for example, interview, advertisement, report and so on, which could also be further categorised according to the social practices it is related to, for instance, news report in media, annual report by PhD researcher,

investigation report from a third party evaluator and so on. *Genre*, at micro level, relates to the activities conveyed or constructed discursively, such as making an argument (or to argue), promoting or rejecting certain kind of value or interests (to promote or to reject), and so forth. These *micro genres* directly relate to the inherent meaning, identified at the beginning of this paragraph.

Fairclough (2003) suggests that an analysis of *genre* can provide a lens for investigating the social relationship. For instance, 'to elaborate' and 'to discuss' constructs two different relationships, particularly in terms of the knowledge of the topic of the discursive practices, between parties involved, such as information sender and receiver. In addition, it could be argue that policies and strategies, such as *The Notice of Strengthening the Administration of Commercials and Other Business Activities of Elite Athletes in Service* (SPCSC, 1996), have more compulsory and disciplinary influence on elite athletes' behaviours than those of academic papers and documentary books. Thus, as shown in Table 3.2, we employ the *disembedded genre*, named as 'genre as medium', and *genre* at micro level, named as 'genre as action', aiming to unveil the relationship constructed and conveyed through framing 'actions over others' (Fairclough, 2003) in Chinese elite sport discourse.

In the column of *discourse*, we analyse not only representation of *topics* but also the perspectives of representation and interpretation, for example, the different ways in which a dominant discourse are construed by different social actors. In order to

clarify the confusion between the content of *topic* and *discourse*, as indicated in Table 3.3, we elaborated the philosophical difference between the two through introducing another item, *Pattern*.

Table 3. 3 The relationship between Topic, Discourse, and Pattern

	Topic	Discourse	Pattern
What it is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real phenomena • Objects of discursive construction of social actors • Objects of meaning construction of the researcher (analysis) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of social actors • Concrete content of discursive construction • Objects of meaning construction of the researcher (analysis) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the researcher • Meaning constructed to research data
What it includes	<p>Two themes of research data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Olympics • Chinese elite sport development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event • Social structure • Content and perspective of meaning construction • The content of change before and after 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answers to research questions • The way Chinese elite sport is changing

Topic is the object of discursive construction of social actors in research data, as the researcher advocates for the existence of social events and partially tangible social structure. There are a number of objects in research data, for instance, in media content there are objects such as competition (reports), sport celebrities (gossip) and so forth. However, only those data that focus on two topics, the Olympics and elite

sport development, are selected and subsequently categorized in the research. In addition, *topic* is also the object of meaning construction of the researcher by his analysis, as the researcher aims to investigate and explain the *pattern* of change.

By contrast, the analysis of *discourse* provides the knowledge of social actors on the two topics, including representation and perspective of discursive construction. Representation and perspective are “two sides of the same coin”, though the second is more intangible than the first, representation, which is the content of meaning construction to the event and phenomenon. Although the topics of data can be variously constructed and interpreted in different terms, for example, economy, culture, social equity etc., this research emphasizes the effects of the Olympics and political phenomena in the Chinese context.

Through identifying the diverse perspectives and representations from different resources on the two topics, we attempt to deliver a ‘panoramic view’ of Chinese Olympic discourse and of elite sport discourse, and then extract the structural elements, which facilitate or constrain the social actors knowledge of events (the Olympic Games, especially the 2008 Games) and of social structure (Chinese elite sport and political elements). Furthermore, in an approach similar to the discussion of *topic*, the analysis in the column of *discourse* also addresses the objects of meaning construction of the researcher, whose interpretation is subsequently demonstrated in *Pattern*.

Pattern is not a criterion of analysis, but is listed in the table to provide a better explanation of the way the analysis is developed. *Pattern* refers to ‘the pattern of changes in Chinese elite sport discourse’ or ‘the way in which elite sport discourse changes’, which embeds the answers to research questions. It is the researcher’s interpretation of the data through analysing it following the whole protocol. In other words, in a manner similar to the way the relationship between the two *topics*, the ‘Olympics’ and ‘Chinese elite sport’ and the data is analysed in *discourse*, the relationship between research data and content in *pattern* relates to ‘objects and interpretation’, namely researchers’ knowledge.

Practically, the analysis of *the Olympic discourse* examines the discursive construction of the Chinese Olympics discourse in general and the discourse concerning the 2008 Games in both pre-2008 and post-2008 era. The *interpretation of the elite sport policy* is investigated from the perspective of “Juguo Tizhi” and of “Chinese elite sport reform”. The investigation of the pre-2008 data provides a general benchmark for our analysis of post-2008 data, the latter being effected through not only a study of the general trend of post-2008 development, but also three cases studies of particular sports in term of specific issues.

Style refers to the discursive facet of identity, reflecting social actor’s knowledge, both in terms of self and other’s recognition, of its social identity. (Fairclough, 2003), in other word, how social actors view and discursively construct their social identity.

For example, being an administrator requires not only certain managing behaviours, but also certain discursive behaviour, such as speaking in the same manner as other administrators do. We, on the one hand, investigate the general style used to talk about the Olympics and Chinese elite sport, for instance, the identity of the Olympics and elite sport is constructed in the Chinese context. Subsequently, we explore the extent to which the *style*, for example of different stakeholders in Chinese elite sport, along the development of Chinese elite sport overarching the 2008 Games.

3.7 Conclusions

In this chapter on methodology, we demonstrate the philosophical positions, specific research methods and the process of empirical work, in order to connect the theoretical concepts with the practical research methods employed. With the adoption of CR and CDA, we advocate the existence of a real but merely partially-‘tangible’ social structure and its construction through social actions, in particular, discourses. Thus our investigation of the relationship between the stratified social structures and social agency in Chinese elite sport is through analysing the ‘tangible’ elements, i.e. the discourse of and about Chinese elite sport.

Discourse can be a reflection of deep structures, for example, growing use of dialogue about commercial activity in sport may be a reflection of changing values

in relation to entrepreneurial activity. In addition, discourses, particularly those of the dominant group, can also be constructive and thus reproduce (or reshape) the deep structure, for example, shaping the social value or ideology about whether, and in what ways, entrepreneurialism is good. Our interests in this relationship between discourse and power are in both 'power over discourse' – whose view predominates, and in how discourse shapes our view of reality ('power of discourse'). CDA is thus employed to investigate of Chinese elite sport discourse before and after the Beijing Games in chapter five and six, after our analytic description of the development of Chinese elite sport in pre-2008 era in chapter four.

Chapter Four

An Analytic Description of the Development of Chinese Elite Sport Policy in the Pre-2008 Era

By characterising this element of our account as ‘analytic description’, we emphasise the analytic and critical features in this ‘historically descriptive’ account. Given our focus on Chinese elite sport discourse, it is crucial to bear in mind that the ‘history’ is a part of the discursive construction of what was done, why and how it was done etc. As previously demonstrated, even the choice of relatively ‘objective factors’, such as a specific date, could be regarded a construction of meaning.

We would also argue that simply by regulating the accessibility or acceptability of certain type of documents or ‘voice’, a (type of) ‘history’ is constructed and a power relationship is structured; meanwhile, by selecting data to be described, a superficial analysis is also simultaneously made and communicated. Thus, if the analysis was to be done unreflexively by merely ‘repeating’ or ‘listing’ what was regulated or available, we would end up seeing the development and problems of Chinese elite sport as what the empirical material have been described, and thus failing to consider the reasons for such portrayal and the interests which are thus promoted. As a researcher employing CDA, one has to go further than simply describing discourse, and has to peel off the discursive skins and reveal intangible implications often bound up with understanding the connotations or implications of the

discourses employed by particular groups of actors. The use of reflexive analytic description is thus central to the recounting of the 'history' of sport policy in China.

4.1 The pre-1990s reform and the background of the 1993 reform

Chinese elite sport started its reform in the mid-1980s, following the strategic guideline, "prioritising elite sport, then leading to general development [of sport]" (Wu, 1999). The first guideline for reform *the SPCSC's decision on the reform of the sport system (draft)* (SPCSC, 1986a, hereafter, the 1986 Policy) is regarded as the principal symbol of the official recognition of the reform of Chinese sport (Xiong et al. 2008). Its updated version, *the SPCSC's opinion on deepening the reform of sport system* (SPCSC 1993d, hereafter the 1993 Policy), was published in 1993, the year in which China lost its first Olympic bid. Though 1986 predates the 1993 Olympic bid, which is recognised as the start line of our research, we would argue that reference to both documents permits us to demonstrate the continuities and discontinuities in the development of the state's elite sport discourse³³.

³³ Even though the aim of the 1986 Policy was claimed as to "promote the overall development of sport" (SPCSC 1986b, p.68), elite sport was consistently accentuated in both the 1986 and 1993 Policy. For instance, nine out of ten sections of the 1986 Policy partially or fully related to Chinese elite sport. This ratio was maintained in the 1993 Policy. In addition, four of the five ancillary documents in the 1993 Policy directly or partially focused on elite sport. Thus, despite being portrayed as guidelines for Chinese sport reform in general, these two policies provide important material for analysing elite sport policies.

As indicated in the SPCSC's (1986a, p.60) report to the National Council, the problems in elite sport with which the 1986 Policy aimed to deal were:

...most [elite] sports are in the middle and lower tier at international level...a number of [elite] sports lack reserve athletes ...ideological and political [education]... is relatively insufficient, there is no sign of improvement in the behaviour of in sport teams and in arenas [including sportsmanship];... the Physical Culture and Sport Commissions (hereafter, PCSCs) at county level or below are inadequate, PCSCs at all levels have played an insufficient role in leadership, coordination and supervision; the SPCSC is busy with numerous administration and competition affairs, only providing generalised working guidance; it lacks research and analysis, and is bureaucratic.

The brief introduction conveys three perspectives, a) elite sport performance, b) ideological and disciplinary education, and c) the working performance of PCSCs. It could be argued that this self-critique narrative indirectly constructs the direction of the subsequent reform of the PCSCs' system and the idealised role of the SPCSC, which is a greater role in "leadership, coordination and supervision" while assigning "administration and competition affairs" to relevant organisations, such as Sport Associations and the education sector.

The main causal factors for these problems were subsequently identified in the 1986 Policy, stating that:

[Though] the current [PCSCs] system is basically effective...[it] has over concentrated on organising sport, has not mobilised society to organise [sport] ... [has not] released [sport] to ... [the] civil society; the role of PCSCs at all levels in leadership, coordination and supervision has not been fulfilled

The policy makers, are not only endorsing the current PCSCs system, but also indirectly constructing the PCSCs' role as the 'core leader, coordinator and supervisor' in the projected 'new' Chinese sport system, in which civil society organisations are to be 'mobilised' to undertake operational responsibility. This is in line with goal of the 1986 Policy, which is interpreted as to "take the route of 'civil-society-based' development [of sport]³⁴, with the reinforcement of the SPCSC's unified leadership as the precondition" (Yang et al. 2002; Xiong et al. 2008,

³⁴ 'Civil-society-based' is a translation we adopt in this thesis for the Chinese term 'Shehuihua'. 'Shehui' stands for 'society'. However, 'hua' used as a suffix has a number of derivatives, which are normally translated as '-en', '-ze(-ise)', '-fy', '-lise' or '-zation', etc (Zeng, 2004).

As the direct translation of 'Shehuihua' as 'socialisation' does not capture the meaning of 'developing civil society based (organisation)', we use different terms for the derivatives of the important Chinese phenomenon.

Derivatives	Noun	Adjective	Verb
Translation	'civil-society-based development'	'civil-society-based'	'to-develop-civil-society-based-organisation'

We make this choice because, firstly, it is a crucial phenomenon, i.e. one of the four themes of Chinese elite sport reform that is subsequently discussed. Secondly, it is widely used in policy statement in different derivatives so that we are not able to use one Pinyin word for all these derivatives, which may cause confusion. Thirdly, though 'voluntary organisation' was initially chosen, it was abandoned as the nature of the 'voluntary' or 'non-governmental' sport organisation in China being in effect a semi- or quasi-public institution.

p.44).

In other words, we would argue that the goal of the 1986 reform was two-fold: a) reinforcing the unified leadership of the SPCSC; b) promoting the civil-society-based development, especially of Chinese elite sport. It is generally recognised that the first part³⁵ of this goal was achieved, which strengthened the SPCSC's administration and supervision over sport affairs at all levels and eventually reinforced its administrative power (Xiong et al., 2008). Even though, it would be radical to regard the new 'circumstance' as the consequence of the 1986 per se, we would argue that the changes in the portrayal of the circumstance in the 1993 Policy (SPCSC, 1993d, p. 1) construct the difference and implies the new direction of reform:

There are still a number of deeply rooted conflicts in sport, which have not been completely solved. There are problems of varying degrees, such as that sport funds are short, elite level talents are scarce, the motivation and inventiveness of society for participation in the organisation of sport is not fully stimulated; sport work is not effective and efficient, the development of sport is insufficient and the momentum is slow. The task of furthering sport reform is [thus] colossal.

We would argue that this official account not only frames the problems, with which

³⁵ The SPCSC reinforced its power in Chinese sport via the 1986 reform, for example, through restoring the county level PCSCs that had previously been cancelled, the power of the PCSC system was vertically extended to local level of the Chinese administrative division. Horizontally, though it is stated in the 1986 Policy that all industries and social sectors should have their own Sport Associations; it was also stated that the PCSCs at every level should reinforce their unified leadership of sport affairs for all of these industries and organisations.

the SPCSC planned to deal, but also indirectly reflects the result of the 1986 reform. On the one hand, compared with the portrait of the background of the 1986 Policy, the content concerning *the ideological education* and *the role of PCSCs* is replaced by *an emphasis on the civil-society-based development of sport*. This absence of the content emphasised in the 1986 Policy is in line with Xiong et al.'s (2008) statement acknowledging the achievement of the 1986 reform in reinforcing the unified leadership of the SPCSC.

On the other hand, the addition of *the civil-society-based development* is consistent with the unsatisfactory achievement relating to promotion of 'civil-society-based development', despite a number of "sensible and correct attempts³⁶" proposed in the 1986 Policy (Zhang, 2009). This limited achievement is ascribed as an outcome of the over-reinforcement of the PCSC system's administrative power and of the ideological interpretation of the reform (Xiong et al. 2008, Yang et al. 2002, Zhang, 2009). For example, Yang et al. (2002, p.3) state that:

Because the social trend of socialist market-oriented economic reform was insufficiently understood, even partially influenced by the extreme 'left' ideology, the

³⁶ A number of measures promoting civil-society-based development were promoted in the 1986 policy, such as encouraging enterprises and factories to organise sport clubs and elite sport teams, for which PCSCs were required to provide policy and technical support; inviting tenders to bidding for hosting or funding some national or provincial events; and the 'school-lisation³⁶' attempts made by provincial teams were encouraged.

initial idea of the reform [of Chinese sport] strayed significantly into limited adjustment and amendment of the Zhuanye sport system that was formed as part of the planned economy system... All of these made the problems and conflicts of competition and training systems rooted in the planned economy impossible to solve. Internally [within the system] there was a lack of competition and dynamism, and it was difficult for civil-society_bodies and enterprises to develop elite sport entities.

A number of words with negative connotations were used in this critical account concerning conservatism in the 1986 reform. For example, “planned economy”, which is the target of economic reform, is associated with not only “the Zhuanye sport system” but also “problems and conflicts”. Thanks to the “extreme ‘left’ ideology” (hinting at the impact of the Cultural Revolution), the understanding of reform was “influenced”, the initial idea of reform had been “strayed”, and the reform thus became ‘impossible’. This is consistent with the then-Sport Minister’s (Wu 1995, p.45) interpretation of the 1986 reform that “compared with the reform [in Chinese society], the 1986 reform was peripheral. A number of deeply rooted problems were unsolved, especially the Juguo Tizhi system and its mode of operation that had been formed in the former planned economy”.

We would thus argue that even though the SPCSC indicated in the 1986 Policy its willingness to reform, this first reforming document eventually reinforced the administrative power of the PCSCs system and Juguo Tizhi. Given the effectiveness of Juguo Tizhi in elite sport development, it could be argued that this consequence of the 1986 Policy is in line with the first part of the guidelines, “prioritising elite sport, then leading to general development [of sport]” (Wu, 1999), and with the vested

interest of Zhuanye sport system, which is realised through providing satisfactory elite sport performance.

4.2 The 1993 Policy and the comparison with the 1986 version

Compared with the Chinese society in 1986, the 1993 reform enjoyed a much easier social environment, particularly in ideological terms, as it was one year after Deng Xiaoping's burden-lifting visit to south China, during which he stated "the market economy is not equal to capitalism, ... because socialism also has a market" (Deng 1993, p.373). The 14th National Congress of the CPC also took place in 1993, during which the direction of the development of a socialist market economy was explicitly identified. Therefore, the 1993 Policy was published in a society which, as officially documented, was on its route to the new 'socialist market economy' system (Wu, 1999).

As with the 1986 Policy, the 1993 Policy also strongly highlighted elite sport. However, in terms of the policy statement *per se*, the 1993 Policy added another 5 ancillary documents, and is, as we would argue, more strategy-like and detailed than the 1986 version. In order to systemically analyse this document, we have divided the contents relating to elite sport reform into four sections according to their respective foci: the reform of the administrative governance system, the reform of the sport market and industry (concerning the introduction of professional sport),

the reform of the training system, and the reform of the competition system.

4.2.1 The reform of administrative governance system

As with the 1986 Policy, the key point of the reform of the administrative governance system in the 1993 Policy (SPCSC 1993d, p.1) was stated as to

... change the function [of the administrative governance system], adjust internal bodies, separate governance and practical affair, transfer a great number of practical tasks to public institutions and civil-society organisations, and firmly shift the focus to macro control.

However, in contrast to the 1986 reform, which strengthened the system, the 1993 policy identified the reframing of structures and departments as the means by which to accomplish the reform. This new policy narrative, on the one hand, signified the SPCSC's new understanding of the ways of governing and promoting elite sport development; on the other hand, it constructed the function and a new identity of civil-society-based organisations in sport, which were virtual incarnations under Sport Administration Departments (hereafter, SADs). For example, the ASCF, COC and the GAS were recognised as "three titles shared by one group of people", among which the GAS is predominant (Li et al. 2003).

It is acknowledged in the 1993 Policy that new identity and function of civil-society based organisations in sport requires "straightening out the relationship" among these identities (SPCSC 1993d, p.1). Even though this is consistent with the principle

of the separation of administration and operational power, it was, by contrast, also explicitly regulated by the State Council that “the GAS, having another ‘banner’ as the ACSF, is the directly-affiliated institution in sport of the State Council”(The General Office of the State Council of the PRC 1998, p.1). This combined identities at the top level assign SADs dominant and substantial power among the other two (Bao 2003), and, on contrary, make sport associations (led by the ACSF at national level) continuously affiliated to corresponding SADs.

It is stated in the 1993 Policy (SPCSC 1993c, p.1) that

[The governance] of sport [should be transferred] from ‘directly governed by sport departments’ to ‘governed by the public-institutional association entities’ and ‘governed by the authentic civil society associations³⁷’; the key Olympic sports, the traditional sport in which we enjoy advantages and the sports based on public institutions³⁸ should be transferred into the public-institutional associations.

³⁷ The characteristics of the authentic civil society organisations are: 1. Their staff are not in the public institution system, 2. More autonomy for the organisations. The only three authentic civil society organisations are the China Triathlon Sport Association, Federation of Automobile Sport of PRC, China Dance Sport Federation. However, because of a number of problems, for example failure in financial reporting and auditing, the three authentic civil society organisations were then re-absorbed into the public institution system (D. Liu 2008).

³⁸ ‘Public institution’ is defined by the State Council as ‘the public service organizations that are established by the state organs or other organizations by using the state-owned assets’ (The State Council of the People’s Republic of China 1998, p.1). Thus this type of Sport Associations is closely associated with SADs.

The significance of sport is indirectly acknowledged as the criteria distinguishing the two new types of Sport Associations. Olympic sports, the performance of which is closely related to the interests of the Zhuanye system, and which are to be governed by public-institutional associations, are heavily steered, if not wholly controlled, by the SADs. In contrast, those sports governed by the authentic civil society associations are simply ignored in the subsequent policy statement. We would thus argue that such a selective account indirectly constructs the hierarchy of the significance of different types of Sport Associations and the sports they respectively governed, which is in line with the interests of the Zhuanye Sport system.

In addition, SADs' control over Sport Associations was maintained through, indirectly regulating the structure of the lead agencies of Sport Associations³⁹; and directly defining the relationship between SADs and Sport Associations, that:

The affairs of a Sport Association are controlled by the competent authority, which is the SAD; [the SAD] mainly implements the following administrative functions: a) Assigning tasks to Sport Associations... ; b) allocating, supervising and auditing government funding to Sport Association; c) recommending candidates for the role of chairperson... and also examining their qualifications; d) examining and approving Sport Association's documents published in the name of SAD.

SPCSC, 1993d, p. 1

³⁹ It is also regulated that representatives from government were top ranked in the list of the lead agencies of Sport Associations, and the head of the associations was the person solely responsible for the duties the organisation.

Though the policy statement is highly descriptive, it *normalises* the power relationship between the two through employing directive and hierarchical terms, such as “assigning tasks”, “determining”, “supervising”, “approving”, etc. Sport Associations were portrayed as being politically, financially, institutionally and administratively *overseen* by SADs. Even though the independence of Sport Associations experienced a rapid growth after the publication of the 1993 Policy⁴⁰, since the start of the establishment of Administration Centres of sports⁴¹ in 1994, Sport Associations gradually and eventually became virtual incarnations of this new type of apparatus of sport governance⁴².

⁴⁰ Before the socialist market economy was announced in 1992, though there had been some attempts at the independence of Sport Associations (for instance at one time three Sport Associations were even organised as civil society organisations, which were independent of state governance or control), the phenomenon of independent Sport Associations was merely a ‘concept’ attached to functional departments of the sport administration system (Li et al. 2010; D. Liu 2008). After the publication of the 1993 Policy, the reform experienced a rapid growth. Up to 1998, 63 Sport Associations were formed, only three of which authentic civil society organisations (Zang 1998).

⁴¹ The Administration Centres work as the administration department’s puppet string connecting Sport Associations. It is indicated in *the Interim Provisions of the Regulation of Sport Administration Centres of the State Physical Culture and Sport Committee* (SPCSC, 1997, p. 1) that “[the Centres are] the directly affiliated public institutions under the SPCSC, [they are] responsible for the governance of sports, [and] are the standing body of the national association of the sport that it governed, responsible for all the kinds of sport it governed”

⁴² The personnel of these Administration Centres were drawn from that of the previously existing, corresponding functional Departments of the SPCSC and/or from the Offices of Sport, which

On the one hand, the Centres are portrayed as key institutions for strengthening and implementing the Olympic strategy (Ma 2005; Zhang 2009). On the other hand, the Centres are also recognised as “state-owned enterprises”, which are operated by administrative power” (Xiong *et al.*, 2008, p.63), and “hived off”, and “regrouped from the corresponding functional department of the SPCSC” (Zhang, 2009, p.45). These terms identify the Centres’ relationship with, and origins in, the GAS, which resulted in the equivocal nature of the Centres and of their ‘non-governmental’ identity, i.e. as Sport Associations. For example, it is pointed out by Liu (2008, p.24) that:

The identity of Sport Associations in China is ambiguous, and their function is unclear. Administration Centres are the directly affiliated public institutions of the GAS, as well as the administrative offices of Sport Associations. They inherently combine three identities of administration, public institutions and civil organisations.

themselves were disbanded. For example, the Administration Centre for Athletics had been formed from staff from the Office of Athletics in the Department of Training and Competition Three, of the SPCSC. After the reform, the Administration Centre for Athletics, which is the standing body of the Chinese Athletic Association, became a directly affiliated public institution under the auspices of the SPCSC.

At the time of writing, there were 22 Administration Centres governing all Olympic sports and most of the non-Olympic sports in China, and these act as the administrative bodies for more than 70 Sport Associations that make up the majority of sports in the ACSF (D. Liu, 2008). Many personnel are shared between Administration Centre and the Sport Association(s) they administer, especially top level officials, thus ensuring political consistency between the governmental side and the non-governmental side of Chinese elite sport (Tan & Houlihan 2012).

Because of the overlapping identities and lack of clarity of function, the Administration Centres are not able to clearly comprehend their working targets and missions, which directly influence the effectiveness and efficiency of its governance.

Liu's account is consistent with a common characteristic of the governance of Chinese elite sport, i.e. "three titles shared by one group" (Li *et al.*, 2003). It is interesting to note that even Liu elides the object of the above quotation, changing from "the identity of Sport Associations" in the first sentence to "Administration Centres" for the rest of the quotation. It is argued that such 'seamless' changes reflect Liu's internalised elision of the two identities.

In summary, even though there were changes in the 1993 Policy in terms of the explanation of how policy would be implemented, as with the 1986 Policy, the achievement remained limited. Given the SADs' legitimised control over Sport Associations (SPCSC, 1993d) and the governmental nature of "the standing body of Sport Associations" (SPCSC 1997, p.1), (i.e. the Centres), we would argue that the Sport Associations' continuous dependence on SADs is an inevitable outcome of the guidance given in the 1993 policy statement, and other government documents. This is to say that although the goal of reform stated in the 1993 Policy statement was the rendering of Sport Associations into truly independent entities, a counterproductive outcome was caused by the measures promoted in the conflicting policy narrative. This limited achievement of the independence of Sport Associations not only maintained Sport Associations as the virtual incarnation of SADs, but also reflected the GAS's power in protecting its interests through manipulating the policy

discourse.

4.2.2 The reform of sport industry and market

Among the different aspects covered in the section of the 1993 Policy on the reform of the sport industry and the sport market, the introduction of professionalisation directly related to Chinese elite sport (the focus of this research). Professionalisation was new to Chinese sport when it was proposed in the 1993 Policy, as it had always been regarded “as a product of capitalism ... [which] it was not believed could emerge [naturally] in socialist sport “ until the reform of Chinese society (Xiong *et al.* 2008, p.83). In other words, the shift from rejection to introduction of professional elements in Chinese elite sport, more precisely Zhuanye sport, could be regarded as a consequence of changes in the Chinese political environment.

Consistent with the political backdrop, in the 1993 Policy, ‘professionalisation’ was mentioned 7 times, and was associated with a number of concepts promoted in the reform, such as “internationally accepted practices”, “international competition”, and “modern rule of development” (SPCSC, 1993a, p. 1, 1993c, p. 1, 1993e, p. 1). This narrative, on the one hand, clothed professional sport in a ‘socialist market economy’ rhetoric and endorsed such “a product of capitalism” with the ‘opening-up’ reform of the PRC. On the other hand, it also reinforced the significance of professional sport in political, rather than financial, terms.

We would argue that this political significance was in line with the nature of Chinese professional sport, which was a consequence of both external and internal pressure on the PCSCs system, and was reflected in the 1993 Policy. As a part of the State machinery, the SPCSC had to obey the external reforming theme of the PRC, which demanded market-oriented reform in Chinese sport. This was evidenced in the inclusion of the professional elements in the 1993 Policy, which indicated a willingness to follow the trend. On the other side of coin, the internal pressure refers to the 'traditional' political task of SPCSC, i.e. winning Olympic glory, in which its primary interest lay. In terms of policy discourse, this internal pressure resulted in the omission of a number of crucial issues related to professionalisation in the 1993 Policy, such as the eligibility criteria for sports to be professionalised, the procedure of professionalisation, and the governance of professional sport.

This broad rhetoric with implicit statements concerning practical issues reflects policy makers' hesitation in introducing professional sport. This is because, on the one hand, the PCSCs system's political task had been well fulfilled by Zhuanye sport and Juguo Tizhi, in which vested interests group had thus been long established. On the other hand, other than the external pressure that was partially defused through the 'reformist' statements in the 1993 Policy, the State funded PCSCs system faced hardly any pressure, especially in financial terms, to introduce professional elements in its system. The SPCSC hence had no reason to implement professionalisation in a radical sense since this might have a negative influence on Zhuanye sport and

subsequently affect its capability of winning Olympic glory.

In practice, such an attitude of suspicion resulted in the careful selection of which sports should be professionalised. Up to 2005, eight elite sports⁴³ had been professionalised, none of which, except table tennis, was regarded as a key sport in terms of the Olympic task⁴⁴. Thus, it could be argued that the professionalisation of these sports not only had limited impact on the Olympic task, but also enabled the PCSCs system to concentrate more resources on 'key sports'.

Taking the scenario of football, Wu Shaozu provided a five-point elaboration of the rationale for choosing football as the first sport to be professionalised:

Firstly, football is a sport, which [Chinese] people love and [to which Chinese people] pay great attention. Comrade Li Tieying⁴⁵ once commented in a document that

⁴³ The eight elite sports had or has been professionalised are football, basketball, volleyball, table tennis, tennis, Go chess (Weiqi), baseball and Chinese chess.

⁴⁴ Football, basketball and volleyball have been called 'the three big ball [sports]' in Chinese society for their popularity and social influence. However, they have also been well known for their low efficiency in payback in terms of winning medals. Therefore, in spite of its social impact, a great number of provincial PCSCs excluded football from their work plans for the National Games, in order to concentrate resources on medal prospect sports (Xiong et al., 2008).

⁴⁵ Li Tieying, the former Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China. When giving the quoted speech, Li was a Member of the Political Bureau of CPC Central Committee, State Councillor and concurrently Minister in charge of State Education Commission and secretary of its Leading Party Members' Group.

football must be improved, which is the expectation of all Chinese people...;
Secondly, there is no mental burden [for us] in football so far, since the performance has been poor. It is impossible for me to experiment on table tennis and swimming⁴⁶...

Thirdly, the focus of the SPCSC in the 1990s, besides working on a bid for the Olympics and the acceleration of the PCSC system reform, also included some important sports, especially football.

Fourthly, football encompasses a wide range [of issues] and is a good example of the reform... (We can) repeat it if it fails, which would be a partial loss (to Chinese elite sport)

Fifthly, the external environment is good for football reform ... advocacy for professionalisation and [professional] clubs used to be labelled as capitalism. There is no such problem now.

Wang 2002, p.46

The causal factors leading to the professionalisation of Chinese football are identified as, a loose political environment; considerable public and political attention paid to the sport; and relatively less influence on the Olympic task, and none of these relate to financial concerns. The first factor is in line with our previous argument concerning the importance of changes in political elements of Chinese society, while the other two suggest the dual political pressures confronted by the SPCSC. On the one hand, thanks to its great social influence, the reform of football was able to provide a “good example” that was to effectively ease the external pressure. On the

⁴⁶ When Wu made this speech, Chinese swimmers just won four gold medals, five silver medals in the Barcelona Olympic Games.

other hand, its poor performance would ensure the limited impact on the Olympic performance of China, even if it failed, which reduced the “mental burden” of, or the pressure placed on, the SPCSC. In his speech in 1993 All States Sports Minister Conference, Wu (1996, p.80) emphasised the importance of poor performance from another perspective that “if we made mistakes in the reform ... [and] negatively affected the performance [of key sports], our reform would be rejected”.

In summary, we would argue that the introduction of professional sport was enabled by changes in political environment (i.e. economic reform), and was advocated because of its symbolic meaning in obeying the reforming trend, and was promised for its scarce influence on the political task of the SCPCS. It could be thus argued that it was such political concerns that framed the implicit professionalisation message in the 1993 Policy, which eased the external pressure for, and maintained the core of, the Zhuanye system. In return, the statement of, and the interpretation of, the 1993 Policy indirectly reflects the significance of political elements in Chinese elite sport, and accentuates political rhetoric in the development of the commercial elements in Zhuanye sport.

4.2.3 The reform of training system

Consistent with the principle of the 1986 reform, i.e. “reinforcing the unified leadership of the SPCSC”, responsibility for training for elite sports was assigned to the three Departments of Training and Competition of the SPCSC (Wu, 1999).

However, Wu (1999) points out that, because each Department of Training and Competition was in charge of a number of sports, it was difficult for it to provide sport-specific guidelines.

In order to address this problem caused by the over-concentration of responsibility for training in one single department, different roles were assigned to different institutions in the 1993 Policy:

Training institutions and sports entities' functions include administrative governance, practical and professional guidance, and advising on competition; ... The SPCSC publishes guidelines, policies, orders and regulations, [a Sport Association] implementing its administrative governance function; ... providing practical... guidance, and direct development via competition and economic leverage....

Sport associations will generally become entities that have their own responsibility, power and interest, and will vertically govern the training system of their own sports from amateur level to elite level.

SPCSC, 1993b, p. 1

In line with the principle of the 1993 Policy, “the separation of administration and operational power”, the SPCSC was portrayed as a macro-controller making policies and administrative orders, and the Sport Associations were assigned responsibilities for practical issues in a vertical national training system.

It was also indirectly implied in the second quotation that Sport Associations were

“entities that have their own responsibility, power and interest”, which is consistent to their identity as the virtual form of the SADs. It could be argued that though the 1993 policy portrayed different roles of the SADs and Sport Associations in the training system, it was not Sport Associations, but the SADs then the Administration Centres that had consistently controlled the national training system.

It is pointed out that the efficacy of this vertical governance system that was essentially implemented by the Centres was not very satisfying, because:

In subsequent development, the Centres with a ‘semi-administrative character’ have replaced the function of Sport Associations [of vertically governing the development of sports]. However, these Centres that are affiliated to the GAS do not have proper institutional identities when dealing with Provincial Sport Departments⁴⁷; additionally, [because of] the actual benchmark of Provincial Sport Departments, which [compete against other delegations in] the National Games, the vertical system does not work smoothly.

Xiong, et al. 2008, p.58

⁴⁷ Though using the term “Provincial Sport Departments” in the thesis, there are different types of sport governance entities embraced in the term besides the entities of Provinces, Municipalities, Autonomous Regions and Special Administrative Regions. For example, the ‘Physical Culture and Sports Team of the PLA’, also known as the August First Physical Culture and Sports Team, is the SAD of the military force of China, which sends delegation the National Games using the name of the ‘PLA Delegation’ (The Editing Committee of the Encyclopedia of China Sports 2001). Special indications are provided when the term of “Provincial Sport Departments” is specifically used for the entities of Provinces, Municipalities, Autonomous Regions and Special Administrative Regions in the thesis.

Firstly, we would argue that the word “replace” constructs the relationship between the Centres and Sport Associations, and shapes the impact of the establishing of the Centres on the reform of the training system. This relationship between these two types of sport organisations, more precisely between the ‘two banners of one group’, is consistent with our previous argument that it was the Centres, as ‘semi-administration institutions’, which took over the “responsibility, power and interests” of Sport Associations and implemented the 1993 Policy.

Secondly, through portraying the conflicts between the Centres, i.e. an apparatus of the SPCSC, and the Provincial Sport Departments, the authors indirectly suggest that the SADs at the national level were not the always source of the most powerful discourse in Chinese elite sport. The Centres’ identity and the interest of Provincial SADs are identified as two main factors that hinder the effectiveness of the vertical training system. The Centres were defined as public institutions that were only responsible for a given sport or sports (SPCSC, 1997). In contrast, a Provincial SADs is an institution of the provincial government. It thus was not the Centres but the provincial government, which provided resources to Provincial SADs and tasked Provincial SADs mainly with delivering the provincial teams performance at the National Games. Thus, the Centres’ ability to direct policy at the provincial end of the vertical training system was limited by virtue of the weakness of their semi-governmental identities, and by Provincial SADs’ principal concern to maximise performance in the national competition system.

In other words, the conflict between the Centres and the Provincial SADs reflects struggles between the interests at the National (represented by the Centres), and Provincial, levels of Zhuanye system. Olympic performance was prioritised as the top goal of Chinese sport by the SPCSC. By contrast, Provincial SADs emphasised respective provincial delegations' performance in the National Games, which for them was even more important than Olympic performance, because good or poor performance related to the rewards or penalties for Provincial SADs and their staff (Yi, 2008). Provincial SADs thus strategically prioritised competition at national rather than international level. However, such inconsistency of interests at national and provincial level was addressed in another part of the 1993 Policy concerning the reform of competition system of Zhuanye sport.

4.2.4 The reform of competition system

The principal purpose of the National Games was explicitly defined as preparing for the Olympic Games in the 1986 and 1993 Policy. It was highlighted in the 1986 Policy that the guideline of the competition arrangements for the National Games was to "emphasise the Olympic sports, and [to] include common [sports]" (SPCSC 1986a, p.72). The emphasis on the Olympic sports was further accentuated in the 1993 policy, through elaborating the problems of the National Games as:

... having redundant sports, key sports thus cannot receive the support they should have had; the distribution of resources [to key sports] is inappropriate, [and consequently] affects the implementation of the Olympic strategy. [Therefore] the key

aspect of reform should be a focus on 'shrinking the frontline [focusing on a reduced number of sports and], highlighting the key sports 'utilising regional advantages and improving the quality and efficiency of competition.

SPCSC, 1993a, p. 1

It is explicitly indicated that the reason for restructuring the National Games was to protect the implementation of the Olympic strategy and to promoting key sports, both of which had been hindered by the redundant sports in the National Games. In other words, this indirectly regulated the inclusion of certain 'unneeded' sports in the National Games as inappropriate for accomplishing the Olympic strategy. Consistent with this tone, was the notion of "common sports" (i.e. non-Olympic sports; non-Asian Games sports; and Asian Games sports for which there was no prospect of China winning gold medals), which was included in the statement of the 1986 Policy but was absent in the 1993 edition.

After the 1993 Policy was published, the sports incorporated in the National Games were reduced to merely Olympic sports and Wushu. Given the significance of National Games to Provincial SADs, it could be argued that this policy change not only reflected the accentuation of Olympic sports at the National level; but also manifested a purpose of unifying the working focus of SADs at national and provincial levels. This focus on provincial level is consistent with the indication of "utilising regional advantage", which is identified as an approach to realise the ultimate goal of the reform of the competition system, i.e. reinforcing the Olympic

strategy. In other words, we would argue that through utilising its power over Chinese elite sport policy discourse, the SPCSC was able not only to preserve its power and interests at national level, but also to increase the prominence of Olympic performance discourse at provincial level through re-structuring the regulation of the competition system.

A number of supportive measures were subsequently implemented to further ease the conflict between the National and Provincial SADs, such as, altering the year of National Games from one year before to one year after each Olympic Games, which helped to ensure that athletes were in peak condition for the Olympic Games. Since 1997, athletes' Olympic performance had been given 'points' which were to be added into the total points that a provincial delegation earns in the National Games. The ranking of the provinces in the National Games was a source not simply of kudos for the province and its sports leaders, but could also influence the political career of successful sports administrators (Shi et al. 2009; Wang & Yang 2011; Xiong et al. 2008). After 2005 the Olympic performance became double weighted while medals in world championships also started to be assessed and to contribute to provincial performance. Since this period, the significance of Olympic performance has increased markedly throughout the Chinese elite sport system. By contrast, non-Olympic sport has been significantly devalued in the overall Chinese elite sport system.

Even though the National Games was also recognised as “an important element to ... attract public attention and strengthen government investment in sport” (SPCSC, 1986a, 1993a, p. 1), there was hardly any concrete content concerning this function. We would argue that such simple inclusion of content relating to civil society is in line with the superficial policy statement, which we previously analysed, concerning the introduction of professional elements into Chinese elite sport.

In general, the 1993 Policy is regarded as “the strategic turning point, at which [Chinese sport] made its first attempt to fundamentally break from the [traditional] framework of the [elite sport] system, and to look for a breakthrough route to reform from outside the [PCSC] system” (Yang et al. 2002, p.4). However, the core interests of the SPCSC and its power over Chinese elite sport were essentially protected, which could be argued to be a reflection of certain parts of the 1993 Policy, such as the maintaining of administrative power that was subsequently assigned to the Centres; the accentuation of Olympic performance in Chinese elite sport, and the selective professionalisation of ZhuanYe sports. In their review of the 1993 Policy, Xiong *et al.* (2008, p.53) point out that:

In terms of the elite sport reform, the 1993 Policy did not have a firm stance [to carry out reform]. ... An important [reason] was the high correlation between Olympic performance and the political kudos of Chinese sport officials. Under such circumstances, everything [in Chinese elite sport] had to be targeted at the Olympic Games. In the situation that elite sport had hardly been developed in a ‘civil-society’ context, it seemed that there was no other choice but to implement administrative methods in order to ensure that [Chinese] elite sport could achieve [satisfactory]

results in the Olympic Games. It is argued, perhaps a little radically, that those with vested interests in elite sport would rather sacrifice the development of elite sport per se than to cede their own interests and [political] future. Because it is a time-tested rule for individual [career] development in elite sport that 'he who excels in training can gain access to an official career', ' he who excels in competition can gain access to an official career'.

In the above evaluation of what the SPCSC did and why in the 1993 reform, the authors, on the one hand, question the starting point of the reform which was “not a firm stand” since civil-society-based development was not fully trusted by the SPCSC as a means for optimising Olympic performance; and, on the other hand, criticise the motivation of vested interest groups to promote the reform, since this was to protect “their own interests and [political] future”.

There were three targets of the reform set in the 1993 policy statement, namely elite sport success; the efficiency of the sport system; and civil-society-based development of elite sport. Compared to the other two, there was less essential achievement in terms of the civil-society-based development of Chinese elite sport, despite of several attempted innovations, such as the independence of Sport Associations and the introduction of professionalisation. Thus, the dominant voices in Chinese elite sport were still those of Zhuanye, rather than professional, sport from the PCSC system, though this was not the case for the Sport Associations. The authors identify this limited achievement in the civil-society based development of sport as reinforcing the appropriateness of Juguo Tizhi, and maintaining the dominance of Zhuanye system in Chinese elite sport. We would further argue that it is also the

practices promoting the dominance and interests of Zhuanye sport that have hindered the development of civil-society elements in Chinese elite sport. In other words, the dominance of Zhuanye sport is both the reason for, and the outcome of, the limited civil-society-based development of Chinese elite sport. This is in line with the vested interest group in Zhuanye sport, and eventually limited the efficacy of reform in terms of civil-society-based development. As Xiong *et al* point out in the above quotation, the aspect of civil-society-based development was “sacrificed” in order to ensure “achiev(ing) [satisfactory] results in the Olympic Games” which were in line with the vested interests (benefits and status) of state administrators.

Through regulating and restructuring the system of Chinese elite sport, the 1993 reform strengthened the SPCSC’s overwhelming power over elite sport. The SPCSC did however attempt to introduce market economy/civil society based approaches into elite sport but greater effort was focused on sports that had not enjoyed Olympic success. Even though it brought more detailed operational content and market-oriented economic features into the policy narrative, the 1993 Policy shares with the 1986 Policy the goal of ‘winning Olympic glory’, which is consistent with the interests of state administrators operating within the PCSC system.

4.3 The Strategic Plan for Winning Olympic Glory 1994-2000, 2001-2010

The Strategic Plan for the Winning Olympic Glory (hereafter, the Plan) is a periodically

renewed Chinese elite sport policy. There have been three editions, respectively covering 1994-2000, 2001-2010, 2011-2020 (hereafter, the 1994 Plan, the 2001 Plan and the 2011 Plan)⁴⁸.

The nature of *the Plan* is well recognised as a policy concerning the "general reform and development of elite sport; it is, in other words, a concentrated version of the general reform and development plan of (Chinese) elite sport" (Xiong *et al.* 2008, p.95). This is consistent with the then-portrait of the Olympic Games as a driving force for the general development and reform of Chinese sport. Lu (1994, p.1) states that:

In the last seven or eight years of the 20th century, Chinese sport will seek its survival and development in two ... contemporary trends, ... the second is [the combination of] the global sport development and [Chinese sport's] own restless trend of reform...especially [because of] its engagement with the Olympic movement, [which] predestines that the reform of Chinese sport has to follow this global trend."

⁴⁸ Each edition of the Plans consisted of two parts, *the Summary of the Plan* (hereafter the Summary) and *the Implementation Plan*. Though specifically named after the Olympics, *the Plans*, especially *the Summaries*, are regarded as essentially the most representative political guidelines for the development of Chinese elite sport after the 1993 policy (Hao & Ren 2003; Xiong *et al.* 2008). *The Summary* is described as "comprehensive and foundational, and is the principal document for the SPCSC to carry out macro control [over Chinese elite sport]" (SPCSC 1995b, p.1); and is "the strategic blueprint guiding Chinese elite sport for its steady development, [and] the programmatic document directing the development of Chinese elite sport and the implementation of Olympic strategy" (GAS 2011b, p.1). Due to the confidentiality of the full version of the document, we focus on *the Summaries* as the main data source for this aspect of the research.

Straightforwardly, Chinese sport was constructed as a passive follower of the development of global sport, and its reform was “predestined” to “follow” the external global trend, represented by the Olympic movement. Additionally, given the significance of the Olympic Games to Chinese elite sport (which we discuss in the subsequent two discourse-focused chapters), it could be argued that this external pressure was also consistent with the inherent feature of Zhuanye sport. Thus, this Olympic ‘specified’ strategic plan was to be regarded as a working guideline for the Olympic-targeted SADs (Cheng 2011).

Given this nature of *the Plans* and *the Summaries*, the goals of these Olympic-titled policies can be said to be two-fold, namely enhancing Olympic performance, which can be straightforwardly used as its benchmark; and the development and reform of Zhuanye sport. Given the steady increase in Chinese Olympic performance since the 1992 Barcelona Games, the Plans can be straightforwardly regarded as successful and fruitful. However, the second target, which is relevant to the concerns of this research, is less tangible and more difficult to assess. We thus focus on those statements and interpretation of *the Summaries*, concerning reform and development in the Plans, and aim to unveil the interest and power relation through analysing the account relating to the intangible targets.

Content-wise, *the Summaries* are generally composed of four major parts, *the situation and task*, *the goal*, *the principle*, and *the measures*. However, only the 2001 Plan

consisted of all four of these sections. In the 1994 Plan, there is an additional introduction section with the measures and steps for the implementation of *the Plan*. The 2010 Plan has a specific section on achievement that mainly focused on the Beijing Games. The analysis in this Chapter focuses on the first two editions, while the *2011 Summary* is reviewed in the Post-2008 Chapter.

4.3.1 The Situation and Task

Even though both the *1994* and *2011 Summaries* covered two Olympic Games in their respective time spans, thanks to the successful bid for the 2008 Games in 2001, the 2008 Olympics was a crucial and major focus of *the 2001 Summary*. The Beijing Olympics was not only portrayed as a sporting event, but also interpreted from a number of perspectives, for instance, economic, political and diplomatic. For example:

Winning the bid for the 2008 Games is another important opportunity for the development of sport in our country, which will have a significant impact on the development of economy and society, on the promotion of opening-up, as well as on the increase of the international status of our country.

GAS, 2002, p. 1

Consistent with the political significance of the Olympics and modern sport in the Chinese context, the significance of the Beijing Games was acknowledged in two ways. First, it was emphasised in terms of elite sport *per se*, which is consistent with

the statement of the 1994 Summary concerning the political task of Zhuanye sport, i.e. “writing the glorious Chinese Olympic chapter”(SPCSC 1995b, p.1). Secondly, the Beijing Games is also associated with a number of political terms, “the opening-up” and “the increase of international status”, which imply the initial purpose of introducing the Olympics into Chinese society and is consistent with the features of Chinese Olympic discourse that we subsequently discussed in the following two chapters.

International competition was employed in both *Summaries*, constructing the external environment of Chinese elite sport. In contrast to the general description in the 1994 *Summary* (SPCSC 1995b, p.1), “because of the collapse of the USSR and the vanishing of East Germany...there are more competitors at our level in the Olympic Games”, a more detailed analysis of competitors was provided in the 2001 *Summary*:

Global elite sport has rapidly developed in the new century; all countries have paid more attention to the Olympic performance and ranking, have increased their investment in elite sport and have employed various kinds of methods to reinforce national administration and [national] support for elite sport...

Competition has taken place between the two super powers, the USA and Russia; the differences among China, Germany, France and Australia have been decreasing...

GAS, 2002, p. 1

The increasing involvement of government within elite sport, represented by

“increased investment” and “reinforce[d] administration”, is acknowledged as a global trend in elite sport development. As the two “international practices” were in line with the character of the Juguo Tizhi, it could be argued that such a portrayal indirectly legitimised Juguo Tizhi and thus endorsed the requirement of concentrating resources and power. Moreover, the political significance of Olympic performance was also accentuated through relating the Olympic Games to international competition in the policy narrative.

Besides this increasing and more explicit portrayal of international competition, the account concerning professional sport was remarkably different between the two *Summaries*. It was acknowledged in *the 1994 Summary* that “the introduction of commercialisation and professionalisation has stimulated the rapid development of elite sport performance” (SPCSC 1995b, p.1). However, there was no mention about this function of professional sport in the subsequent edition. This change, on the one hand, is consistent with the characteristic of Chinese professional sport, most of which were ‘functionally’ worthless to the GAS in terms of fulfilling its Olympic task. On the other hand, such an account indirectly identified Zhuanye sport as the only means by which Olympic glory could be achieved, and thus endorsed the concentration of resource on it in preparation for the Beijing Games.

In the subsequent part of *the Situation and Task* section in the 2001 Summary, discussion of ‘governance’ and of ‘sport science and technology’ replaced the

description of the domestic situation and the winter Olympic sports in the 1994 Summary. The 2001 Summary (GAS 2002, p.1) stated:

Relationships in sport administration, the competition management [system], the financial investment [system] and the social security [system] should be further clarified and reinforced...

Traditional, experiential training is still dominant [in the training system of Chinese elite sport], the combination of training and science and technology is insufficient, and therefore the investments in science and technology as well as research teams urgently need to be intensified.

It is pointed out by Xiong et al. (2008) that the addition of the first two issues in terms of governance, *i.e.* sport administration and competition management, aims to solve problems in professional sport and ease conflicts between professional and Zhuanye sport. We would argue that this purpose, on the one hand, is consistent with the *genre* employed in the statement, *i.e.* “clarifying and reinforcing”. On the other hand, it is also in line with the GAS’s attitude towards, and knowledge of, professional sport and the Olympic task, which led to the nearly complete exclusion⁴⁹ of professional sport in the 2001 *Summary*.

The addition of the other two issues, finance and social security reflected the GAS’s attempts to demand additional social resources for Zhuanye sport for the

⁴⁹ Professional sport was only mentioned once in the 2001 *Summary*, “the professionalisation of elite sport is accelerated” (GAS 2002, p.1).

preparation of the Beijing Olympics. This demand was rationalised and legitimised by China's continual improvement in Olympic performance, which evidenced the effectiveness and efficiency of ZhuanYe sport and Juguo Tizhi in elite sport development. There were a number of elements covered in the subsequent detailed breakdown of the requirement for resources, such as, human resources, ideological education, financial supports, etc., which reflected the GAS's interpretation of the causal factors of its former success.

The inclusion and emphasis of these issues [the refinement of sport administration, of the competition management system, of the financial investment system and of the social security system] in the policy statement also reflected the GAS's awareness of the weaknesses of Juguo Tizhi. These requirements, which were eventually fulfilled during the preparation for the Beijing Games, essentially reinforced the power of, and resource invested in, Juguo Tizhi. Thus, as a number of interviewees noted, "an extreme Juguo Tizhi" was established before the Beijing Games.

4.3.2 The Guiding Theory and Principle

This section on *Guiding Theory and Principle* was 'promoted' from the third section of the 1994 Summary to the second of the 2001 Summary, which, we would argue, reflected the GAS's growing attention to the effect of theoretical and strategic issues relating to Olympic performance. In terms of the policy statement, this section in each of the Summaries were consisted with four parts, which are respectively

discussed below.

4.3.2.1 Guiding theory and the principle of Reform

Consistent with the reforming trend of the Chinese society, reform is also emphasised in the 1994 *Summary*, that “the overall [development of Chinese elite sport] should be led through deepening the reform of Chinese sport” (SPCSC 1995a, p.1). However, like the term of ‘professionalisation’, this perspective was absent in the 2001 *Summary*. Given the nature of Chinese elite sport reform, which is to “refine Juguo Tizhi” (SPCSC 1993d; Liu 2007; P. Liu 2008; P. Liu 2009b), this absence indirectly reflected the GAS’s attempt to, at least, postpone ‘refining Juguo Tizhi’ for the preparation for the Beijing Games. This ‘sacrifice’ of reform is evidenced in the interview with *Interviewee General 3*, indicating that:

Actually, there were all of these problems [in Chinese sport] before 2008... [However], everyone kept quiet at that time just for the 2008 Games, for the success of the Games... though everyone had some complaints or comments, we suppressed them, ... to show our devotion and as a contribution to the nation... The reform of Chinese sport had basically halted from 2000. Everyone temporarily suppressed conflicts in order to guarantee [the success of] the Beijing Games. ...

Through suggesting the “silence” of “everyone” (both internal and external to Zhuanye sport), the Interviewee portrays a general understanding of Chinese society in terms of the necessity of sacrifice for the Beijing Games, which, consequently, enhanced the power of discourse in relation to Olympic performance and Juguo Tizhi discourse. We may also argued that this absence of a reforming account in the

statement of the *2001 Summary* also reflected a significant power difference between the discourse of Olympic performance and of elite sport reform, which were implicitly constructed as incompatible in the policy narrative. This is evidenced in Zhang's (2009, p.22, p.48) assessment on the impact of the Beijing Games on the reform of Chinese elite sport, stating:

During the packed-schedule of the preparation for the [2008] Games,... the reform that might destabilise [Juguo Tizhi] and thus affected elite sport performance had to be postponed. The introduction of professional sport and the further refinement of Juguo Tizhi were therefore affected....

Winning the bid in 2001, ... offered an excuse for the continuity of conservatism in sport reform...

Even though the Beijing Games was portrayed as the factor hindering the reform of Chinese elite sport in general, this 'negative' impact of the Beijing Games was explicitly associated with those reforms that were recognised as potentially "affect(ing) elite sport performance". Given the relationship between Juguo Tizhi and elite sport performance, this is consistent with our previous argument concerning the limited achievement of certain parts of the 1993 reform, i.e. the aspects of the reform of the administrative governance system and the professionalisation of Chinese elite sport. In other words, this (voluntary or involuntary) 'pre-2008 silence' of reforming narrative in policy statement or external discourse reflected the impact of the Beijing Games on the power structure of Chinese sport in the reforming era.

4.3.2.2 *The construction of the Olympics and of the Olympic strategy*

In line with its title, Olympic performance was emphasised in three editions of the *Summary*, although their accounts concerning the Olympics are different. In the *1994 Summary* (SPCSC 1995b, p.1), the Olympics was portrayed as the primary strategic goal of Chinese elite sport:

[We should] implement the strategy for development, which prioritises the Olympic Games at top level.

Given the historical emphasis on Olympic performance in Chinese elite sport discourse, this identification of the prime importance of the Olympics indirectly promoted the Olympic performance as the principal benchmark of the PCSCs system.

In the *2001 Summary*, though the performance in the Beijing Games was particularly accentuated, the 2008 Olympics was also portrayed as an opportunity for the general development of elite sport. It was stated that:

(We should) consider the 2008 Olympics as an opportunity to improve the comprehensive strength and competitive level of Chinese elite sport by regarding the fulfilment of people's increasing need in sport as the starting point, linking it closely to practices, and obeying the rule of elite sport development.

GAS, 2002, p. 1

In contrast to the concentrated emphasis on Olympic performance and thus the

absence of reforming content in this section, another outcome, the general development of Chinese sport, was introduced into the policy statement as one of the projected outcomes of hosting the 2008 Games. Compared with the other benchmark, that of Olympic performance, this new outcome was relatively more difficult to evaluate. Nevertheless it seems clear that the introduction of this less-tangible element and of “the increasing need of Chinese people” would protect the interest of the GAS. On the one hand, this inclusion of ‘the need of people’ endorses SADs’ subsequently move with a principle of the CPC, ‘serving the people’ (Mao, 1944). On the other hand, it also hedges the bets of the Zhuanye sport system, if it failed to clinch a top three place in the medal table of the Beijing Games, as stated in the 2001 Summary.

Compared to the 1994 *Summary*, the mechanism of Chinese elite sport development was regulated in a more concise, practical and more clearly targeted fashion in the 2001 edition, stating:

[We should] strengthen the Olympic strategy... establish the hierarchy of sports [in terms of their importance], carry out adjustments in the structure [of Chinese sport], and refine the distribution of resources.[We should also] clarify the relationship between the Olympic Games, Asian Games, National Games and Inter-City Games, develop national sporting resources, utilise the advantage of Juguo Tizhi, and stimulate and make use of the enthusiasm of all social sectors...

GAS, 2002, p. 1

Besides changing *genre* in relation to the Olympic strategy from “implementing” to “strengthen(ing)”, the above quotation also concretely identified the key procedures of Chinese elite sport development, which reflected the “advantage of Juguo Tizhi”. On the one hand, *following the 1993 Policy*, a hierarchy of the importance of sport events from international to domestic level was regularly emphasised. On the other hand, the utilisation of resources from the state and social sector was also normalised as a common practice for implementing the Olympic strategy. This account further endorses the GAS’s control over elite sport resources and over Chinese elite sport *per se* in preparing for the Beijing Games, which was at the very top of the hierarchy.

4.3.2.3 *Elite sport development*

In the *1994 Summary*, there were 9 factors covered in this part, most of which were concrete operational measures and were subsequently repeated in the section on *Main Measures* [for implementing the Olympic strategy], which to a degree, reduce the value of this part of content in the section of Guiding theory. By contrast, only three factors, i.e. scientific and technological support, legal elements in sport and mass sport, were included in the corresponding section of the *2001 Summary*. This content reflected the GAS’s ‘new’ knowledge about ways of strengthening Juguo Tizhi and of exploring new fields and methods for concentrating social resource.

The first factor, the scientific and technological support, was combined with

education issues in the policy statement, and was more detailed than the 1994 *Summary*. On the one hand, the increased amount of content and level of detail was consistent with the previous section in the 1994 *Summary on the Situation and Task*, which addresses the insufficient scientific and technological support to Chinese elite sport. On the other hand, the addition of the education sector matters identified it not only as a means of promoting ‘civil-society-based development’ but also as a measure for enhancing performance. However, there has been only limited progress in relation to the educational goals. This was interpreted as the consequence of the Zhuanye system’s monopolistic control over elite sport resources and its concerns about the potential challenges from the education sector for winning Olympic glory, which would threaten its vested interests (Xiong *et al.* 2008).

Secondly, the maintenance of legal elements, i.e. claiming “ruling [elite] sport by law”, echoed the then-popular political statement, ‘ruling the country by law’, which was made by the Chinese President (Jiang 1997). This also reflected the GAS’s recognition of the function of legal elements in endorsing its monopolistic power in Chinese elite sport. For instance, the SADs’ intervention in elite sport, which became more important during the preparation for the Beijing Games, is legitimised in the Sport Law of China (the only substantive sport related law in China⁵⁰).

⁵⁰ Besides the Sport Law of China published by the State Council, there are some regulations relating to elite sport mainly published by the SPCSC and then the GAS, such as the notice on reinforcing

Thirdly, it is 'acknowledged' that elite sport had a number of positive impacts on it, such as "enhancing people's consciousness of sport participation, increasing the weight of sport in people's life" (GAS 2002, p.1). This is consistent with the advocacy of "the fulfilment of people's increasing need in sport" and with the indication of general development as one of the intended outcomes of hosting the Games in this document. We would argue that this account reflected the GAS's attempts to legitimise the necessity of prioritising elite sport from the perspective of mass sport.

4.3.2.4 *The expected outcomes*

As policies inherently focusing on elite sport development in general, the expected outcomes stated in both the 1994 and 2001 *Summaries* were not restricted to Olympic performance only. In the 1994 *Summary*, the expected outcome was indicated in a 'stratified' manner:

[We should] implement [a various of] ... means ... that are in line with these principles, consolidating and upgrading the sports in which we have had advantage; strengthening those sports in which we have potential to develop advantage; [striving for] breakthrough in weak points [of Chinese elite sport], and improving those less-developed regions.

SPCSC, 1995b, p. 1

administrative management on sport market 关于加强体育市场管理的通知 (published by the SPCSC); Methods of National Sport Competition (published by the GAS), etc.; the Summary of Nationwide Fitness Program 全民健身计划纲要 was published by the State Council for mass sport in 1995.

This emphasis on general elite sport is consistent with the statement in the section on the *Situation and Task*, indicating that the overall strength of Chinese elite sport “urgently needs to be improved” (SPCSC 1995b, p.1). However, like the *1993 Policy*, the *1994 Summary* confronted a similar dilemma in balancing reform and Juguo Tizhi. For instance, the reform of Juguo Tizhi was strongly promoted in the *1994 Summary* and was portrayed as a primary factor leading the overall development of Chinese elite sport (SPCSC 1995a, p.1). This account, as we previously argued, reflected the clash of the internal and external pressures on Chinese elite sport.

In the *2001 Summary*, fulfilling people’s needs is framed as the ultimate outcome of the GAS’s practices. This is indicated in the following extract:

...[We should] regard the 2008 Olympics as an opportunity for improving the overall strength and level of the elite sport of China by regarding the fulfilment of people’s increasing needs in sports as a starting point, by closely linking it to practices, and [by] obeying the rule of elite sport development.

GAS, 2002

In line with Mao Zedong’s (1944) words, “serving the people”, the improvement “of the overall strength and level of elite sport” was framed as the GAS’s approach to meeting the needs of Chinese people. This account clothes the GAS’s moves, which essentially realise its interests through providing satisfactory performance, in a socialist rhetoric and legitimises such a move with the dominant ideology in Chinese society.

In general, through comparing the statement of the 1994 and 2001 Summaries, it could be argued that the GAS was more experienced than the SPCSC in promoting elite sport development in a reforming era. For example, through utilising different concepts, such as mass sport and people's needs, the GAS endorsed the necessity of prioritising elite sport as well as of maintaining its power over Chinese elite sport during the preparation for the Beijing Games. Additionally, the GAS was also empowered by the emphasis on the Beijing Games in the Chinese society (as we demonstrated in the part concerning the Chinese Olympic discourse in the following chapter), and consequently employed the concentrated political and public attention on the Games as a distraction allowing a drift in the focus of the *Summary* away from reform, and towards the reinforcement of Juguo Tizhi.

In Xiong *et al.*'s (2008, p.97) analysis of the 2001 Summary, these 'clever' practices and consistent dominance are regarded as a key obstacle to sport reform, which is also the result of common understanding of Chinese elite sport:

Including the authors of the Summaries, almost everyone in Chinese sport believes that the Olympic success of Chinese elite sport should be ascribed to Juguo Tizhi which has lasted since the planned economy era. However, Juguo Tizhi has also been the target of the two reforms of Chinese elite sport so far. Nonetheless, as evidenced by the current situation, a significant number of the missions of 'the reform of the administrative governance system' (for example, the independence of sports [associations], and the diversification of funding resources) have not yet been completed.

Framing Juguo Tizhi and reform as two conflicting phenomena, the authors

indirectly identified the continuous dominance of Juguo Tizhi through acknowledging the limited achievement in Chinese elite sport reform. This dominance, as stated in the first line of the quotation, was supported by the belief held by almost everyone in Chinese sport in the effectiveness and significance of Juguo Tizhi. In other words, it indirectly normalises the ‘usefulness’ of Juguo Tizhi as a common knowledge of Chinese elite sport. Though we are not able to know exactly who “almost everyone” was, given the relatively fewer number professional sports in China, we may infer that most of those referred to are those who were involved in Zhuanye sport. Given that the vested interests within Zhuanye sport were in line with Chinese Olympic performance that had been attributed to Juguo Tizhi, we may argue that promoting Juguo Tizhi or demoting reform were also in line with the interests of most of this significant majority. Eventually,

“the Beijing Games pushed Juguo Tizhi to the extreme, ... [which] has concentrated the nation’s scarce resources on a limited number of elite sports, and implemented all means to maximize (Olympic) performance”.

Interviewee General 2

4.3.3 The Objects of the Plan

Straightforwardly, projected performance targets for each Olympic Games were clearly listed in the 1994 and 2001 *Summaries*. However, in contrast to the indication of the general position in the Olympics, the projected rank of the Chinese team in the Beijing Games was explicitly indicated in the 2001 *Summaries*.

'The fundamental factors in the strength of the system' and 'the goal of the reform of the system and mechanism of Chinese elite sport' were also employed in the 1994 Summary as the other two objects. 'The fundamental factors' were relatively straightforward: including a number of basic indicators of elite sport development, such as the number of elite athletes and coaches, the percentage of Olympic level athletes in the Zhuanye sport system, the system of scientific and technological support, etc.

The inclusion of 'the object of the reform of system and mechanism' is consistent with the nature of the 1994 *Summary* as a series of implementations of the 1993 *Policy* (Xiong, et al. 2008). All of the eight aspects in part duplicated the requirement in the 1993 *Policy*. Six of these aspects were associated with the verb "to establish". we would argue that his *genre* the reflected a dissatisfaction with the implementation of the 1993 *Policy* in 'establishing' foundation in these six aspects, and an intention to reinforce the power of the SPCSC, which, as we previously argued, was the essential impact of the 1993 *Policy*.

The title of the corresponding section in the 2001 *Summary* was changed to "The Objectives of Reform and Development". This change in rhetorical terms was interpreted as a representation of GAS's improved recognition of the importance of the reform of Chinese elite sport. Ironically, the reform narrative was remarkably reduced in the 2001 *Summary* in both quantitative and qualitative terms. For example,

similar to the exclusion of the topic of reform *in the Guiding Theory and Principle*, the *objective of the reform of the system and operating mechanisms of Chinese elite sport* was also deleted in the *2001 Summary*. Although there was a new topic in the section on *the Objectives of the Plan*, i.e. *the general object of elite sport development*, there was only one sentence generally relating to the reform as follows:

... establish[ing] the elite sport administrative system and operating mechanisms with Chinese characteristics [, which is] consistent with the socialist market economy [of China]

GAS, 2002

This contradictory narrative in the title and statement of this part in the *2001 Summary* reflected a similar dilemma between *Juguo Tizhi* and reform, which confronted the SPCSC when publishing the 1993 Policy. *Juguo Tizhi* had been well regarded and positively portrayed as an effective apparatus of elite sport development (Fan, Wu, & Xiong, 2005; Hao & Ren, 2003; Yu. Li et al., 2010; Wei et al., 2010; Xu, 2008). However, it was also recognised as the obligation and the target of Chinese elite sport reform by external commentators and a number of internal ‘reformists’. For example, Zhang (2009, p. 1) indicates that

The socialist market economy of China has been established, nevertheless, there is still an element of the planned economic system left in Chinese sport, (namely) Juguo Tizhi in which typical features of the planned economy are still highly rewarded and respected...

Given the reforming trend in Chinese society, it could be argued that through identifying the planned-economy nature of Juguo Tizhi, Zhang indirectly portrays Juguo Tizhi as the target of the reform. Hence, the alternation of the title of this section on the Objects could be regarded as a consequence of the influence of the political power over discourse of Chinese society. In other words, it represented the GAS's positive response to the increasing emphasis on reforming discourse in Chinese society.

However, as previously indicated, this positive responds to the pressure for reform was limited in the title of this part. We would argue that this superficial support and essentially postpone of the reform, which substantially protected Juguo Tizhi at least during the imminence of the Beijing Games, was enabled and endorsed by the significance of the Beijing Games and the effectiveness of Juguo Tizhi, both of which were well recognised by Chinese society. Thus this knowledge empowers the GAS to not only eventually protect Juguo Tizhi in the reforming trend, but also, silence requirements for carrying out reform in the name of preparing the Beijing Games.

Li Yuanwei *et al.* (2003, p.4) interpreted this dilemma between the requirement of reform and of the performance in the Beijing Games as a conflict between short term and long term objects of Chinese sport, stating that :

The reform procedure of refining Juguo Tizhi accidentally overlapped with the 29th Olympiad. Because the Olympic Strategy is directly implemented by the GAS [who recognise that] on the one hand, reform might bring some risks, on the other hand,

stopping reform will waste a good opportunity, and subsequently will affect long term development. [It could] neither use the task of the 29th Olympiad as an excuse to give up reform, nor hastily carry out [the reform] without considering the timing, [the GAS thus is] in a dilemma. Hence, controlling the timing and the process [of the reform] became one of the key factors influencing the big picture [of the development of Chinese elite sport].

In contrast to other scholars, Li *et al.* suggested that the reform of Juguo Tizhi was not a consequence of external pressure on Chinese elite sport, for example, “the socialist market economy of China” (Zhang, 2009, p.1) or “the development of global sport” (Lu 1994, p.1), but a long-term target of it. Thus the GAS was identified as the sole policy maker proactively, rather than passively, balancing its significant short-term goal, namely performance in the 29th Olympiad, and the inescapable long-term objects.

This interpretation not only reflected the GAS’s dominance in Chinese elite sport, but also, legitimised the GAS’s choice of promoting Juguo Tizhi before the Beijing Games. This was consistent with the fact that the main author was a holder of high rank in the SAD. This also suggests that the GAS, which was under great pressure to succeed in Olympic performance and to implement elite sport reform, still maintained its power over discourse not only in Juguo Tizhi but also in the reform. This is to say that though the reform was a significant long-term target, which should not be “given up”, the choice of prioritising Olympic strategy was eventually made after careful planning when the Beijing Games were imminent. However, it was emphasised by Interviewee General 3 that this essential emphasis of Olympic

performance (in the intrinsic and extrinsic discourse of Chinese elite sport) was “a double-edged sword for the GAS tying both the government and itself”. On the one hand, it brought tremendous pressure on Zhuanye sport for providing satisfactory Olympic performance for its benefit and status. On the other hand, it also rationalised the maintenance of Juguo Tizhi, and endorsed the GAS’s requirement for support from the government in terms of resources and further cooperation, in order to ensure delivering satisfactory Olympic performance.

4.3.4 The Measures

The policy statement in the section of *the measures* covers the practical factors and elements that are well regarded (by the policy makers) as essentials to elite sport development. In order to have a systemic view of these operational factors, we will begin the analysis by comparing these aspects covered in the 1994 and 2001 Summaries, to De Bosscher *et al.*’s (2007; 2009; 2010) 9-pillar SPLISS model of elite sport development.

As we can see from the Table 4.1 below, there were nine aspects elaborated in the practical section of the 1994 Summary and ten aspects in the 2001 Summary, covering all of the 9 pillars of the SPLISS model. However, the section of *the measures* in the 1994 Summary and 2001 Summary did not literally imitate the SPLISS model, as some aspects covered more than one pillar and some measures focused on different perspectives of one pillar.

In addition, as shown in Table 4.1, there are differences between the policy statement of *the measures* in the 1994 and 2001 Summaries, such as some additional aspects and modifications of the 1994 Summary in the 2001 edition. In this section, we mainly focus on the additional aspects in the 2001 edition, because, on the one hand, we would argue that, these additions represented the GAS's 'new' knowledge of the weakness of Juguo Tizhi in terms of practical affairs; on the other hand, these two additional aspects concentrated on administrative issues while the other aspects were mainly concerned with operational matters.

4.3.4.1 *The restatement of Juguo Tizhi*

There are two new aspects included in this section of the *2001 Summary*. The first is the restatement of Juguo Tizhi, which was titled as "*insisting and refining Juguo Tizhi, deepening the reform of elite sport system*" (GAS 2002, p.1) Juguo Tizhi was absent in the *1994 Summary* and then was reinstated as the leading measure for implementing the Olympic strategy. The well-targeted policy statement started with referring to the features of the communist regime and of the connotation of modern sport in the Chinese context. It was emphasised that:

Utilising the superiority of the socialist system; fully developing all kinds of sporting resources; establishing the ideology of 'practicing domestically, uniting against the foreign [athletes]; complementing each other with respective advantages, promoting mutual development', which regards the whole country as one entity; paying attention to the combination of general and partial development; effective addressing the interests of different hierarchies.

Table 4. 1 Additional Aspects the 1994 and 2001 Summary		
<u>1994 Summary</u>	<u>SPLISS</u>	<u>2001 Summary</u>
	Pillar 2 integrated policy (From a overall and strategic perspective)	Article 1, Insisting and refining Juguo Tizhi, deepening the reform of elite sport system
		Article 7, Establishing and improving laws and regulation, promoting sport ethical development

Table 4. 2 Modified Aspects the 1994 and 2001 Summary		
<u>1994 Summary</u>	<u>SPLISS</u>	<u>2001 Summary</u>
Article 3, Developing scientific training, provoking performance improvement with [enhanced] governance and [use of] science and technology	Pillar 6 Training Facilities	Article 5, Insisting scientific training, enhancing scientific investment in sport, rising effectiveness in training
	Pillar 9 Scientific research	
	Pillar 5 Athletic and post-athletic career support	Article 4, Training and making a high level, tough style elite athlete and coaches team
Article 4, Training and making a team of elite coaches	Pillar 7 Coaching provision and coach development	
Article 8, Expanding 'opening-up', increasing international exchange	Pillar 8 International competition (only part of its contend focusing on international competition)	Article 10, Increasing international exchange, popularising and promoting Olympism, enhancing the social impact of elite sport
Article 9, Popularising and promoting Olympism, enhancing the social impact of elite sport	Pillar 3 Participation in sport (a single line)	

Table 4.3 Identical Aspects the 1994 and 2001 Summary		
<u>1994 Summary</u>	<u>SPLISS</u>	<u>2001 Summary</u>
Article 5, Implementing 2000 talent project	Pillar 4 Talent identification and development system	Article 8, Implementing 2010 talent project

Table 4.4 Developed Aspects Between the 1994 and 2001 Summary		
<u>1994 Summary</u>	<u>SPLISS</u>	<u>2001 Summary</u>
Article 1, Modifying the overall layout of the development of Olympic Sport	Pillar 2 Integrated policy (focusing on the (horizontal) integrating development among regions and sports)	Article 3, Refining structural layout of sports, expanding new gold-medal opportunities
Article 2, Establishing a intra-national team competition system, combining centralisation and de-centralisation (of training)	Pillar 2 integrated policy (focusing on the formation and training of national team system)	Article 2, Expanding [the number of sports in which China is highly competitive], while emphasising key sports, full engagement [of Chinese elite sport] in Olympic competition
	Pillar 4 Talent identification and development system	
Article 6, Establishing effectiveness of the financial investment system	Pillar 1 funding	Article 9, Refining the effectiveness of the financial investment system of elite sport
Article 7, Fully utilising the leverage effect of competition	Pillar 8 International competition (modifying domestic competition system mapping international ones)	Article 4, Reform and refine competition system, Fully utilising the leverage effect of competition

Through linking Juguo Tizhi with “the superiority of the socialist system”, the authors endorsed the political correctness of Juguo Tizhi, which, however, was inconsistent with the reforming trend of Chinese society. The collective ideology was also indirectly conveyed in the statement through constructing, on the one hand, a “we” identity. This collective identity includes not only Chinese elite sport but the whole Chinese society through using terms such as “practicing domestically”, “uniting against the foreign”, and “the whole country as one entity”. We would argue that the statement, “practicing domestically, uniting against the foreign [athletes]; complementing each other with respective advantages, promoting mutual development”, on the one hand, defined Juguo Tizhi in a patriotic fashion from four aspects, namely the methods, target, internal relationship within, and outcome of, Juguo Tizhi. On the other hand, through constructing a ‘we’ identity, it also linked Juguo Tizhi to the initial purpose of introducing modern sport to China, which was to establish national identity and status and to resist the invasion of foreign countries.

On the other hand, the collective ideology is also conveyed through producing the hierarchy of Chinese elite sport, in which Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye sport were granted prior status for promoting general development. It was explicitly indicated that there were divergent interests, which need to be “effectively addressed”, at different hierarchies. Some were newly

emerged in the reforming era, such as the interests of sponsors and clubs; while others were intrinsic to Zhuanye sport, such as those between the national and provincial SADs. Utilising the 2008 Olympics as an opportunity to promote Juguo Tizhi that was in line with the interest of Zhuanye sport, the policy makers identified collective ideology, represented by “the whole country as one entity”, as the principle to ease potential conflicts among these interests.

Along with the restatement of Juguo Tizhi, a reforming feature, *deepening the reform of elite sport system*, was also included in the title of the first measures. It was accordingly indicated that:

... Continuously pushing on and refining the reform of governance systems of sport, clarifying the Administration Centres' relationship with provincial sport department and Sport Associations; all Centres should strengthen their own development, establish and refine scientific working mechanisms and reasonable rules and regulations, and continuing to explore the independence of Sport Associations.

GAS, 2002, p. 1

According to the previous analysis of the 1993 Policy, there are four aspects of the reform of Chinese sport that are related to elite sport. However, only the content concerning the reform of the administrative governance system was included here. We would argue that this is because, on the one hand, the

reform of the training system and the competition system were emphasised in other sections. On the other hand, the absence of professionalisation is also sensible, given the limited importance Chinese professional sports in the Olympic strategy.

Moreover, the Centres were clearly identified as the principal institution in the above quotation. As we previously argued, the Centres, regarded as 'state-owned enterprises' in essence, had significantly hindered the reform of the governance system (Zang 1998; Xiong et al. 2008). However, through employing "clarifying", the authors conveyed the GAS's attitude to the Centres as to refine, if not to reinforce, rather than to reform. It was also indicated that it was the Centres, but not any other institutions, that were to be in charge of "their own construction" and their prior duties, at least, in the era of 2001-2010. Thus, with the GAS' power over the discourse of elite sport reform and the legitimisation of the Centres' principal role in the reform, the power of Juguo Tizhi discourse, which were in line with the interests of Zhuanye Sport system, and the power of SADs' over Chinese elite sport discourse were further enhanced.

Xiong *et al.*'s (2008) ascribed this change in the statement of the 2001 Summary, which significantly reinforced the power of the SADs, from three aspects:

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- a) it solidified the dominance of Juguo Tizhi and to ease problems provoked between Juguo Tizhi and professional sport;
 - b) it realised the interests of SADs through providing satisfactory elite sport performance than developing mass sport; and,
 - c) it ensured the realisation of the expectation of the government and Chinese society in terms of the performance in the Beijing Games.

We would argue that this was essentially a consequence of the effectiveness of Juguo Tizhi in elite sport development and, more importantly, of the pressure for providing satisfactory performance at the Beijing Games. It was also explicitly acknowledged by the authors that

Without Juguo Tizhi, there would be no-guarantee of [winning] gold medals, and the SAD would [thus] not be able to hand in a satisfactory 'answer paper' to its superior department and the general public... [This is important since] elite sport [, compared to mass sport,] can attain remarkable 'political kudos' in a short period of time through utilising the Olympics [as a showcase]

Xiong *et al.*, 2008, p.53

Such pressure was recognised as an outcome of the Olympic expectation and of the interests of SADs, namely gaining political recognition via the Beijing Games. We would argue that these external and internal factors affected both GAS's power over Chinese elite sport discourse and the power of the discourse concerning Olympic performance in 2008, which jointly led to and endorsed the restatement of Juguo Tizhi. This is to say that the GAS was able

to reemphasise Juguo Tizhi because of its power over discourse. Juguo discourse was not only emphasised by GAS but also was empowered by the knowledge of the significance of the Beijing Games by the Chinese society.

The GAS's power over discourse was consistent with its role as the leading authority of Chinese sport, and could be regarded as the consequence of the Juguo Tizhi system. With the increase of the power of Juguo Tizhi discourse, the GAS as its leading authority was further empowered to give additional stress and protection of Juguo Tizhi for the Beijing Games. This proactive accentuation is in line with both the consensus of Chinese society before the Beijing Games and the interests of ZhuanYe sport system. Therefore, thanks to this 'active promotion' of Juguo Tizhi by the government, which was represented by the GAS, and the 'voluntary compliance' of Chinese society, when the 2008 Games were imminent, all discourses were turned down in Chinese elite sport except those of Juguo Tizhi.

4.3.4.2 *The addition of a moral code*

The other additional element in the 2001 Summary focused on the moral code and legal elements of Chinese elite sport, which was entitled "*establishing and improving laws and regulation, promote sport ethical development*". It was stated:

[We should] enhance the comprehensive administration over sportsmanship and discipline in competitions, establish and refine related laws and

regulations, increase punishment in response to rule violation. [We should] Firmly resist misbehaviour, such as deception, disruption to competition regulations, disorder in the arenas etc., in order to protect fairness and justice in sport. ...

[We should] strengthen the administration and ideological education of referees, [we should] refine the regulation of registration, training, assessment, selection and rewards and sanctions [of referees], [we should] improve the professional quality and lecturing ability [of referees], [we should] promote professional ethics and dedication [on the part of referees], in order to ensure that they can literally make accurate, fair and justice decisions.

GAS, 2002, p. 1

The policy statement in this section was straightforward, and was consistent with the statement in the section on *guiding theory and principles*, in which legal aspects were one of the only three elements. It could be argued that legislation and ethical elements, such as the “punishment” for “misbehaviour”, would further complement the power of the SADs or other authorities for the preparation of the 2008 Games.

Though the regulations for athletes indicated in the policy statement mainly focused on misbehaviour within competition, the addition of this section was interpreted as a move to ease conflicts between individual and collective interests that led to these incidents. It was stated by Xiong *et al.* (2008, p.99) that:

Firstly, since Olympic champions have been 'worshipped' by the society, there have been a small number of them 'individually involved with commercial activities', which negatively affected the stability of Olympic teams and the implementation of Olympic strategy;

Secondly, there are redundant talents in those sports that China is leading, this situation results in some athletes not being able to deal in an appropriate manner with 'the decision of the organisation' concerning the Olympic qualification and [the decision as to who should win] Olympic gold medals, which negatively affected the public image of Chinese elite sport;

Thirdly, Chinese elite sport has been lacking in preparation in terms of legislation and regulation, [resulting in] conflicts between sport departments and athletes about [interests or] the distribution of benefits, which have subsequently hindered the strategic deployment of related sport departments.

Fourthly, there are serious issues about elite athletes' unsatisfactory or even illegal behaviours in professional sports, which have had considerable negative impacts on Chinese elite sport, especially professional sport.

The purpose of adding moral and legislative content to the 2001 Policy was largely to address the conflicts of interests between individuals and a number of collective elements. These collective elements include the "Olympic team", "the decision of the organisation", "the public image of Chinese elite sport", etc. We would argue that this interpretation reflects a strong collectivist perspective, which, firstly, was conveyed through portraying institutional phenomena and collective values as the 'victim' of such conflicts, for instance, in "[interests or] the distribution of benefits". Secondly, individual activities were associated with a number of terms with negative meanings employed, such as "hinder", "negative effect" and "not able to have the appropriate

attitude”, which framed the promotion of interests of the individual as ‘misbehaviour’. Additionally, the authors also marginalised these activities as behaviours of minorities at individual level, by “a small number of” athletes, and at the sport level through explicit links to professional sport, which was complementary to the Olympic strategy and was excluded from the 2001 Summary.

The authors associated most of the misbehaviours with their potential negative impact on the strategy of Chinese elite sport and on Olympic performance. However, only those within professional sports were not linked to the Olympic strategy. It could be argued that this, on the one hand, reflected the authors’ knowledge of the remote relation between professional sports and Olympic performance. On the other hand, the authors also suggested that the essential purpose of the addition of moral code and legal elements was to protect Olympic performance. This purpose coincided with the statement of the regulation of the commercial activities of elite athletes published in 2006. This stated that:

Under the circumstances of the socialist market economy, the administration of athletes in the national teams is faced with a new environment, [there are] also some new problems in terms of the way in which the direction and management of athletes’ commercial activities is reinforced. If these problems cannot be resolved effectively and in time, it would affect the training and

[results in] competitions and greatly disturb the administration of national teams.

GAS, 2006, p.1

We would argue that via the addition of the moral code and legal elements in the 2001 Summary, the power of SADs was enhanced in elite sport administration, especially in relation to its fight against individualism. The collective values rooted in the socialist ideology, which have been emphasised in Chinese elite sports, were hence further accentuated in Chinese elite sport discourse and protected during the preparation for the Beijing Games. This is to say, taking the scenarios in the previous quotation from Xiong *et al.* (2008), that the “organisational decisions” which deal with redundant elite athletes would be accepted more readily by those who were identified as redundant; that the Olympic strategy, which is the political task of the SAD, would be well implemented; that the Olympic team, which would realise the Olympic strategy, would be more stable; in addition, that the illegal behaviour of professional athletes would be regulated.

Additionally, the regulation over, and conservative attitude towards, individualism can also be noticed in the changes of other elements of the policy statement in the 2001 Summary. For instance, in the 1994 Summary, besides giving an indication of the routine incentive to elite athletes, contained a special statement about promoting the contribution and values of

the individual:

While [we are] strictly administering and educating [athletes], [we] should popularise the value and contribution of sport stars, increasing [their] social awareness, those who performed outstandingly deserve big rewards from the country.

This type of narrative was however abandoned in the 2001 Summary.

4.4 Conclusion

Through our analytic description of the historical development of Chinese elite sport discourse, including statements of policy, the narrative constructed through policy statements and related interpretation, we would argue that the interest of SADs has been promoted and privileged in Chinese elite sport policy while other interests were embraced during the introduction of other stakeholders (such as sponsors and others representing professional sport interests) into the Chinese elite sport system.

While arguing for the increase of the power of Juguo Tizhi prior to the Beijing Games, it is important to remind ourselves of the function of the power *over* Chinese elite sport discourse and its impact on the development of Chinese elite sport. The power *over* discourse regulated not only the dominant topics that should be talked about in Chinese elite sport before the Beijing Games.

For instance, Olympic performance, national glory, etc.; but also the dominant way of talking, such as, the superiority of socialism, and collectivism; as well as, practically, the prioritised means of achieving these goals, namely *Juguo Tizhi* and *Zhuanye* sport. Meanwhile, these examples of power over discourse also included evidence of the influence of the general trend in Chinese society, namely of economic reform and opening-up. This 'external' theme was so powerful that related discursive elements had to be included within elite sport discourse, even though they were regarded as challenges to *Juguo Tizhi* and *Zhuanye* sport. The Minister of Sport's speech before the Beijing Games provides a good illustration of the power of such external discourse, in which there were direct indications of commercial and market-oriented elements, albeit superficial. In addition, the external political power over discourse not only ensured the inclusion of reformist elements in the policy statement or official discourse, but also legitimised social actors' interpretation, more precisely disputation, over Chinese elite sport policy e.g. the criticisms within reform discourse of the structural defects of *Juguo Tizhi*.

Thus, on the one hand, given the considerable reformist power, which was consistent with and endorsed by political actors in Chinese society, the GAS had to not only face challenging reform discourses, but also to include certain reformist features in the policy statement even when the Beijing Games was imminent. On the other hand, we would also argue that the power of reform

discourse in terms of Chinese elite sport was limited in the pre-2008 era due to the significance of the 2008 Games for Chinese elite sport and to the country as a whole. In other words, although other discourses, especially challenging ones, were included in the Chinese elite sport policy statement prior to the 2008 Games, Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye sport still dominated in Chinese elite sport, which, however, was the target of the reform. This dominance was not just safeguarded and privileged by the GAS, but was promoted by the Chinese government and Chinese society. This was due to the faith in, or knowledge of, Juguo Tizhi which was portrayed as the most effective means of elite sport development. It was indicated by Zhang (2009, p.43) that

Before the Beijing Games, it is the maintenance and improvement of elite sport performance that is the most important task of the GAS. Since China has had glorious victories in elite sport in the last several Olympic Games, which was guaranteed by Juguo Tizhi, no one would dare to initiate reform of Juguo Tizhi during such a special period of time, only Kafkaesque articles that are about refining and improving Juguo Tizhi have been regularly published. Till now, the core issue of Chinese sport reform, the 'monopolistic' elite sport system that has been solely run by the state has not yet been shaken at all.

In the above interpretation of the relationship among the Beijing Games, the Chinese sport reform and Chinese elite sport discourse, it was indicated that the GAS, as the leading department of the monopolistic state-run elite sport system, has maintained its dominant power within Chinese elite sport and

over Chinese elite sport discourse after all these years of reform. This dominance ensured that the “the most important task of the GAS” and its interests were prioritised in Chinese elite sport. Juguo Tizhi, as we previously argued, was thus protected and privileged, and discourse related to Juguo Tizhi was also promoted as the most dominant Chinese elite sport discourse.

The identity of other stakeholders promoting elite sport reform was also indirectly indicated in the above quotation, none of whom, however, “dare[d] to promote [the initiation of] reforming Juguo Tizhi during this particular period of time”. We would argue that the silence of reform discourse, superficially, relates to the argument of the GAS’s power over discourse. This is to say that given there was no other stakeholder who had greater power over Chinese elite sport discourse, none could therefore have made reform discourse ‘speak’ louder during the preparation for the Beijing Games. Additionally, the author also indirectly portrays the overwhelming power of Juguo Tizhi and related discourse in this period before the Beijing Games, which was a product of the significance of the Beijing Games to Chinese society. This power was internalised by stakeholders in Chinese elite sport, especially the advocates of elite sport reform. It was the political and social significance of the Beijing Games which made the pre-2008 era “a special period of time” and the internalisation of such power ensured that “no one ‘dared’ to” challenge the dominance of Juguo Tizhi. In addition, coinciding

with the 'superficial' statement of reform discourse in the 2001 Summary, it was also suggested by Zhang that the reforming trend of Chinese society still affected Chinese elite sport discourse. Nonetheless, this influence was affected by the social and political expectations for the Beijing Games and reform discourse was distorted through the prism of "Kafkaesque articles about refining and improving Juguo Tizhi".

Nevertheless, it is crucial to bear in mind that though power is normally viewed as constraining, it is also enabling or productive, which, as Foucault argues, "induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse" (Foucault 1980b, p.119 cited by Hall, 2001, p.77). For instance, the power over discourse was utilised by the GAS and Chinese government to endorse the dominance of Juguo Tizhi in the Chinese elite sport discourse, which eventually contributed to the exceptional success of Chinese athletes in the Beijing Games. Additionally, in the scenario of elite sport reform, it was the influence of power external to elite sport that ensured that the reform discourse was still included in the 2001 Summary, albeit only in section titles in the pre-2008 era, and gave Zhang (2009, p.47) the hope that "all kinds of reformist forces will converge in 2008, [and] the end of the Beijing Games will open the curtains for another round of the reform of Chinese sport".

Chapter Five

Chinese Olympic Discourse and Chinese Elite Sport Development in the Pre-2008 Era

In the previous chapter, we investigated the development of Chinese elite sport policy from its first reforming policy (from 1986) to the periodic strategic guidelines for elite sport development covering the 2008 Beijing Games. We also examined different interpretations concerning the policy discourse and implementations. We therefore argued that different interests were promoted in the different discourse of/about policy, within which there were a number of conflicts. These conflicts within policy discourses reflected the clashes between different interests that emerged along with the reform of Chinese society and of Chinese elite sport. Nonetheless, the policy narrative of these Chinese elite sport policies not only constructed the fundamental logic underlying the 'theory' of Chinese elite sport development, but also reflected the dominant power of the GAS over Chinese elite sport discourse. Following this logic and the main theme of Chinese elite sport, namely *Juguo Tizhi* and 'Olympic glory', the projected outcome of the implementation of the Chinese elite sport policy (i.e. the dominance and reinforcement of *Juguo Tizhi*) was evidenced in the subsequent interpretation of policy as well as in the actual and exceptional performance of Chinese elite sport in the 2008 Olympic Games.

The focus of this pre-2008 discourse analysis chapter is on relationships between the Chinese Olympic discourse and the development of Chinese elite sport in the pre-2008 era. We aim to further scrutinise the interaction between the Chinese portrayal of the Olympics and the pre-2008 development of Chinese elite sport, to inspect the way in which power relationships within Chinese elite sport were being constructed and influenced by the Chinese Olympic discourse and vice versa.

In terms of Chinese Olympic discourse, we examine those elements which are related to the Olympic Games, as the major target of our investigation, and also address those concerning the Olympic movement. However, this is not to say that we are attempting to reduce the Chinese Olympic discourse merely to those elements concerning the Games *per se*. The reason for doing this is two-fold. Firstly, it is clear that the Olympic Games, and more precisely the performance in, and the competitions of, the Olympic Games, are overwhelmingly accentuated in Chinese Olympic discourse. In terms of social consensus, as D. Xiong (2002, p.10) describes it, "it is natural that Chinese people, even sport personnel and media... regard the Olympic [movement] merely as a sport competition, as winning gold medals, which is a superficial understanding".

Secondly, the focus of this research, i.e. Chinese elite sport, closely relates to

the elite sport system's Olympic performance. For instance, in terms of elite sport policies, as we argued in the previous chapter, Olympic performances have been historically emphasised by the political leaders and in policy statement as the primary goal, portrayed as the political task of Chinese elite sport, and thus prioritised by the policy makers.

Hence, the main part of the Chinese Olympic discourse that we review relates to the Chinese interpretation of the Olympic Games and Olympic performance, while the Chinese discourse on the Olympic *movement* is also embraced in the analysis but is given significantly less weight (as it is in the documents, speeches and commentaries concerning Chinese elite sport themselves).

5.1 The Chinese Discourse on the Olympics

5.1.1 The 'extrinsic' function of the Olympics

As a phenomenon exogenous to Chinese society, not only the Olympic Games, but also modern sport has been portrayed as a multi-functional social phenomenon, and emphasised more often for its extrinsic social functions rather than for its own sake. For example, D. Xiong (2002, p.10) argues that:

The various functions of sport have been well known to sport academics...in fact the intrinsic functions of sport are educating, [promoting] well-being and entertaining, which is common to all types of sports. Other social functions, such as political, economic, cultural etc., which are normally discussed, shall be regarded as extrinsic functions. Hosting the Olympics in Beijing is a favourable circumstance to fully utilise these functions of sport, and is also a platform on which sport will show what it is capable of.

As we previously demonstrated in the literature review, the “extrinsic functions” of modern sport, especially the political ones, have been accentuated since it was introduced to, and accepted by, Chinese society in the early 20th century. Chinese Olympic discourse has also embraced this feature of emphasising “extrinsic functions”, such as national revival that was well-known to Chinese society as the three Olympic questions asked in a Chinese newspaper article in 1908 (Xu 2008; Brownell 2008). In the history of the PRC, the political significance and function of the Olympic Games has also been recognised and stressed by PRC leaders since the then three-year old regime sent its first Olympic delegation to Helsinki in 1952 (Wu 1999). Thus, Xiong’s portrayal of the Beijing Games as an opportunity for “fully utilising these functions” indirectly emphasises the extrinsic functions of the Beijing Games to Chinese society.

The political elements in the Chinese Olympic discourse are not only reflected in the portrayal of the political implications of participating in the Games, but are also manifested in the interpretation of the Chinese Olympic movement.

For instance, in D. Xiong's (2002, p.10) statement concerning domestic Olympic education and the Olympic movement, national political interest is emphasised as the top concern in the Olympic movement in China. It is stated that:

We experienced a 27-year conflict with the IOC fighting about the "two-Chinas" [issue], during which it was obviously impossible to promote the Olympic movement [in China], let alone to have Olympic education [in China], therefore it is natural that Chinese people, even sport personnel and media have not had abundant knowledge about the Olympic [movement] ... Till now, most of them still regard the Olympic [movement] merely as a sport competition, for winning gold medals, which is a superficial understanding.

D. Xiong, 2002, p. 10

In the above quotation, the political conflict between the PRC and the IOC on the status of the PRC and Taiwan in the international Olympic movement is identified as the main factor, if not the sole factor, that caused a split between the PRC and the international Olympic movement but as a consequence also hindered the development of Olympic education in mainland China. Through elaborating the impact of the political conflicts, the author suggests that the guarantee of the national interests of China in the international Olympic movement was a condition of the PRC's involvement with the international Olympic movement and thus also of the promotion of domestic Olympic education.

This prioritisation of the political interests is consistent with what Ma (2005, p.30) argues, “Chinese Olympic policy is an important part of the diplomatic policy of China. Diplomacy relates to core national interests, to which sport affairs [therefore] have to be subordinate and serve”. In both quotations from D. Xiong (2002) and Ma (2005), the Chinese government’s influence on the Chinese Olympic movement is embraced, or more precisely internalised, as the condition and premise of the Chinese Olympic movement. This political feature of the Chinese Olympic discourse is reflected, for example, in the political connotation of the ‘two China issue’ and in the notion of “Olympic policy as a diplomatic policy”

The political implications of the Olympic movement and Olympic Games are often directly and positively stated in government documents, and portrayed as an essential motivation for China’s involvement with the international Olympic movement. For instance, the 1994 Summary states that

With its unique attractiveness, the modern Olympic Movement attracts all countries around the world to participate; promoting the Olympic ideology and advocating the Olympic spirit [in China] are beneficial for stimulating the opening-up of our country and its international communication.

SPCSC, 1995a, p. 1

Similarly, the 2001 Summary comments

Winning the bid of the 2008 Games is another great opportunity of Chinese sport development, and will have significant impact on the economic and social development [of China] in the new century, on the establishment of an 'all-dimensional', multi-tiered and wide-ranging 'opening-up' of our country, as well as on enhancing its international status.

(GAS 2002, p.1)

While the 2002 publication, *the Central Committee of the CPC and the State Council's Guidelines for Further Strengthening and Improving Sporting Affairs in the New Era* comments,

Winning the bid of the 2008 Games fully reflects the great accomplishments that have been achieved through the reform and opening-up, and will have significant impact on the economic and social development [of China] in the new century, on the establishment of an all-dimensional, multi-tiered and wide-ranging opening-up, as well as on enhancing its international status.

It is a mutual duty of all Party members, governments at various levels and Chinese people of all ethnicities to seize the opportunity and accept the challenge [of the Beijing Games], to try their best to make the 2008 Olympic Games the most outstanding Olympics in history... in order to promote the development of the socialist material progress, and cultural and ethical progress, of our country.

The Central Committee of the CPC, 2002, p. 1

The political implications of the Olympic movement are emphasised in all of these three quotations from key elite sport policy publications by the GAS and the core of the PRC regime. We would further argue that these official

discourses not only stress the political function of the Olympics, but also indirectly regulate the means for realising this function. In the three quotations, the term “Olympic movement” is only mentioned in the first, while the other two focus explicitly on the Beijing 2008 Games. This is not only evidenced in the quoted policy statement. The term “Olympic movement” is absent in the statement of the two documents from which the last three quotations are taken. In these two important documents, the term “Olympic” is only mentioned once without being linked with terms such as ‘Games’ or ‘strategy’. It is in the 2001 Summary that it is stated “[we should] utilise the opportunity of the Beijing Games... to energetically promote the Olympic spirit, [in order to] make the whole society emphasise and support the Olympic strategy”. The choice of terms in the policy statement, as we see, indirectly identifies Olympic performance as the officially recognised means for realising the political implications of the Olympics, and also reflects the impact of winning the bid for the 2008 Games on Chinese Olympic discourse. In other words, due to the significance of the Beijing Games to the Chinese government, the focus and perspective of the discursive construction of the Olympics, at least in Chinese elite sport discourse, reflected the government’s power over discourse even when the Games was still 6 years away.

It is worth emphasising that this suggests neither that the discourse of the 2008 Games had replaced all other Olympic discourses in China after 2001,

nor that the political implications of the Olympic Games had been the sole motive on the part of the PRC government for hosting it. However, we would argue that the political features, and the focus, of the Chinese Olympic discourse do reflect the Chinese government's emphasis on the political implications of the Olympic Games rather than on the general Olympic movement and matters such as Olympic values. At discourse level, the official emphasis reflects the government's preference among the 'extrinsic functions' of the Games, and structures the way in which the key impact of the 2008 Games should be constructed in Chinese elite sport discourse. At a practical level, it increased the significance of the Olympic Games *per se* and thus of Olympic performance, especially the performance of 2008 Games, as the premier political task for Chinese elite sport.

Besides the optimistic and positive portrayal of the impact and political function of the Olympics in the policy statement, the negative side is normally stated immediately afterwards, reflecting a dialectical materialist style of discussion with roots in the Marxist origin of the PRC regime. To contrast with the explicit acknowledgement upholding the national interests and political features in the positive portrait, the negative influence is usually stated in vague terms at least publicly, for example, portraying the 2008 Games as "a rare historical opportunity, as well as a new challenge" (The Central Committee of the CPC 2002, p.1).

In the *Discussion on the Olympic Policy of China*, Ma (2005, p.30) provides further details of both the potential positive and negative political impacts of the Beijing Games on China, stating that:

Hosting the 2008 Games in Beijing ... we will be able to have more communication with the IOC, IFs and NOCs... to make more friends... to strive for greater political, diplomatic and sporting achievements. The ... challenges are that the increase of interaction between our country and other political and sport organisations may result in more problems and conflicts. Therefore, we have to hold the dialectical materialist and historical materialist stance, in order to understand, maintain and develop the Olympic policy of our country, [we have to] analyse and adjust relevant policies for the Beijing Olympiad as soon as possible.

Ma, 2005, p. 30

In terms of the challenging effect of the Games discussed in Ma's statement, a protective attitude is constructed through employing a number of conservative terms, such as "have to hold", "in order to ... maintain". The defensive perspective is consistent with the construction of the identities of different parties included in the statement. For example, international organisations are portrayed as those with whom China would have "more problems and conflicts" if more interactions between the two parties took place. By contrast, the mainstream political ideology of the PRC, represented by the terms "dialectical materialist and historical materialist", is emphasised as the basic point that should be protected in these potential

'problem-provoking' interactions associated with the opportunity of hosting the 2008 Olympic Games. We may argue that the conservative tone and terms illustrate the nature of political movement that Ma suggests, i.e. "analyse and adjust relevant policies for the Beijing Olympiad", which is to deal with the greater occurrence of "problems and conflicts". In other words, from a negative perspective, Ma's prediction of the potential challenges in the Beijing Games and the 'defensive' suggestions emphasises the political implication of the Beijing Games and ultimately promotes the political interests of the socialist regime.

The Beijing Games are also portrayed as a diplomatic opportunity in the above quotation. The potential political and diplomatic achievements are identified as the objectives, for the achievement of which China should strive equally, if not primarily, as it should do for the objective of sporting performance. The Minister of Sport identifies this 'diplomatic mission' of Chinese elite sport as "the positive tradition", stating that:

International interaction has been increasing while the [Beijing] Olympics are approaching.... Following the positive tradition of [Chinese] sport diplomacy ... [We should] make diplomatic affairs in sport a showcase of the image of China as a peaceful rising country, while creating a good international environment for the battle preparation [for the Beijing Games].

P. Liu, 2008, p. 1

The imminence of the Beijing Games is identified as the backdrop for Liu's stress of the diplomatic mission of Chinese elite sport to the high-profile sport officials, who were the audience for this speech in the 2008 All State Sports Minister Conference. Normalising the diplomatic function of Chinese elite sport as its "positive tradition", which refers for example to China's 'Ping-Pong diplomacy', the Minister of Sport indirectly assigns this diplomatic function to the Beijing Games, as a Chinese elite sport event.

To summarise, the accentuation of the political function of the Olympics, especially the 2008 edition, is consistent with extrinsic function that has been assigned to modern sport in China since its initial introduction in the country. This feature is not only reflected in the official Chinese Olympic discourse, but also manifested in the interpretation of Chinese elite sport by external commentators. The national interest is ultimately promoted in the Chinese Olympic discourse as a goal for realising its political function. The elements relating to the socialist character of the regime are also embraced in the promotion of the national interest and portrayal of the Olympics.

It is worth noting that due to the importance of the socialist character of China, we choose to leave further investigation of its function in, and impacts on, Chinese Olympic discourse and elite sport discourse to section 1.3. We now turn to the other two major political features of the Chinese Olympic

discourse, namely nationalism and patriotism.

5.1.2 Nationalism and Patriotism

Nationalism and Patriotism⁵¹ are the other two major features of the Chinese Olympic discourse. Both are viewed as intrinsic features of the Chinese Olympic movement (Brownell 2008; Dong & Mangan 2008; Xu 2008).

A typical Chinese Olympic discourse constructing the linkage between western Olympism and the Chinese nation is the notion of the “Olympic dream” of China. Since the notion of ‘the three Olympic questions’ was raised

⁵¹ In their encyclopaedia, *Nations and Nationalism*, Herb and Kaplan (2008, p.xi) view nationalism as “the process that defines, creates, and expresses the essential loyalty ... holding people’s allegiance ... to a nation”. Bairner (2008, p.998) indicates that the nationalist elements in sport, such as representing one’s nation in international event, are closely related to cultural nationalism. This is especially evident in relation to the political dispute between the Mainland China and Taiwan, ‘nationalism’ and ‘national identity’ could be more appropriate terms to be associated with Olympic discourse in the Chinese context than ‘nationality’, to which the respective sides of the Taiwan Strait ascribe, even though these concepts, to a degree, overlap with one another. And Patriotism, which sometimes is relatively politically influenced, is also evidenced in the sport domain, for example, in the desire to express national identity. In their paper on Chinese nationalism, Lewis and Teets (2008) state that patriotism is consistently employed by the communist regime, due to a concern with the ethnic denotation of the concept of nationalism, which would have a negative impact on the minority ethnicities. The government also promotes the concept of “Chinese nationalism”, which is associated with the idea of unifying the various ethnicities in China with political criteria and vague cultural principles (Lewis and Teets, 2008).

in 1908, the Olympic Games has been constructed as a “dream” or a “wish” of all Chinese people, associated with the idea of national rejuvenation (Xu 2008; Yi 2008). Yuan Weimin’s (2001, p.1) speech celebrating the success of the Beijing Olympic bid provides a good example of not only the Olympic dream discourse but also the politicisation of ‘the dream’, in which he states that

Hosting an Olympic Games in China is a dream of generations of Chinese people, and is also a common wish of the 1.3 billion Chinese people. As early as the 1950s, and 1960s, the leaders of the Party and the country had repeatedly stated that China would host an Olympic Games. The Prime Minister Zhou Enlai⁵² argued in 1959 that China should host an Olympic Games in the future.

Yuan also reminds the audience that this suggestion or aspiration was repeated by Deng Xiaoping in February 1972, and again in July 1990, and he went on to argue,

... Now, we are able to give consolation to the older generations of revolutionaries that under the leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Jiang Zemin at the core, thanks to the endeavours of Chinese people and BOBICO as well as the support and understanding of the IOC members and international community, Beijing was finally awarded the 2008 Olympic Games.

⁵² The first PM of the PRC, serving the country since it was established in October 1949 till his death in January 1976.

In the short quotation from the speech of the then Minister of Sport, hosting an Olympic Games is portrayed not only as a national dream which has lasted for generations, but also an expectation of the political leaders of the PRC. It could also be argued that due to the explicit indication of the date, i.e. 1950s, the relationship between those KMT politicians of the Republic of China (the Olympic delegation of which is officially known as Chinese Taipei) and the realisation of the national dream was 'suppressed'. Through quoting statements of the top PRC leaders, Yuan emphasises the role of these political leaders in the 'realisation of the Olympic dreams', legitimising this goal, and subtly mixes their identity with 'the Chinese people' in terms of the Olympic dream. These politicians then represent, if not replace, the Chinese people as those who have finally been able to realise the Olympic dream, and thus the Olympic goals of the older generation of revolutionaries have finally been met. This transformation of the subjects of the Olympic dream, manifested a way in which a nationalist discourse, i.e. the realisation of Chinese Olympic dream, is seen as synonymous with the Party's Olympic dream, and is therefore utilised as an endorsement of the regime. This is similar to the function of the statement that credited the 2008 Games to "the great accomplishment that has been achieved in the reform and opening-up of society" (The Central Committee of the CPC, 2002, p. 1), reflecting the political power over Olympic discourse exerted by the regime, regulating the way in which the Chinese Olympic dream should be interpreted and to

whom the achievement should be credited.

In the same event, the speech made by He Zhenliang (2001), the honorary president of the Chinese Olympic Committee and an honorary member of the IOC, provides another example of the nationalist Chinese Olympic dreams discourse. He states that:

When the IOC president Juan Samaranch announced that the 29th Olympic Games was awarded to Beijing, I felt that the wish had finally been fulfilled. Hosting an Olympic Games in the land of China is not only my personal wish, but also a long-time aspiration of the Chinese people...

When Wu Ching-kuo, the IOC member from Chinese Taipei, hugged me, tears were steaming down our faces. He said to me that "this is the first time for Chinese people to host the Olympic Games for more than 100 years, I am so exultant, I am so thrilled, our mutual wish is realised." I believe there were more excited Chinese people than just the two of us, who had tears down their faces, including those from Taiwan, from Hong Kong and Macau, and from all around the world...

In the media conference after the result was announced ... I felt that it was my duty to make the whole world be aware of my thoughts, [so that] I replied in English: "I am proud of my homeland, I am proud of my people".

He, 2001, p. 1

Through comparing the construction of Olympic dream in He and Yuan's account of the successful bid for the 2008 Games, we would argue that the quoted speech of He is made in a way that has less connection to the socialist

feature of the PRC than those of Yuan. For example, the concept of the “Chinese Olympic dream” indicated in He’s speech is extended not only beyond the history of the PRC, but also beyond the geographic territory of the regime. In spite of the disputed status of the ROC and Taiwan, the mutual Olympic dream of “Chinese people ... all around the world” is described in terms of Chinese culture, ethnicity or nation, rather than the border of either of the regimes with ‘China’ in their name.

It is worth noting that in terms of the cultural and ethnic definition of Chinese people in the above quotation, language is utilised as the criterion regulating the knowledge or defining the ‘Chinese nation’, and constructing a “we” identity. We may argue that this is done in two steps. Firstly, in the second part of the above quotation, with the direct quotation from Mr Wu and the indication of his identity as the IOC member from Chinese Taipei, it is naturally and wordlessly implied that the conversation was made in Chinese. Then, through generalising their emotion during the conversation as a mutual feeling of Chinese “all around the world” at that time, the language is naturally implied and constructed as a key reaction shared by Chinese “all around the world” and which thus provides a vehicle for all Chinese to express their exultant emotion.

Secondly, in contrast to the definition of Chinese, the world, to which He

spoke, is explicitly linked to another language, i.e. English, in the third part of the above quotation. Through noting that “I replied in English”, the foreign language is portrayed as the vehicle for communicating with the rest of the world about the mutual emotion conveyed between Wu and He in Chinese language and shared by the Chinese people. This is to say that, on the one hand, the “Olympic dream” discourse reflects and reproduces the significance of the Olympic movement to Chinese people; on the other hand, especially in the pre-2008 era, the “Olympic dream” discourse was employed to a certain degree to construct the national identity of Chinese people.

Besides the portrait of the Olympic Games as a national “Olympic dream”, it is also well recognised as a “part of the project to reinsert China into an international narrative of history and progress” (Morris 2004, p.3). As previously indicated, modern sport was introduced to China accompanied by the idea of national restoration, when China was at one of its most crucial and dangerous moments in its modern history (Brownell 2008). Compared to traditional Chinese physical culture, modern sport was regarded as a ‘new’ body culture related to warlike spirit and national survival at that time (Xu 2008; Gu 1997). This characteristic of re-establishment of the Chinese national identity and national restoration is thus normally evidenced in Chinese Olympic discourse. For example, in He’s (2004, p.3) statement concerning the impact of the Beijing Games in China, he claims that:

The success of the Beijing Olympic Games will greatly revive national spirit and reinforce national cohesion, which will generate boundless energy for [the development of Chinese society]...

Hosting an Olympic Games in China ...will make the world gain better understanding of China, of the Chinese nation's spirit of continuous self-improvement, and the Chinese nation's obsessive pursuit of [being capable of] standing among other powerful nations...

Straightforwardly, the term of “national spirit” is mentioned in both quotations, and is portrayed as the beneficiary of the Beijing Games in terms of domestic and international impact. Following the connotation of modern sport in national revival terms in China, there are a number of terms with progressing and developing meanings employed in these quotations. These terms, such as “generating boundless energy for [development]”, “continuous self-improvement”, and “pursuit of standing among other powerful nations”, reflect the connotation of the national revival of China embraced in the Chinese Olympic discourse.

The effect of the Beijing Games in terms of the restoration of China is suggested from both domestic and international aspects in the above quotation. It could be argued that there is a slight difference between the two facets. In terms of the re-establishment of the international status of China, “hosting a Games in Beijing” *per se* is portrayed as the sufficient condition for, and the trigger of, a positive global impact for China. However, the domestic impact of the Beijing Games, especially in terms of its political significance of

national restoration, is explicitly linked to the “success” of the Games. Although the concept of “success” can be interpreted from a number of perspectives, it is argued that this subtle difference in He’s discourse suggests the importance of having a ‘successful’ Olympic Games to Chinese society.

Following D. Xiong’s (2002) criticism of the ‘superficial understanding’ of the Olympics in Chinese society, it could be argued that the notion of ‘success’ closely associates to ‘success in the Olympic stadium’. The significance of ‘winning Olympic glory’ is therefore emphasised in political terms as an important, if not the important, means for Chinese elite sport to promote the restoration of China. It is emphasised by Liu Peng, the Minister of Sport, that:

[In order to] develop harmonious sport, [we] must further develop our skills and [must] achieve great result in the Beijing Games. Elite sport has unique or even irreplaceable effects in increasing national cohesion and centripetal forces and in inspiring the national spirit...

P. Liu, 2007, p. 1

It is incumbent upon us to strive for outstanding results in the Beijing Games... the performance of Chinese elite athletes will be a showcase of the national image and Chinese sport.

P. Liu, 2008, p.1

In the above two quotations from Liu’s speech at the annual conference of all state ministers of sport, the Minister of Sport details the political significance

of the Beijing Games and Olympic performance. It is worth noting that in contrast to the traditional expression of “Olympic performance”, the achievement of “great results” and then “outstanding results in the Beijing Games” is emphasised by Liu as the responsibility of Chinese elite sport, suggesting an increase from the standard of merely ‘satisfactory’ Beijing Olympic performance. It could be argued that through portraying it as “incumbent” and linking it to the then-fashionable political term, ‘harmonious society’, that was brought up by the core of the CPC in 2004, Liu portrays this increased standard as a compelling requirement that is associated with the top-tier political requirement despite the growing pressure this would bring. This relationship between the Olympics and the development of Chinese elite sport and the cumulative pressure reflected in Chinese elite sport discourse will be further discussed in subsequent sections.

From the above analysis, it is evident that the Olympic Games and Olympic performance, especially the ‘successful’ Olympic performance, are imbued with significant political meanings in terms of national restoration and the re-establishment of the national identity in the Chinese context. This nationalist connotation of the Chinese Olympic discourse is evidenced not only in the statement of sport officials, but also from external discourses, for example:

The Olympic medal ceremonies are obviously politically symbolic, [the symbolic meaning of] which is expressed through the raising of the national flags and the playing of the national anthem...when our athletes are standing on the top of the podium...as long as having the blood of Huaxia in his/her body, he/she will be excited about, and proud of being the descendants of Yan and Huang. [The Olympic] Gold medallists are usually regarded as national heroes (need discussion of this translation). This is to say, one successful Olympic Games per se. is a great resource for national identity education for [Chinese] nationals, and is [also] a great opportunity for strengthening national cohesion. From this point, it is argued that the effect of a successful Olympic Games on the construction of national society is irreplaceable in this inevitably special period due to reform and the opening-up process, in which there are confusions in social values.

Tang, 2007, p. 20

It is important to point out the two historical concepts employed in Tang's statement, which extend the nationalist implication of Olympic glory as an element of the development of Chinese history and beyond the borders of both the PRC and ROC. "Huaxia" is a historical term originally relating to a union of tribes that were the ancestors of the Han Chinese, who represent more than 90% of the Chinese population (The Central People's Government of the PRC 2006). The other historical reference is to "the descendants of Yan and Huang". "Yan" and "Huang" are the names of the leaders of two tribes of the "Huaxia" people who fought against a mutual enemy (Cioffi-Revilla & Lai 1995). Given "Zhongguo" ("China" in Chinese) usually refers to Mainland China, both of these two terms, at present, are mutually used in the PRC and

ROC representing the Chinese nation. We would argue that through explicitly linking the political implication of Olympic medal ceremonies with “the blood of Huaxia” and portraying gold medallists as “national heroes”, Tang extends the significance of Olympic victories, *i.e.* the political task of Chinese elite sport, from the political dimension to the nationalist dimension that embraces all Chinese people around world.

Even though Tang argues for the effects of “a successful Olympic Games” rather than “successful Olympic performance”, it is the Olympic victories that are inherently stressed in his interpretation of the significance of the Olympic Games in nationalist terms. Firstly, this emphasis on Olympic performance is consistent with the portrayal of the nationalist implication of Olympic victories in the previous quotation, and is associated with a number of terms implying successful performance such as the podium, national flag and anthem. Secondly, the argument concerning the effect of the Olympic Games in terms of establishing national identity is extended beyond the 2008 Games, at least, to those Olympic Games in the “inevitable special period due to reform and opening-up”. Compared to the opportunity of hosting the 2008 Olympic Games, there are relatively fewer criteria through which to evaluate the success of China in the Olympics as a participant except that of providing satisfactory performance. In other words, it is suggested that it is the character of Chinese society in the opening-up era, *i.e.* the inevitable “confusions in

social values”, that endorses the political significance of Olympic success that, in most cases, would be largely evaluated via Olympic performance. Thus, the requirement of Olympic performance is recognised and legitimised as a quest for the Chinese society rather than for the Zhuanye sport system.

The importance of Olympic performance in nationalist and patriotic terms is also stressed from an international perspective. It is stated by Xiong & Zheng that:

Although the termination of the Cold War has reduced the political opposition in the Olympics, political functions of the Olympic Games such as inspiring national spirit and [establishing] national identity are still the main reasons that governments of all countries participate in the Olympic movement. This is evidenced in the increased the investment by western developed countries in participating in the Olympic Games. It is impossible for us, as a giant developing-country that is rising, to stay out of the Olympic Games.

X. Xiong & Zheng, 2007, p. 13

In the above quotation, the authors legitimise the Chinese government’s involvement in developing the nationalist function of the Olympic Games from a global perspective. Firstly, through employing terms implying the activities of national governments, such as “the Cold War” and “investment by ... countries”, and indicating the activities of “developed western countries”, national governments are portrayed as proactive actors and participants in the Olympic movement. Secondly, the development of the

political function of the Olympics in the nationalist dimension is identified as a common international practice in the global sphere. Given China cannot “stay out of the Olympic Games”, it is implied that this common practice of “developed western countries” in the international Olympic community should also be followed by the Chinese government.

The features of nationalism and patriotism, especially the latter, are normally employed in the discourse related to the Olympic performance and the ideological education of elite athletes. If we, for example, consider the scenario of the speeches of Liu Peng in the 2007 and 2008 All States Sport Minister Conferences, in which the Minister of Sport states that:

It is pointed out by comrades in the leading core [of the CPC] that, spiritual character... of [how] the Chinese female volleyball team and Chinese table tennis team worked tenaciously to win glory for the country ... is the foundation of the [Chinese] elite sport to prepare for the battle of the 2008 Games ... the victory of the Long March⁵³ was achieved by the Red Army due to their recalcitrant spirit under the tough conditions; preparing the battle of Olympic Games also needs the same recalcitrant spirit.

⁵³ The Long March (October 1933-October 1935) was a military retreat of 9,000 km by the Red Army, the CPC military force which was being chased by the KMT army (Zhang & Vaughan 2002). It has been constantly used as a theme of propaganda, delineating the fighting spirit and spirit of stubborn determination under tough conditions of the Chinese people, a spirit accredited to the leadership of the CPC.

Winning glory for the country is the eternal topic of the ideological and political work of elite sport teams. Facing the Beijing Games, [we] have to make our athletes realise that winning glory for the State is not only a slogan, but also a heavy responsibility and an honourable mission.

P. Liu, 2007, p. 1

The construction of the ideology and the sportsmanship [and positive behaviour] of elite sport teams is as important as training... in the battle-preparation [for the 2008 Games]. All Centres ... have to regard the education of patriotism...the honing of [an appropriate] mentality as important elements in the battle- preparation [for the 2008 Games].

P. Liu, 2008, p.1

In Liu's statement, patriotism, as an element of the ideological education of Chinese athletes, is portrayed as a factor crucial to the preparation of the 2008 Beijing Games. Thanks to the traditional ideological education and political portrait of Chinese elite sport, 'winning glory for the country' has been recognised as an innate and essential duty of Chinese elite sport. Chinese elite sport and athletes had thus been utilised and internalised as a metaphor of patriotism, such as in the case of the Chinese female volleyball team and Chinese table tennis team in the above quotation.

The typical patriotic phrase, i.e. "winning glory for the country", is not only linked with Chinese elite athletes, but also associated with political metaphors, such as the revolutionary spirit of the Red Army. Besides the notion of the Red Army, other revolutionary-spiritual concepts, such as "recalcitrant spirit"

and “working tenaciously to win glory for the country”, are also portrayed as essential content of the ideological education of Chinese elite athletes for winning Olympic success.

This linkage between Chinese Olympic discourse and the feature of the socialist regime is also illustrated in our previous quotation from the speech of the then Minister of Sport, Yuan Weimin, in celebrating the success of the Beijing Olympic bid. Before jumping to the investigation of these elements, which are related to and reflect the socialist character of the PRC, in the following section, we would like to provide a brief conclusion of our analysis of the features of nationalism and patriotism in Chinese Olympic discourse.

As original features which have accompanied the Chinese Olympic movement since its beginning, features of nationalism and patriotism reflect the purpose of constructing the identity of a ‘new’ Chinese nation that is to be re-established from its bitter experiences in the 20th century. Even though this ‘new’ national identity is differently interpreted in political or cultural terms, the features of nationalism and patriotism, such as the aim of national restoration, reinforce the significance of Olympic victories not only to Chinese elite sport, but also to the Chinese nation. In the pursuit of Olympic victories, Chinese elite athletes become both the objects of patriotic education and a symbol of what ‘constitutes’ Chinese elite athletes themselves.

5.1.3 The Superiority of Socialism

It is worth noting at the beginning of this section, the analysis contained in this section specifically focuses on the socialist element in Chinese elite sport, which is different from Section 1.1, investigating the 'extrinsic' (political) function assigned to the Olympics in general in the Chinese context.

As one of not many countries that remain labelled (by themselves or others) as a socialist country, China embraces and utilises this political feature in its Olympic discourse, on the one hand, to interpret its achievement related to the Olympics; and on the other, to support its response to the international community as a ideological foundation.

Illustrated in a number of previous quotations, the socialist character of the PRC is associated with Chinese Olympic victories, either in the Olympic stadia or in the successful bid of the 2008 Games, such as the statement of the Central Committee of the CPC (2002, p.1), "Winning the bid of the 2008 Games fully reflects the great accomplishments that have been achieved through the reform and opening-up..." Even though there is not direct reference to socialism, given the strong political connotation of "the reform and opening-up", as the symbol of 'the socialism with Chinese characteristics', we would maintain that the successful bid of the 2008 is portrayed as an endorsement of the correctness of the socialist regime and its development

route. He Zhenliang's speech in the celebration ceremony for the successful 2008 bid provides a more obvious example of this association. It is stated that:

This [winning the 2008 bid] is the recognition [by the IOC] of our achievement in the reform and opening-up, the support of our government and Chinese people [to the bid]... Genuinely speaking, I would ascribe [the successful bid] to the leadership of the Party, to our achievement in the reform and open-up, to the People's support.

He, 2002, p. 1

In the above quotation, the successful bid is not only identified as a result of the reform and opening-up of China, in other words of socialism with Chinese characteristics, as it is in the quoted CPC document; but also portrayed as a symbol of the international recognition of this development route. Following the typical and implicit account of achievement in relation to reform, He does not acknowledge the difference between the enormous accomplishment in the economy and the relatively less significant achievement in other areas, such as the political domain. Though it would be difficult to argue that the successful bid was only an outcome of the economic achievement of the reform, we would suggest that this ambiguous expression, to a degree, generalises the nature of the international recognition and thus endorses the political theme of the PRC. It is also worth noting that in the second part of the above quotation, He also acknowledges the domestic factors relating to the success of the bid. In contrast to his interpretation of the

international perspective, the Party's leadership is explicitly included as the leading factor in the success of the bid, while the other two factors mentioned ("the support of people and the achievement of the reform and opening up") are also consistently mentioned throughout the document.

In terms of the success China has enjoyed in the Olympic Games, the socialist character of the country is normally portrayed as the fundamental source of Olympic victories, reflecting the superiority of socialism. For instance, it is stated by the Central Committee of the CPC that

Drafting the Plan for Winning Olympic Glory in the new era..., [we should] further utilise the superiority of socialism, [we should] insist and refine Juguo Tizhi,... better integrate sport resources from the whole country.

The Central Committee of the CPC, 2002, p. 1

The former President of China, Hu Jintao, (2008b, p.3) also stated that the "superiority of socialism" is reflected in "the concentration of all national resources for a major task". This is consistent with the main feature of Juguo Tizhi, the support of whole nation for the elite sport system, and with the notion of "integrat[ing] sport resources from the whole country" in the above quotation. Given the close relationship between the socialist character of Chinese society and Juguo Tizhi, we would argue this promotion of the socialist features of Chinese elite sport in Chinese Olympic discourse ultimately reinforces and endorses the status of Juguo Tizhi. However, we

will have further discussion on the discursive construction of the relationship between the Olympic success, Juguo Tizhi and its socialist character in subsequent sections.

Socialist elements are also employed in the portrait of the challenges associated with the Olympics. In terms of those challenges within the Olympic competition, i.e. the challenges for fulfilling the Olympic strategy, the superiority of socialism is normally accentuated as it is in explaining Olympic success. Due to its close relationship with Juguo Tizhi, it will be investigated in the following section entitled, "*Olympic glory, Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanyue sport*".

In responding to the potential challenges related to the Olympics, especially in political terms, socialist elements are often employed as the ideological foundation for the PRC to respond to these external pressures and challenges. The previous quotation from Ma (2005) provides a good example of this implication of socialist elements. Ma emphasises the importance of maintaining the "dialectical materialist and historical materialist" stance in dealing with "problems" caused by the increased interaction with international organisations for the staging of the Beijing Games.

Domestically, discourses related with socialist ideology and values are associated with the ideological education of elite athletes in their preparation

for the Olympic Games. This is indicated in a GAS document that is specifically published for the ideological education of elite athletes:

Further strengthening the ideological education of the national teams is an urgent need in the preparation for the Olympics, and is an important means to guarantee the effectiveness of the preparation of the 2008 Games.

Something which needs to be specifically addressed is that some athletes...have even behaved in libertarian, hedonistic, ways exhibiting extreme individualism and materialism [money-worship] ... [because] they have abundant opportunities for competing overseas, they are susceptible to Western ideology, values, cultural products and unhealthy practices ... [We thus] need to further strengthen and improve ideological education ... to ensure all athletes give everything in the battle preparation for the Olympics.

All of the new members of the national teams have to be given [ideological education] tutorials ... [We] must educate [athletes] about the history of the [Communist] Party...the 'Socialist concept of honour and disgrace'...[which should be] reflected in their love of the country and the organisations [to which they belong]... in order to let them clearly understand the essential task of, and the significance of, the preparation for the 2008 Olympic Games.

GAS, 2006, p. 1

In the quoted statement of *the Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving the Ideological Education of National Teams*, the ideological education of the elite athletes is identified as compulsory and a necessary condition of the Olympic task for Chinese elite sport, especially for 2008. In other words, socialist ideological education is legitimated by the significance of the Olympic performance in Chinese society. As exemplified in the above quotation, such

ideological education is consistent with the patriotic character of Chinese Olympic discourse, “love of the country and the organisations”; and with the political theme, i.e. socialism of the PRC, education in “the history of the [Communist] Party...the ‘Socialist concept of honour and disgrace’”. The ‘misbehaviour’ of elite athletes that is influenced by other, i.e. Western, ideologies is portrayed as the target of the programme of ideological education, which should ‘correct’ these negative tendencies. Given the close relationship with the term ‘Western’ and capitalism, in a Chinese context, indirectly through criticising capitalist and Western values the socialist features of this ideological education are subtly promoted.

For the recipients of education, i.e. Chinese elite athletes (especially those preparing for the Olympics), given the overwhelming proportion and tremendous significance of ZhuanYe athletes to the achievement of the goal of Olympic glory for China, it is ZhuanYe athletes instead of professional athletes who are portrayed as the target of this ideological education.

As we previously demonstrated, providing satisfactory Olympic performance is recognised as one of the major ways for ZhuanYe athletes, who rely on government funds, to realise their benefits and to promote their status. Thus we would argue that the ideological education is, to a degree, consistent with the individual interests of elite athletes, given that it is designed to promote

Olympic performance. In other words, even though it is the collective and national interests that are ultimately promoted in the socialist discourse advocating ideological education for Chinese Olympians, it does not necessarily lead to a full rejection of the interests of the individual. To a certain extent, the collective and individual interests are consistent with each other in the ideological education, to which Chinese elite athletes are subjected. Thus through fulfilling the collective and national interests, certain individual interests have been satisfied and vested interest groups have subsequently been formed. Such groups proactively promote the national interest and their own interests, which are to be realised through providing satisfactory Olympic performance, and thus reject the pursuit of 'extreme' individual interests threatening the preparation for the Olympics.

Even though the conflicts between some 'Western ideology' and socialist philosophy are well recognised, the socialist development of the country remains portrayed as a beneficiary of the western-origin Olympics, especially through the 2008 Beijing Games. As indicated in the previous quotation from the documents of the Central Committee of the CPC (2002, p.1), the Beijing Games is portrayed as an opportunity "to promote the development of the socialist material progress, and cultural and ethical progress, of our country".

In terms of the development of Chinese elite sport, it is also projected by

Zhang (2009, p.13) that the Beijing Games would “provoke dynamism in the Chinese socialist-market-economic sport system that is in the process of transformation”. Given the reforming connotation of the ‘socialist market economy’ in contemporary Chinese society, it could be argued that the term “socialist-market-economic sport system” also implies a reformist tone and the prediction of the positive impact of the Beijing Games on the development of Chinese elite sport reform. However, such a projection is in contrast to the ‘extreme accentuation’ of the planned-economy-based *Juguo Tizhi* and ‘the superficial-emphasis’ on market-oriented Chinese elite sport reform in the development of pre-2008 Chinese elite sport policy, which is argued in the previous chapter. In the next two sections, we will investigate this relationship between the Olympic task, *Juguo Tizhi* and Chinese elite sport reform in detail.

In general, Olympic victories are framed as a symbol of the socialist development of the country endorsing the correctness of the communist regime and of *Juguo Tizhi*. In the name of protecting national interests, the collectivist discourse, as a feature of the socialist regime, is employed to safeguard the vested interests that have been realised through providing satisfactory Olympic performance. Elite athletes are thus educated with such collectivist values which embrace the ‘proper’ ways of pursuing individual interests while competing in the Olympics. Both *Juguo Tizhi* and the

socialist-market-economic reform of Chinese elite sport are portrayed as beneficiaries of the 2008 Olympic Games. However, there were considerable differences between the pre-2008 developments of the two, which was also in line with the vested interests of Zhuanye sport. In general, we would argue that the socialist features of the Chinese Olympic discourse are closely associated with Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye sport, as the two are deeply rooted in the socialist structural characteristics of the Chinese elite sport system. The relationship between these three is subsequently investigated in the following section.

5.2 Juguo Tizhi, Zhuanye Sport and the Olympic performance oriented policies

In this and the subsequent section, we focus on the relationship between the pre-2008 Chinese Olympic discourse and the development of Chinese elite sport. For this section, the major concern is the interaction between Chinese Olympic discourse and the discursive construction of Juguo Tizhi, and the influence on different interests within the Zhuanye sport system.

5.2.1 The nature of Juguo Tizhi

As demonstrated in the part of *Glossary of terms*, we would argue that Juguo

Tizhi should also be understood as a framework that administers and operates Chinese sport affairs as a whole. It is Zhuanye sport that should be recognised as the sport system supported by the whole country, and is operated and governed by the government with the Juguo Tizhi framework.

The Olympic task are recognised as innate characteristics of the administrative framework, i.e. Juguo Tizhi, which was initially established in the 1950s for “concentrating all resources on highly challenging tasks” (Hao 2004; Hao & Ren 2003; Li 2009, p.229) and was then articulated as an approach in Chinese elite sport discourse in the 1980s (Li et al. 2003; Hao 2004). The then-President of China, Jiang Zemin’s statement popularised the term, stating in a public address that “...the [Olympic] success of Chinese [elite] sport relies on Juguo Tizhi” (Li 2002, p.1). According to our literature review, these two dates are associated with the two initiations of the Olympic movement in the PRC. During the ‘Olympic vacuum’ between these dates, Juguo Tizhi was seldom mentioned in Chinese elite sport discourse.

In Li *et al.*’s interpretation of the origin and significance of Juguo Tizhi, both the nature of, and the notion of, Juguo Tizhi is associated with the Olympic strategy. It is indicated that:

*The notion of ‘Juguo Tizhi’ was brought up after the 1984 LA Olympics.
When the SPCSC started formulating the ‘Olympic strategy’, it was indicated*

by some comrades who were analysing the factors that lead to the rapid development of the sport that we were leading, ... This method of organisation and administration [of elite sport] that highly integrates resources within the sport system is similar to the model of [the PRC, by which] “two bombs and one satellite⁵⁴” [were developed], and is therefore entitled as ‘Juguo Tizhi’.

Y. Li et al., 2003, p.2

In the above quotation, the notion of Juguo Tizhi is portrayed as a ‘by-product’ of the formulation of the Olympic strategy, suggesting that Juguo Tizhi was developed for achieving the goal of Olympic strategy, i.e. winning Olympic glory, which should be the prime policy concern. A number of terms that imply victories in the Chinese context are accordingly included by the authors, such as “the 1984 LA Olympic Games”⁵⁵, “the rapid development of the sport

⁵⁴ The idiom, “Two bombs and one satellite”, stands for China’s nuclear bombs, missiles and man-made satellites, most of which were developed during the Cultural Revolution. “Two bombs and one satellite” are not only regarded as referring to the scientific achievement of the PRC but also in political terms are portrayed as the foundation of the international status of the PRC as a powerful country. Given the poor economic conditions prevailing in China at that time, it was also interpreted in ideological terms as a icon of the spirit and the progress of socialist self-development relating to patriotism, collectivism, socialist spirit and scientism (CCTV 2007; Jiang 1999).

⁵⁵ The 1984 Olympic Games is recognised as “breakthrough from 0” of Chinese elite sport, in which China won its first Olympic gold medal by shooter Xu Haifeng and finished fourth in the medal table with 15 gold medals (Miao et al. 2012; Wu 1999; Liu 2003)

that we were leading” and “two bombs and one satellite”, portraying Juguo Tizhi as an effective apparatus for Chinese elite sport to achieve satisfactory (Olympic) performance. Such emphasis on the Olympic victories is consistent with statement of Jiang linking Juguo Tizhi to “the success of” Chinese elite sport.

It is worth noting the association between Juguo Tizhi and the highly political idiom, “two bombs and one satellite”. This linkage not only implies the political significance of elite sport performance; but also associates ‘the ideology of “the two bombs and one satellite”’, i.e. “patriotism, collectivism, socialist spirit and Scientism” (Jiang 1999, p.4) with Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye sport, an association which coincides with the political features in the Chinese Olympic discourse. In addition, in line with our previous quotation from Li (2009, p.229), the authors also identify the integration of resources as the defining character of Juguo Tizhi, the initial goal of which was focused on economic terms (Hao & Ren 2003; Hao 2004; Li et al. 2010; Hu 2008b).

Not only being identified as consistent with the structure and ideology of the communist regime, Juguo Tizhi is also associated with other political phrases in the PRC, such as the political status quo of China, and recognised as “necessary [for Chinese elite sport] especially in the primary stage of socialism” (Ma 2005, p.29). Juguo Tizhi’s features of planned-economy and

government-control, which are closely associated with communism, are also often emphasised. Li *et al.* state that:

The sport system of China is consistent with the planned economy, in which the government directly operates [practical affairs of] sport. Its basic characters are that government distributes sport resource with plans [formulated by central authorities] and governs sport by administrative means. The government is the one that both administers and operates [Chinese] sport... it is the support of this system that makes Juguo Tizhi significantly effective.

Y. Li et al., 2003, p. 1

The government's control and the planned-economy features are portrayed as the two inherent elements of the character of Chinese elite sport and Juguo Tizhi. Even though such 'orthodox' socialist features of Juguo Tizhi are inconsistent with the reforming trend of Chinese society, they are promoted in Chinese elite sport as the necessary condition for fulfilling the Olympic strategy. Given the strong involvement of the government in the planned economy, these two features complement each other and jointly promote the government's power in Chinese elite sport. In return, this promotion of the planned-economy features of the Chinese elite sport system restrains the involvement and influence of other stakeholders, especially those from civil-society and the market economy. This coincides with the way in which interviewee G3 characterises the nature of Juguo Tizhi, indicating that it "is not a system supported by the whole country, but by the sport system. It is [a]

closed [system] which to a degree is closed to, and rejects, external resources and stakeholders.” Hence, this dominant role of the GAS was, on the one hand, ensured by the reliance of Zhuanye sport on government resources, i.e. the planned-economy character of Chinese elite sport; while on the other hand, it was also safeguarded via the emphasis on Olympic performance that led to the ultimate promotion of the Juguo Tizhi system, which was dominated by the GAS.

In general, we would argue that Juguo Tizhi is the government-controlled framework by which the Chinese government administers and operates elite sport (including Zhuanye sport) with administrative methods, and distributes resources with the means provided by the planned economy. Similar ideological features, which are consistent with the socialist feature of the regime, are shared between the Chinese Olympic discourse and the interpretation of Juguo Tizhi, emphasising the success in the Olympics and associated political implication of these excel performance. The major benchmark for this framework is to achieve satisfactory Olympic performance.

5.2.2 Juguo Tizhi and its political task: elite sport performance

The significance of satisfactory performance, recognised as the ‘political task’ of Chinese elite sport, for Juguo Tizhi has mainly been constructed from two

perspectives. On the one hand, it is recognised as the necessary condition for realising the social function of elite sport, which is accentuated in the Chinese context. On the other hand, it is also understood, especially by the SADs, that failure to accomplish this core task would threaten the value of the existence of Juguo Tizhi, as providing satisfactory performance is the main role of Chinese elite sport, the main form of which is Zhuanye sport.

The political significance assigned to Chinese elite sport has varied along the history of the PRC. In the period immediately prior to the Beijing Games, the satisfactory performance in the 2008 Olympics was associated with political phrases, such as 'a moderately prosperous society' (Deng 1993) and "the socialist harmonious-society" (The Central Committee of the CPC 2006), for example, in the deputy Sport Minister's speech (Duan 2007, p.1).

It could be argued these timely changes reflect the requirement on Chinese elite sport of being "consistent with the macro policy of the Party and the country" (Ma, 2005, p.29), for instance the 'opening-up and reform'. This emphasis on coherence between Chinese elite sport and the political theme of Chinese society is consistent with the political origin of Chinese elite sport and SADs.

However, along with the changes in political climate, providing excellent elite sport performance has steadily been stressed as the means to realise such

extrinsic functions (promoting nationalism and socialism for example), and thus as the main political task of Chinese elite sport at both collective and individual level. Xiong *et al.* (2008) portray this reliance on outstanding performance as a defining characteristic of ZhuanYe sport. It is indicated that:

The only way for ...the former [model of] elite sport that “developed with a closed door” ... [to exert] social influence is [through competing in] important international events; the positive influence would only be induced with outstanding performance. ... Realising... other social [functions] through striving for outstanding performance is the origin of all practices of [Chinese] elite sport, is the ultimate goal of [Chinese] elite sport development, and is an important standard for restructuring the model of the development of Chinese elite sport.

Xiong, et al, 2008, p.87, p.177

Through a longitudinal description overarching the origin, the present and the future of Chinese elite sport, the authors portray the social function and the political implication of elite sport performance as an inherent feature and ultimate goal of Chinese elite sport. It is worth noting that “outstanding” is repeatedly employed in the above quotation, qualifying the necessary condition for realising the social functions of Chinese elite sport. This constant pursuit of ‘excellence’ is not only linked to “elite sport that ‘developed with a closed door’”, but also acknowledged as “standard for restructuring the model of the development of Chinese elite sport”. We would argue that this account, on the one hand, constructs a consistent relationship between the

elite sport performance and the social effect of Chinese elite sport, and thus regulates the acceptability of certain types of elite sport performance. On the other hand, it also normalises the political functions that are undertaken by Chinese elite sport. Through portraying this consistency of the requirement of realising its social task, the authors acknowledge that outstanding performance would be continuously recognised as the standard for Chinese elite sport. Indirectly, this also implies that the political value of those elite sports with 'less-outstanding' performance, for example Chinese baseball, is thus decreased in the Chinese context.

At the level of the individual, this character of Chinese elite sport is emphasised by the deputy Minister of Sport in the construction of the identity of sport personnel as an essential duty. It is stated that:

'Winning glory for the country' is the duty of those who work in sport, like [the duty of] farmers [to] provide more food, [or the duty of] workers [to] have more production, [or the duty of] soldiers [to] protect the country, which would never merely be a slogan. Either Olympic or non-Olympic sports, either professional or amateur athletes, as long as one participated in an international event in the name of China, it would be incumbent to 'win glory for the country', which is [a] non-negotiable [task].

Duan, 2007, p. 1

In the speech of Duan, the responsibility of "winning glory for the country" is expanded to non-Olympic sports and amateur athletes. However, given the

significance of Olympic performance and 'officially-designated' association between Zhuanye sport and the Olympic strategy, it could be argued that it is Zhuanye athletes that mainly, if not solely, undertake this task at individual level.

The identity of Chinese elite athletes is constructed as undertaking the role of full-time employee of the state through comparison with other occupations, especially soldiers, stressing the non-negotiability of athletes' duty to "win glory for the country". This also indirectly suggests the corresponding relationship between elite athletes and its employer (in the case of Zhuanye sport, SADs). Given the SADs' interests associated with elite sport performance, it could be argued that Chinese elite athletes, who have such responsibilities imposed upon them, are also indirectly framed as a medium for the GAS to realise its own interest through "winning glory for the country".

From an alternative perspective, i.e. promoting the necessity of Chinese elite sport reform, Xiong *et al.* argue that unsatisfactory performance will be the driving force provoking change in the system, and providing a challenge to Juguo Tizhi:

There was a huge gap between the performance [of Chinese athletes] in the 1988 Seoul Games and the expectation of Chinese people, which caused great

pain, since Chinese [elite] sport had been fabulous in the first half of the 1980s. ... Especially, after the failure of the Chinese Olympic football team in pursuing qualification for the Barcelona Olympic Games, there was great reaction [and discussion] throughout the country, Chinese football and Chinese [elite] sport [hence] had to confront the greatest pressure that it had ever experienced from the public for [the initiation] of reform.

Xiong et al, 2008. p.28

Even though the emphasis in Chinese society on successful Olympic performance is criticised by D. Xiong (2002) as a superficial understanding of Olympism, the above quotation suggests that this superficial expectation was so powerful that it left Chinese elite sport with “great pain” and “the greatest pressure that it had ever had” after China’s Olympic “failure” in the 1988 Games. In other words, the Olympic performance is portrayed as the key influential factor of the public expectation, or as Ma (2005) terms it “the people’s needs”.

Following Chairman Mao’s (1944, p.1) famous line “serve the people”, the argument that “people need gold medals” has long been utilised as a rationale by governments for ‘buying’ gold medals from sport departments (Lu 1994, p.1). It could be argued that the value of Juguo Tizhi to the government is greatly affected by its effectiveness in fulfilling the “people’s need”, or the need of the ‘investor’. This threat to the value of Juguo Tizhi is conveyed from an opposite perspective in the above quotation, portraying the

unsuccessful performance as the trigger of the increase in the pressure for elite sport reform. Xiong *et al.* circuitously suggest that the success of, or the acceptability of, the Olympic performance essentially affects the pressure on Chinese SADs to actually implement the reform. In other words, the power of SADs, especially the GAS, to maintain the dominance of Juguo Tizhi relies on its capability of obtaining Olympic victories. It could be argued that as long as Olympic success could be guaranteed, Chinese elite sport is capable of, to a degree, resisting the requirement for essential reform, even though reform has been a mainstream political and economic theme in Chinese society. Such a situation coincides with our previous analysis of the 1993 Policy, which eventually reinforced Juguo Tizhi in its role of fulfilling the Olympic task of Chinese elite sport while the SPCSC was under great external pressure for reform.

As a brief summary of this section, we would argue that the political implication of elite sport has been highly accentuated in Chinese elite sport discourse, which is constrained in the Chinese context. Consistent with the traditional emphasis on success and political significance assigned to elite sport, victorious performance has thus been emphasised and prioritised as the political task of Chinese elite sport. Given the importance of the Olympics in Chinese society and in the global sport world, Olympic performance has been the most prominently stressed element in policy statement and external

comments, especially in those statements relating to Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye sport.

Such emphasis on Olympic performance, on the one hand, is regulated and accepted as the dominant discourse of Chinese elite sport, as it is in line with Chinese society's need in relation to elite sport, i.e. the need for success. On the other hand, Olympic performance is accentuated in Chinese elite sport because of its consistency with the vested interests of the Chinese elite sport system. This accentuation further strengthens the dominance of Juguo Tizhi, which is employed for achieving elite sport excellence; and enables SADs to resist changes that may threaten the stability of the Zhuanye sport system, through regulating the truth, or the priority, of Chinese elite sport. It also considerably devalues those non-key-sports, which 'grab' scarce resources from the key sports; and even inherently de-emphasises the reforming discourse in Chinese elite sport. Such 'promotional' effects of Chinese Olympic discourse on Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye sport are analysed in the following section.

5.2.3 Promoting Juguo Tizhi, in the name of the Olympics

Even though the refinement of Juguo Tizhi, especially 'separating the administration and operational issues', has long been identified as the core target of the Chinese elite sport reform; in the period immediately prior to the

Beijing Games, Juguo Tizhi was reshaped to reflect an “extreme form” (Interviewee General 2), namely “a system that was literally supported by the whole country rather than the [elite sport] system” (Interviewee General 3). In the interpretation of such a development, which ran somewhat counter to the so-called reform, the Beijing Games is a crucial factor rationalising the prioritisation of elite sport performance and thus of Juguo Tizhi. For instance, it is indicated by Li *et al.* that:

Refining Juguo Tizhi, to a great extent, focuses on the sustainable development of Chinese elite sport, which is concretely symbolized by the new breakthrough that Chinese elite sport is going to accomplish in the 29th Olympiad, and the capability of Chinese elite sport of maintaining this powerful momentum after 2008.

(Li *et al.* 2003, p.3)

In the above quotation, Li *et al.* portray two divergent directions of Chinese elite sport development through employing a term with strong reforming connotation, “the sustainable development of Chinese elite sport”⁵⁶ while emphasising Olympic performance (as the benchmark for Juguo Tizhi).

⁵⁶ The sustainable development is a crucial element of the political theory “scientific outlook on development” that was initiated by the President of China, Hu Jintao, and heavily promoted by the Central Committee of the CPC in 2003 (The Central Committee of the CPC 2003). It was further stressed as the basic requirement of the “scientific outlook on development” in Hu’s speech as the 17th National Congress of the CPC (Hu 2007).

However, there are subtle differences, which the authors indirectly indicate, between the importance of the two crucial tasks. This is to say that through identifying “the new breakthrough” in the Beijing Games as the benchmark, or “concrete symbol”, of the refinement of Juguo Tizhi, the imminent task of Juguo Tizhi is imposed on the long-term development of Chinese elite sport. The reinforcement of Juguo Tizhi is hence eventually accentuated. In addition, “sustainable development”, the reforming concept, is also interpreted from a perspective stressing the continuous excellence of elite sport, i.e. “the capability of ... maintaining this powerful momentum after 2008”. We would argue that this interpretation clothing the consistent reinforcement of Juguo Tizhi in a reforming rhetoric is in line with the vested interests of SADs. This subtle discourse, which ultimately promotes Juguo Tizhi, coincides with Xiong *et al.*'s (2008, p.59) interpretation stating that “inherently, the Olympic strategy has been the core of all of the reform of Chinese elite sport”.

We would thus argue that even though the dilemma between Juguo Tizhi and the reform has led to a conflicting feature in Chinese elite sport discourse in the reforming era, Juguo Tizhi has been normalised as the ‘standard’ priority via the accentuation of the importance of the Olympic performance, at least, by SADs themselves. This also coincides with our previous argument that the fulfilment of the Olympic expectation is literally the key factor determining the pressure on, and necessity of, SADs to implement essential reform.

Thanks to the association between Juguo Tizhi and satisfactory Olympic performance, political significance assigned to Olympic performance is also directly employed in Chinese elite sport discourse as an endorsement to the prioritisation of Juguo Tizhi. For instance, Juguo Tizhi is associated with socialism in the policy published by the headquarters of the CPC and State Council, emphasising “[Chinese elite sport should] target achieving outstanding results in the Olympic Games ... [should thus] further utilise the superiority of socialism, insist and refine Juguo Tizhi,... [and] better integrate sport resources from all over the country (The Central Committee of the CPC 2002, p.1)”. We would argue that this account not only portrays Juguo Tizhi as intrinsic to the socialism, but also legitimises its planned-economy characteristics, such as the GAS’s control of sporting resource, which had been publicly stressed by a number of Chinese politicians, including the then-President of China before the Beijing Games (Sun & Zou 2006; Xinhua News Agency 2007; Hu 2008a; P. Liu 2008).

The ‘extrinsic function’ of elite sport performance, especially Olympic performance, is also an important feature of Chinese elite sport discourse that is often employed to legitimise the implementation of Juguo Tizhi. It is stated by Hao and Ren that:

The establishment of Juguo Tizhi had direct relation with the participation [of China] in the Olympic Games... Though there are many problems with Juguo

Tizhi, it is still an effective system for ... achieving outstanding results in international events. ... In other words, as long as the Chinese government and Chinese people have collective emotional needs for outstanding results in international events, any proposal suggesting abandoning the system is unrealistic.

Hao & Ren, 2003, pp. 3, 4

Hao and Ren interpret the necessity of implementing Juguo Tizhi from a domestic perspective in terms of its effectiveness in fulfilling the Olympic expectation in Chinese society. On the one hand, the authors directly acknowledge Juguo Tizhi's role as the GAS's prime apparatus to "achieving outstanding results in international events", while acknowledging its problems. On the other hand, through associating the infeasibility of "any proposal suggesting abandoning the system" with "collective emotional needs" in Chinese society, the authors indirectly identify collective interests as the element which legitimises the overwhelming importance of the Olympic strategy and the dominance of the Juguo Tizhi system. This is to say that the promotion of Juguo Tizhi, technically, is closely linked to its effectiveness in achieving elite sport success, especially Olympic success, which is highly emphasised as reflecting "collective emotional needs" in the Chinese context. Essentially, the implementation of Juguo Tizhi relates to the vested interests of both the Zhuanye sport system and of SADs, which also emphasise the priority of "collective interests" in Chinese elite sport while

proactively protecting Juguo Tizhi during the reforming era.

Though from a radical perspective, Tang's (2007) portrayal of the differences in the realisation of different stakeholders' interests within Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye sport provides a good example of the content of 'the collective interests' promoted in the Olympic strategy. It is stated that:

The development of Chinese elite sport has been focusing on gold medals... The Olympic strategy has gradually transformed into a 'gold-medal strategy'. Throughout this transforming procedure, the number of gold medals has increased, sport departments have received political [recognition for its] achievement, gold-medallists and coaches have received [financial] benefits and status, taxpayers have received their bills, a huge number of 'obsolete' athletes have 'received' unemployment.

(Tang 2007, p.20)

With the realisation of collective interests as the foundation for realising interests of other sub-groups, which is symbolised by the notion of increased gold medals, the author lists the (different) "benefits" gained by different stakeholders. We would argue that Tang's account associates the extent to which different stakeholders' interests are realised with the internal and external identities of these "beneficiaries". This is to say that the author associates the interests of internal stakeholders with benefits gained from achieving the 'gold-medal strategy'; while links those externals, including the athletes who are 'obsolete' (i.e. who fail to reach or retain a place at the elite

level), with the cost of winning gold medals. In other words, Tang indirectly conveys that the benefits of winning gold medals are focused within the Zhuanye sport system, which is consistent with the monopolistic position and power of Juguo Tizhi in Chinese elite sport.

In addition, it is worth noting the use of 'receive' in the above quotation. We would argue that this term, on the one hand, implies the passive role of stakeholders, either those who would be benefitted, or be negatively affected, in the Chinese elite sport system. On the other hand, more importantly, through ignoring the capability of actors, the author overlooks the influence of the intention, for example of those who are in powerful positions, of maintaining the system that promotes the interests of internal stakeholders. It is thus indirectly suggested that the inhibition of the interests of external stakeholders is a structural defect of, or a feature of, Zhuanye sport, which should be accepted by 'receivers' as long as the Olympic strategy is accepted. We would thus argue that in spite of its negative effects which are identified as the target of the reform, Juguo Tizhi would be continuously promoted, or accepted unless, a) there were any challenging systems that could accomplish the Olympic strategy with relatively less negative impact, or; b) Juguo Tizhi was no longer effective in fulfilling its Olympic task, or; c) the Olympic fever of the Chinese society decreased, which would reduce the value of the Olympic strategy for the vested interests group in Chinese elite sport,

especially the Zhuanye sport system.

This is consistent with the statement of Interviewee General 3 that, “though having complaints or comments, everyone temporarily suppressed conflicts in order to guarantee [the success of] the Beijing Games ... The reform of Chinese sport had basically been halted from 2000, which is just to protect Olympic [performance] ”. We would argue that this account reflects a) the priority of Olympic performance in Chinese elite sport; b) the reliability of Juguo Tizhi in accomplishing the Olympic strategy, for which the reform had been halted; c) the proposition that the reformed system was not as effective as Juguo Tizhi in providing satisfactory Olympic performance, and is thus less powerful in the Olympic-accentuated Chinese context. This relationship between Chinese Olympic discourse and the Chinese elite sport reform in the pre-2008 era is investigated in the following section.

5.3 The Chinese Olympic Discourse and the Pre-2008 Reform

In this section, we will investigate the relationship between Chinese Olympic discourse and Chinese elite sport reform and examine the influence of Chinese Olympic discourse on the portrayal and implementation of the reform. It is worth noting that the reforming concepts investigated in this section mainly relate to the reform that is recognised as challenging Juguo

Tizhi and Zhuanye sport, for example, the reform of the administrative governance system of Chinese elite sport and the introduction of professionalisation. We would argue that Chinese Olympic discourse also had a two-fold effect on the reform of Chinese elite sport, which was regarded mainly as a refinement of Juguo Tizhi.

5.3.1 The Olympics and the postponement of reform

As argued in the previous chapter, the goal of the reform is to refine Juguo Tizhi and to ultimately promote the sustainable development of Chinese elite sport. Nonetheless, limited achievement had been accomplished in the core parts of the reform. Juguo Tizhi, as the main target of reform, has maintained its dominance in providing satisfactory Olympic performance of Chinese elite sport. The effect of postponing progress on the reform of sport reached a high point during the preparation for the Beijing Games, in which a temporary silence was gradually implemented on, and eventually accepted by, the Chinese elite sport reformers. There was thus a gradual marginalisation of reforming content in elite sport policies as China was approaching to the 2008 Games (Policies Laws and Regulations Department of the GAS 2000; The Central Committee of the CPC 2002).

It could be argued that this pattern of policy discourse reflects awareness on the part of policy makers of the tension between the emphasis on Olympic

performance and the advocacy of, at least certain elements of, elite sport reform. Even in the policy statement in which content from the two sides co-exists, it was *Juguo Tizhi* and Olympic performance that were ultimately prioritised (Policies Laws and Regulations Department of the GAS, 2000⁵⁷; SPCSC, 1995b⁵⁸; The Central Committee of the CPC, 2002).

The Chinese Minister of Sport links this decrease in the importance of elite sport reform to the preparation for the Beijing Games in his speech in the 2007 All States Sports Minister Conference, indicating that:

*... There have been a number of battle-preparation policies that aim to refine *Juguo Tizhi*... The basic principle of these policy modifications at this time was to obey and to serve the needs of the battle-preparation for the 2008*

⁵⁷ *Gradually refine the sport administration system. Clarifying the relationship between different types of sport organisations, in order to fully utilise their respective functions...Establishing a sport service system that will serve the general public, and [establishing] an elite sport system that will benefit [the target of] “winning Olympic glory” (Policies Laws and Regulations Department of the GAS, 2000, p.1)*

⁵⁸ *(Article six) Greatly develop commercial sport competitions. [The development of commercial sport competitions] should be incorporated with the implementation of Olympic Plan. [We should] regard the reform of the competition system and of the operational mode [of competitions] as fundamental issues [in the promotion of commercial competitions], [we should] actively direct and regulate the commercial activities of all kinds of sport competitions, encourage all social sectors to bid and to organise international elite sport events, in order to lead the development of sport competition towards industrialised, civil-society-based and law-based [development]. (SPCSC, 1995B, P.1)*

Beijing Games, to highlight the national interest...and to motivate the enthusiasm of the majority of all institutions and organisations. [We have] not adopted those suggestions that ...might cause new problems and be harmful to the interests of the majority of all institutions and organisations.

Liu, 2007, p.1

Given the emphasis on “the battle-preparation for the 2008 Beijing Games” in the context, Liu’s account of “refining Juguo Tizhi” focuses on its effectiveness in the imminent Beijing Games rather than a long-term sustainable development of Chinese elite sport. However, although this is a reforming term, the underlying reality is one of protecting the conservative direction of the GAS, covering this with a layer of apparent reform.

In the quoted speech, the Sport Minister promotes Juguo Tizhi from two perspectives. From a pro-Juguo Tizhi side, Liu emphasises the importance of national and provincial interests during the policy modification of Chinese elite sport. Given the consistency between political interests and the success of elite sport, Liu’s statement indirectly frames Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye sport as the key elements that should be promoted for their effectiveness in elite sport development. In return, the Sport Minister also officially but indirectly rejects the reforming voice, because these “potential problem-making” proposals would ultimately challenge Juguo Tizhi, and “be harmful to the interests of the majority of all institutions and organisations”, which are to be

fulfilled via elite sport success.

It could be argued that the Olympic discourse, especially the emphasis on the 2008 performance, changed the previous balance between the discourse of *Juguo Tizhi* and of reform in Chinese elite sport. It had devalued any other Chinese elite sport discourse except that of *Juguo Tizhi* and *Zhuanye* sport, and reproduced the knowledge of the importance of the Beijing Games, of *Juguo Tizhi*, and of the incompatibility between *Juguo Tizhi* and reform. In practical terms, the increased accentuation of *Juguo Tizhi*, to a degree, led to the inhibition of the reform of Chinese elite sport. This (temporary) rejection of reform was promoted both in an indirect, or unintentional, manner, such as the promotion of its counter part, *Juguo Tizhi*; and also directly or intentionally, like the Sport Minister's official rejection of 'problem-making proposals' and commercial activities. More importantly, it was supported by other stakeholders, especially those whose interests related to the reform, as a result of, as we would argue, the internalisation of the significance of the 2008 Olympics, of the priority of the Olympic performance in 2008 and thus of *Juguo Tizhi*.

This compliance to the promotion of *Juguo Tizhi*, and the tolerance and sacrifice of the postponement of the reform, at least before the Beijing Games, had been portrayed and recognised as an appropriate move at the 'right time'.

It is elaborated by Li *et al.* (2003) and Zhang (2009) as follows:

The reform procedure of refining Juguo Tizhi accidentally overlapped with the 29th Olympiad... on the one hand, [because] reform might bring some risks...[we] can't hastily carry out [the reform] without considering the timing, [the GAS therefore is] in a dilemma. Hence, controlling the timing and the process [of the reform] became one of the key factors influencing the big picture [of the development of Chinese elite sport].

Y. Li, et al. 2003, p.4

Winning the bid in 2001... provided an excuse for conservatism in sport reform, [because] successfully hosting the 2008 Games becomes the most important task at present. ... there are a great number of people who openly and profoundly advocate Juguo Tizhi, and those who criticise Juguo Tizhi become "those defying the universal consensus".

Zhang, 2009 p. 42, p63

Li *et al.* acknowledge "the potential risk of the reform" as the reason that makes the pre-2008 era an inappropriate time for Chinese elite sport reform. Though the authors do not indicate what the 'risks' would be, given the indication of the Beijing Games, there is a clear implication that it refers to a potential decline in Chinese Olympic performance. It could thus be argued that Li *et al.*'s account of the GAS's dilemma elaborates the inconsistency between Juguo Tizhi, or elite sport performance, and the reform. This brief statement, whose source is Li, who had a high-profile identity within the GAS, reflected the attitude of the GAS established towards the dilemma of reform in the pre-2008 era. It endorses the postponement of the reform before the

2008 Games, as a case of bad timing while still maintaining the possibility of, and in fact also the necessity of, furthering reform after the Beijing Olympics.

The second quotation directly indicates the impact of winning the bid for the 2008 Games on elite sport reform and on the power relationship within Chinese elite sport discourse regulating the balance between, and the acceptability of, different types of discourse in the pre-2008 era. It is worth noting that there is no indication of the identity of those who represent the opposing side to Juguo Tizhi, except labelling them as “those defying the ‘universal’ opinion”. Employing ‘the universal opinion’ (even though literally it clearly was not ‘universal’), Zhang generalises and suggests that such power was promoted and legitimated by the public consensus of the usefulness and significance of Juguo Tizhi before the Beijing Games. Luke (2005, p. 11) indicates in his elaboration of the “third dimension of power’, that such power shapes “cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things”.

Given the reproduced knowledge of, and the new balance of, the power relationship within Chinese elite sport, not only the general public but also the reformists, to a degree, accepted this significance of the 2008 Olympics. The ‘temporary’ promotion of Juguo Tizhi was thus recognised as an acceptable, or even appropriate, move before the Beijing Games. By contrast,

due to the new balance between the significance of the Beijing Games, the importance of Juguo Tizhi and the 'sacrifices' required, objectors to the Juguo Tizhi approach are portrayed as "those defying the universal consensus".

We would argue that the change in the social context of Chinese elite sport, i.e. winning the bid, increases the significance of the Olympic performance in 2008. While, the knowledge of the relation between Juguo Tizhi and Olympic performance, which regulated the "right way" of going about this, alternated the existing balance between the "reformist" and "conservative" discourse of Chinese elite sport. Nonetheless, although the expected very high level of performance in the Beijing Games is strongly emphasised, endorsing the promotion of Juguo Tizhi; its counter part, i.e. the reform of Chinese elite sport, is still maintained in the Olympic discourse. It is further implied that the post-2008 era offers the "right time" for progressing reform.

5.3.2 The Olympics and the promotion of reform

Even though the pre-2008 deceleration of the elite sport reform was rationalised by the Chinese Olympic discourse and accepted by different stakeholders, this is not to say that the reforming discourse was totally silenced by the SADs and ignored in Chinese society. On the contrary, there were also Olympic discourses positively portraying the relationship between the Olympic Games and elite sport reform and predicting a potential impact

of the Beijing Games on elite sport reform. In line with the Foucauldian notion of the productive effect of power, the repressive effects of which is often accentuated in research, we would argue that Chinese Olympic discourse also provides a positive portrayal of, and positive impact on, elite sport reform, even though it mainly focuses on elite sport performance and Juguo Tizhi.

Typologically, we would categorise the Chinese Olympic discourse that positively constructs the relation between the Olympics and elite sport reform into three types. For the first type, the Olympic Games, especially the 2008 edition is portrayed as a watershed, or turning point, for Chinese elite sport policy moving towards reform or marketization. The SADs are normally portrayed as proactive initiators and operators of the reform. Their promotion of Juguo Tizhi is normally portrayed as a reforming move through 'stretching' the connotation of reform to the overall development of Chinese sport in this era of change.

For example, it is stated by Li, *et al.* that:

The benchmarks for assessing the reform are ... the 29th Olympics ... and [whether] the sustainable development of sport... . Though the direct motivation for the new round of reform is ... [the] great pressure to ... achieve outstanding results in the 29th Olympics, ... the 29th Olympics... should be utilised as an opportunity to focus on institutional innovation; to maximally integrate all kinds of domestic and international resources for sport ...

Given the necessity of, the urgency of and the complicatedness of the reform of the elite sport system, it is unrealistic to try to complete [the reform] at one go. ... We would suggest that the reform shall be divided into three stages: ... The Stage of the Complete Reform (post-2008): fully implementing the institutional reform of the GAS, realising the independence of the COC. ... [ensuring that] all Centres complete their transitional mission [as an interim institution from government-administration to associational-governance], completing the mission of reform of current Zhuanyue sport teams, establishing a new Juguo Tizhi.

ibid, p. 5

In the first quotation, the performance in the 2008 Beijing Games is explicitly framed as an important context and focus of Chinese elite sport reform, as well as the watershed for a new round of reform. In contrast to the 'pro-reform' discourse that eventually emphasises Olympic performance, Li *et al* explicitly advocate a form of elite sport reform, which, however, is assigned a different connotation according to the period in which this term is used. The 'complete or essential reform', as we term, mainly concerns the reform of the governance system, which is associated with "the stage of the complete reform" in the second quotation. By contrast, the 'stretched notion of reform' can be interpreted as the overall development of Chinese sport in this era of change, and includes both "Olympic success" and "sustainable development" respectively representing Juguo Tizhi, and the 'essential or fundamental reform'.

Similar to the Sport Ministers notion of ‘the refinement of Juguo Tizhi’, quoted in the previous passage, the authors also clothe the prioritisation of Juguo Tizhi in a reforming rhetoric, through stretching the connotation of the reform. For example, through emphasising that the reform should not be *limited* within the preparation for Beijing Games and elite sport, the authors indirectly frame the strengthening of Juguo Tizhi in the preparation for the 2008 Olympics as a reforming move. This, to a degree, eases the external pressure and criticism of the SADs’ conservatism in relation to ‘essential reform’.

On the other side of the coin, the authors also constructed their positive attitude to the ‘essential reform’, and its ideal relationship with Juguo Tizhi. It could be argued that the advocacy of expanding the focus of reform beyond the 2008 Olympics not only portrayed the preparation of the 2008 Games as a reforming move, but also directly promoted future reform of Chinese elite sport. Such direct promotion of reform is evidenced in statements, such as “utilising the Games for innovation, civil-society-based development, industrialisation, etc.”

However, we would argue that though the ‘essential’ requirement of reform is directly indicated in both quotations above, it is Juguo Tizhi and the interest of the SAD that is mainly and ultimately promoted. For instance, it is

suggested that “all kinds of domestic and international resources for sport” should be integrated for the development of Chinese sport, which coincides with the core feature of Juguo Tizhi. Additionally, though the Beijing Games is portrayed as a crucial causal factor in the ‘strategic postponement’ of the ‘essential reform’ in the second quotation, the authors also suggest that it was “the complicatedness” of the reform *per se*, that actually delayed its implementation. This circuitous statement indirectly reduces the emphasis on the impact of the preparation for the Beijing Games on the postponement of reform, and simultaneously de-emphasise the SADs’ interests, which are associated with the Olympic preparation and the postponement of the reform.

Even though there is no explicit mention of who will implement the advocated moves, through emphasising Olympic performance that closely relates to Zhuanye sport and by specifying the institutions that are involved with the reform, the authors indirectly identify the institutions within, and related to, Zhuanye sport and Juguo Tizhi as the implementers of the reform. Further examples of similar construction of the role of SADs in the post-2008 era in the first type of ‘pro-reform’ Olympic discourse might also include Liu Peng’s 2008 speech to high-profile sport officials. The Sport Minister emphasises ‘our knowledge’ of the Beijing Games as “the summit of Chinese elite sport development, and [its] new start point” (Liu, 2008, p.1).

In the second type of reform-promoting Olympic discourse, the Beijing Games are also recognised as a milestone and turning point in Chinese elite sport. In contrast to the first type, the post-2008 development is normally acknowledged as a reaction to the extreme pre-2008 development or emphasis on *Juguo Tizhi*. In other words, the driving force of the post-2008 reform is identified as the reforming trend that had been suppressed for the Beijing Games rather than the SADs' political agenda.

Similar to Li *et al.*'s (2003) account, Zhang (2009) also acknowledges the significance of the Beijing Games and its privileging position in the pre-2008 Chinese elite sport policy. She accordingly recognises the repressive impact of the Beijing Games on Chinese sport reform and predicts changes in Chinese elite sport in the post-2008 era:

*Though the reform of the sport administration system has become the breakthrough point of the reform of Chinese sport at the link point between the two centuries, however ... the key-issue of elite sport policy in the Beijing Olympiad remains 'the maintenance and refinement of *Juguo Tizhi*', [requiring the] full utilisation of the superiority of the socialist system with the leadership of the Party and the country'. During this period, ... it is impossible to have radical reform on a large scale. ... Nonetheless, this does not mean the stagnation of the reform of Chinese sport. The reform promoting civil-society-based-development, [the reform promoting] marketization and [the reform promoting] legalisation of Chinese sport is irreversible... there have been deep-rooted problems [in Chinese elite sport] left unsolved. The reforming forces have been accumulating [before the Beijing Games], all kinds*

of reforming forces will converge in 2008, the end of the Beijing Games will open the curtains for another round of Chinese sport reform.

Zhang 2009 p.47

A supportive attitude towards Chinese elite sport reform is constructed throughout this statement through, for example, arguing for the inevitability of overall reform of Chinese elite sport and pointing out the goals of the new round of reform. In a manner similar to that in the previous quotation from Li *et al.* (2003), the predicted “breakthrough point” of Chinese elite sport reform also highlights the reform of the administration system. This perspective coincides with Chinese elite sport policies, as it is the leading part of the four aspects stated in the 1993 Policy and the only reformist phenomenon that is indicated in the practical section (*the measures*) of the 2001 Summary.

Rationally, Zhang also complies to, if not legitimises, the GAS’s conservative move prior to the Beijing Games, acknowledging the impossibility of radical reform before 2008. Through associating the pre-2008 principle of elite sport policy, i.e. “the maintenance and refinement of Juguo Tizhi”, with the socialist character of Chinese society, Zhang legitimises the GAS’s conservative move against the reforming trend with “the leadership of the Party and country”. We would argue that this reflects the structural constraints in the Chinese contexts and the knowledge of the dominance of the interests that Chinese elite sport serves.

In spite of endorsing the conservative move of the GAS, Zhang also portrays “the end of the Beijing Games” as the ‘call to arms’ of the reformist forces that had (voluntarily or involuntarily) been suppressed before 2008. We would argue that the different moves associated with the SAD and the reforming force constructs the relationship between the two and their respective roles in Chinese elite sport reform. Through linking the “insistence and refinement of Juguo Tizhi” that was emphasised in the policy statement to the “stagnation” of Chinese sport reform, the author frames the GAS as the source of the delays, if not the cessation, of reform. As previously illustrated, the notion of reforming forces in Chinese elite sport was ‘less-emphasised’, if not suppressed, before the Beijing Games in policy statements. In the portrayal of the termination of the 2008 Olympics as the release of a ‘pressure valve’ of Chinese elite sport reform, there is an implication that the anonymous “reforming forces” would provoke the post-2008 reform of Chinese sport. Through isolating the SADs from explanation of the post 2008 reform, Zhang frames the reforming force as a development trend that is independent from the control of SADs. It thus reinforces the linkage between Chinese elite sport reform and the reforming trend of Chinese society, by which the reform is endorsed and empowered to challenge Juguo Tizhi. This is consistent with the view of interviewee General 3, who argues that:

The reform of Chinese sport had basically halted from 2000. Everyone temporarily suppressed conflicts in order to guarantee [the success of] the Beijing Games. It was like a pressure cooker, [or] a coiled spring, the more you pressure [it] the more it will bounce back. After the subsequent release of pressure, everyone would be able to focus on other problems...

Emphasising the promotional effect of the 2008 Olympics on Chinese elite sport reform, the third type of Olympic discourse interpreted the Beijing Games as the driving force or accelerator of the reform. Liu Peng (2008, p.1) identifies the post-2008 elite sport reform as a legacy of the Beijing Games, stating that:

[The 2008] Olympics will leave precious legacies in terms of ... human resources, knowledge, spirit, and experiences. We should ruminate on the way in which the long-term effect could be maximised, [in order to] promote the all-around improvement of Chinese sport in terms of the theory of development [of Chinese sport], the ideas [of development of Chinese sport], and the system [of Chinese sport], [in order to] fulfil the new and tougher requirements to [Chinese] sport at a higher level from the development of socialist economy, [socialist] politics, [socialist] culture, and [socialist] society

In contrast to the first two types of Olympic discourses, the 2008 Games is constructed not only as a turning point of Chinese elite sport reform, but also a significant social event influencing the knowledge of the development of Chinese sport. Liu recognises the development of both the “the system of”, and the “knowledge of” Chinese elite sport development, i.e. “the theory” and “the idea”, as the legacies of the 2008 Games.

Even though isolating the post-2008 reform from the actions of social actors, Liu circuitously maintains the dominant position of the SADs and the importance of Juguo Tizhi in the reform. Given this speech was delivered at the 2008 All States Sports Minister Conference, through associating “we” with a number of proactive *genres* (Fairclough 2005b; Fairclough 2003), such as “seriously consider”, “promote”, and “fulfil”, Liu emphasised to the sport officials in China the active role of SADs in interpreting and utilising the Olympic legacies. In addition, given the exceptional performance of Chinese elite athletes in the 2008 Games, the Minister of Sport’s indication of “tougher requirements of [Chinese] sport at a higher level” indirectly maintains the importance of Olympic performance for the subsequent reform. This would also maintain the weight of Juguo Tizhi in the post-2008 era if there were no better means to satisfy this “tougher requirement”.

It could be argued that these practical features concerning the future performance of Chinese elite sport and the political elements, such as the notion of socialist development, in Liu’s speech, coincide with his role as the top sport politician in China. The character of Liu’s speech is different from Zhang’s interpretation of the impact of the Beijing Games on the reform of Chinese sport, in which however a number of political elements are also embraced:

At present, Chinese sport has not yet been liberated from the totalitarian run-by-government sport system. However, for the socialist-market-economic sport system of China that is in the process of transformation, hosting the Olympic Games is a challenge, which brings enormous shock and dynamic stimulation for [further] transform. It will be a long-term mission in the post-2008 era [for Chinese SADs] to take the sport development models of the Western developed capitalist countries as examples, to establish a model of [Chinese] elite sport reform targeting the socialist market economy, to explore the route of the reform of civil-society-based development, industrialisation and marketization of Chinese sport.

Zhang, 2009 p.13

Even though Zhang also promotes a view of the positive impact of the Beijing Olympics on the reform of Chinese sport in the post-2008 era, a challenging attitude to the current Chinese sport system is constructed in her interpretation. This attitude is not only conveyed through directly suggesting the Beijing Games would “bring an enormous shock” to Chinese elite sport, but is also constructed via the political terms associated with Juguo Tizhi and reform in the above quotation. For example, the author also constructs the “socialist-market-economy” route and direction required for Chinese sport to be “liberated” from a “totalitarian run-by-government” system.

Additionally, various ‘action’ terms are associated with different political phenomena, for instance, “liberated” from the old system, “brings enormous shock and dynamic stimulation”, “to establish” and “to explore” the new route, etc. This not only constructs the author’s different attitude to the reform

and Juguo Tizhi, but also reflects the author's knowledge or expectation of the provoking effect of the Beijing Games for Chinese sport reform.

In the quotations from both authors, the Beijing Games are interpreted as an opportunity for China to 'learn from outside', which would increase its interaction and communication with international community. This portrayal of the Beijing Games illustrates a change in the Olympic discourse in the Chinese context. Thus even though, the political significance of the Beijing Games, for instance as a political showcase and an icon of national rejuvenation, has continued to be promoted by many (Cha 2009; Brownell 2008; Pound 2008; Dong & Mangan 2008); the Beijing Games is recognised as a two-way communication rather than merely a one-way propaganda medium.

5.4 Conclusion

Through looking at the pre-2008 Chinese Olympic discourse and its relationship with Chinese elite sport, we would argue that the Chinese interpretation of the Olympics has essentially reinforced the power of *Juguo Tizhi* and the dominance of *Zhuanye* sport in Chinese elite sport. Even though the reform of Chinese elite sport is also mentioned in the portrayal of the Olympics in Chinese society, its importance had been marginalised as the 2008 Olympics became imminent.

As one of the intrinsic characters of Chinese Olympic discourse, the political implication of the Olympics is accentuated not only in government documents, but also in those by external commentators. The extrinsic functions of the Olympics, such as in relation to nationalism, patriotism and diplomacy, are interpreted in a socialist rhetoric, reflecting the political power that regulates the appropriate tone of Chinese Olympic discourse.

Olympic successes (both within and outside the stadium) are traditionally emphasised in Chinese Olympic discourse; and are officially identified as the means for realising extrinsic functions, such as endorsing the correctness and superiority of socialism in Chinese society and as a vehicle for interaction with the international community. As evidenced by its former success in elite

sport development, Juguo Tizhi is recognised as the key component of the Chinese Olympic strategy, but thus is also under great pressure to maintain success through such victories, especially after Beijing was awarded the 2008 Games. Nonetheless, such pressure not only forced, but also empowered, the SADs to reinforce the maintaining of their dominance over national sporting resources and to postpone, if not to reject, the requirement for the reform on the grounds of avoiding any distractions in the run up to the Beijing Games.

As the administration and operational mode of Chinese elite sport, Juguo Tizhi embodies the character of the regime and the country, i.e. the government's control over sport resources throughout the country, and thus fortifies SADs' dominant status in Chinese elite sport. In return, governments exert their power over Chinese elite sport discourse, legalise the role of Juguo Tizhi as the apparatus for accomplishing the Olympic strategy and seize national resources and the benefits of winning gold medals within ZhuanYe sport system. Consistent with its 'government-run' character, the advocacy of Juguo Tizhi not only reinforced SADs' dominance but also restrained the influence of other stakeholders, even though the investment of resources from civil society was encouraged.

Nonetheless, this promotion of Juguo Tizhi in the pre-2008 era did not eliminate the reform discourse, in which reform of Juguo Tizhi is recognised

as the core issue in Chinese elite sport. On the contrary, the GAS embraced reform discourse within Chinese elite sport policy, indicating its willingness to cater for this political trend in Chinese society. However, the GAS had effectively manipulated reforming discourse and limited the influence of reform, especially of the 'essential' reforms, in Chinese elite sport. As Xiong *et al.* (2008, p.59) indicate, "inherently, the Olympic strategy has been the core of all the reform of Chinese elite sport". In return, the limited growth of civil-society-based development of Chinese elite sport further increases the importance of Zhuanye sport for fulfilling the Olympic task, and secures the dominance of Juguo Tizhi in Chinese elite sport. As Xiong *et al.* (2008, p.53) suggest, "there was no other choice but to implement administrative methods in order to ... achieve [satisfactory] results in the Olympic Games". In other words, we would argue that Juguo Tizhi was not only directly promoted via the emphasis on the Olympic success, but also indirectly secured through deemphasising or superficially promoting the reform, thereby marginalising the importance of reform, at least prior to the Beijing Games.

The former equilibrium between Juguo Tizhi and Chinese elite sport reform was thus broken and restructured. The grievances against the dominance of Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye sport were labelled, or perceived, as 'trouble-making proposals', and consequently (voluntarily and involuntarily) silenced in Chinese elite sport discourse. In the practical domain, this

contributed to the pre-2008 brake placed on Chinese elite sport reform, especially in those aspects that were recognised as challenging the position of Juguo Tizhi.

This turn of events was not only associated with the portrayal of, and the knowledge of, the importance of the Olympic Games in the Chinese context, but also reflected awareness of the inconsistency between the emphasis on Olympic performance and the advocacy, at least of certain parts, of elite sport reform. In other words, it is the recognition (both on the part of those supporting and those opposing reform) of the conflicting relationship between reform and Olympic success that resulted in Chinese elite sport reform being removed from discussion, as the 2008 Olympics became the dominance focus and concern of Chinese elite sport.

On the other side of the coin, the superficial promotion of Chinese elite sport reform, such as advocacy of the “sustainable development” of Olympic performance legitimised the pre-2008 development of Juguo Tizhi and maintained the possibility of post-2008 reform through, for example, stretching the connotation of reform. The positive portraits of the post-2008 reform by the SADs and others reflect the knowledge of the necessity of reform and the infeasibility of the reform in the pre-2008 era. Thus, Juguo Tizhi is ultimately emphasised in the pre-2008 era in the name of the 2008

Games, and this emphasis is consistent with the interests of SADs. Even though post-2008 reform was promoted, the role of the GAS was understood very differently by different stakeholders while the significance of the Beijing Games in reforming terms was widely understood.

In summary, as a conclusion to our pre-2008 analysis, we would argue that the power of Chinese Olympic discourse was endorsed by the consensus of Chinese society in, for instance, the knowledge of the significance of the Beijing Games. The emphasis on Olympic performance considerably increased the pressure on, and the importance of, *Juguo Tizhi* and *Zhuanye* sport to deliver satisfactorily in the 2008 Olympics. Recognised as a potential challenge to the dominance of *Juguo Tizhi*, Chinese elite sport reform was de-emphasised in official discourse and social consensus in this period and thus in practice postponed. Moreover, through manipulating and re-defining Chinese elite sport reform, SADs further legitimised the reinforcement of *Juguo Tizhi* and the pursuit of Olympic performance as an appropriate 'reforming' move, at least in the pre-2008 era.

Chapter Six

The Chinese Olympic Discourse and Chinese Elite Sport Development in the Post-2008 Era

As “a realisation of a nation’s expectation for a century” (Hu 2008c, p.1), since Beijing was awarded the 2008 Olympics, the significance of Beijing Games to the Chinese society was interpreted from a number of perspectives, such as nationalism, socialism, diplomatic usefulness, etc., due to its importance that was a powerful medium in China in the pre-2008 era. In terms of Chinese elite sport, as we argued in the previous chapter, the emphasis on the 2008 Olympics, on the one hand, greatly intensified the pressure on Zhuanye sport and Juguo Tizhi for achieving outstanding performance. On the other hand, it also promoted the development of Juguo Tizhi in its ‘extreme form’. The advocacy of Chinese elite sport reform was silenced during this period, as the significance of the Olympic fever in Chinese society was felt in the dominant voices relating to Chinese elite sport. By contrast, the post-2008 era was framed as a favourable opportunity, an opportune “time”, for furthering the reform of Chinese elite sport, more precisely of Juguo Tizhi.

Even though, the necessity for reform in the post-2008 era was well recognised, the central role of the GAS was consistently implied in portrayal of the reform in the post-2008 era by, for example, some stakeholders from the

SADs. Thanks to the accentuation of the 2008 Games and development of Juguo Tizhi, the dominance of the GAS and SADs in Chinese elite sport was reinforced with a further concentration of national sporting resources in Juguo Tizhi. Given such power among the SADs and the enormous vested interests that had been realised via the Juguo Tizhi framework, this official advocacy for maintaining the central role of the GAS undermined the feasibility, and effectiveness, of the projected post-2008 reform. Especially in those areas in which SADs' power would confront challenges from civil-society based organisation, the superficial promotion of the reform in the pre-2008 era provided crucial and 'successful' experience for those advocating the maintenance of Juguo Tizhi.

In this chapter, we start the investigation of the post-2008 development of Chinese elite sport with examining the Olympic discourse in Chinese society after the third, also the last, 'Olympic question'⁵⁹, which had been brought up a century ago, was finally answered. In line with the analysis in the preceding chapter, we move on to the relationship between Chinese Olympic discourse

⁵⁹ The 'three Olympic questions' refer to the three questions brought up in an article was published in *Tientsing Young men*. These questions, which have become the cornerstone of the Chinese Olympic Dream, are a) When could China be able to send a winning athlete to the Olympic Games? b) When could China be able to send a winning team to the Olympic Games? c) When could China be able to host an Olympic Game? (Xu 2008; Yi 2008)

and the development of Chinese elite sport. By contrast to the analysis in the chapter dealing with the pre-2008 period, the main part of the analysis in this chapter is concerned with the reform of Chinese elite sport and its relationship with the post-2008 portrayal of the Beijing Games and of the Olympics in general. This is because, firstly, given the positive connection between 'post-2008 era', which was framed as a pro-reform epoch, and 'Chinese elite sport reform' that had been officially, and unofficially, constructed before the Beijing Games, it would be sensible to expect an increase in the importance of reform on the Chinese elite sport agenda after the 2008 Olympics. Secondly, due to the relationship between the (essential) reform and *Juguo Tizhi*, it could be argued that the development, or change, of *Juguo Tizhi* closely relates to the substantive achievement of Chinese elite sport reform. Thus, even though mainly focusing on the development of Chinese elite sport reform, i.e. the post-2008 topic of Chinese elite sport development that was projected prior to the Beijing Games, we would be able to scrutinise the trend of the development of *Juguo Tizhi* and *Zhuanye Sport*.

6.1 The Chinese Discourse on the Olympics

The successful staging of the Beijing Games changes the Chinese discourse of the 2008 Olympics Games from the portrait of an 'Olympic dream' to the interpretation of the experiences and implication of the expected

'opportunities and challenges' of the Beijing Games. In this post-2008 Chinese Olympic discourse section, we start with examining the discursive construction of the Beijing Games and its impact on Chinese society, including the account concerning the Beijing Games *per se* and its comparison with other Olympics. Then we shift our focus to the post-2008 Chinese Olympic discourse in general.

6.1.1 The discursive construction of the Beijing Games

The extrinsic function of the Olympic Games has been employed in Chinese Olympic discourse, constructing the significance of the Olympics to Chinese society. In the post-2008 era, the extrinsic functions of the Olympics are consistently evident as a core element of the discursive construction of the 2008 Games and other Olympics. *Interviewee General 1*, for example, states that:

[The Beijing Games] provided a platform, not only for elite sport but also for other [social sectors], to present, to communicate and to perform. It was also a great opportunity for Chinese elite sport, in terms of its trend of communicating, assimilating and integrating with international community, as the Olympics is a communication activity in essence. ... [The 2012 Olympic] was good as well, showing its national characters. ... The UK, with its high-level of development, does not need to show anything via the Olympics. We needed to display our national spirit, and to throw away the title of 'the sick man of East Asia'. Chinese people had bent down, but [we] now lift [ourselves] up, ...it had a strong sense of [this] mission.

This portrayal by Interviewee General 1, of the Olympics as a “platform”, not only for Chinese elite sport, but also for Chinese society, is associated with a number of terms denoting ‘(one or two-way) communication’. Through employing terms, such as “to present”, “to communicate”, “to perform” and “to show’, *Interviewee General 1* constructs the role of Chinese society in the 2008 Games as both a participant in a “communication activity” and a presenter on the global platform, i.e. the Olympics. This portrayal of the 2008 Games, as a “communication activity” is consistent with the traditional Chinese Olympic discourse framing the Olympics as a medium through which the revival of the Chinese nation could be communicated to others in the international community.

The function of the 2008 Olympics, as a showcase of the PRC, is also normalised by *Interviewee General 1* through comparing the 2008 and the 2012 Olympics in terms of the function of presenting the host countries. He portrays the move of “displaying the national spirit” via the Olympics as a common practice among the Olympic host nations, which, however, is influenced by the status of the host nations. This is consistent with his account framing the realisation of such a function as a “mission” of the 2008 Olympics, rather than a “mission” of Chinese society. It is thus suggested that whether the host country utilises such a function is a question of whether it needs to do so. It could be argued that this interpretation of the role of the Olympics

conveys an argument against the critical voices blaming the Communist government for politicising the 2008 Olympic Games, and constructs a self-recognition of China as an emerging power seeking an equal status in world affairs via hosting an Olympics.

This nationalist feature is employed not only in the interpretation of the role and the nature of the Olympics hosted in Beijing, but also in the account concerning the impact, or legacy, of the 2008 Games. On the one hand, concurring with the *Interviewee General 1's* portrait of the 2008 Olympics as a 'platform', the Beijing Games is also assessed as a successful 'show' of China's cultural, economic and political strengths by *Interviewee General 3*, stating:

We not only became the No.1 in the medal table in the Beijing Games, but also demonstrated the vitality of the country through the Games. No matter what incentivizing means was employed, we surely presented our vitality.

On the other hand, the Beijing Games was also portrayed as a confidence-booster for the Chinese nation and a 'springboard' for the take-off of the PRC in changing its role, and becoming increasingly active in the international community. It is suggested by *Interviewee General 2* that

There have been changes in the [Chinese] national mentality since the Beijing Games. [Chinese people] used to perceive [themselves] as a weak nation that was looked down upon by others, but [we now] perceive [ourselves] as a powerful nation. [At present, we] need to be inclusive. 'Harmony' was [thus] promoted in the Beijing Games, instead of the [type of] song that we sang in

the [1990] Asian Games “the mountains in Asia, are like heads held high”, [and is] different to [the meaning] ‘I need to strive [for the country], I need to rise up, I need to catch up and take over others’. The Beijing Games was a national and cultural symbol. It...utilised the strength of the whole of [Chinese] society, ... because it was a symbol representing the rise of the Chinese nation, [we] needed this symbol to show the rise of a nation.

In the above quotation from *Interviewee General 2*, the impact of the Beijing Games, which is recognised as “a national and cultural symbol”, is interpreted from the perspective of the Chinese identity and the subsequent related actions that China took. Besides the direct indication of the change from “a weak nation” to a “powerful” one, *Interviewee General 2* also indirectly portrays this change through comparing China’s discursive self-construction via the 1990 Asia Games and the 2008 Olympics. It is indicated that in terms of its interaction with the world, the Chinese nation’s appropriate move conveyed in the respective themes of the two international events changed from “striving”, “catching-up” and “taking over” to emphasising the “need to be inclusive” and “promoting harmony”. We would argue that such changes construct a changing position in the attitude of the PRC towards its relationship with the international community.

This is to say that the actions implied in relation to the Asian Games convey that the communist regime was eager to keep pace with the world, in a manner consistent with China’s status at the early stage of its economic reform. In other words, the relationship between China and the outside world

was portrayed as that of a straggler in the leading group. Through addressing the PRC's need to "promote harmony" and the "need to be inclusive" in the Beijing Games, the PRC is portrayed as an actor in the global community not only equally and "harmoniously" communicating with others, but also accepting the difference of others. In addition, through acknowledging the actions of the PRC in the 2008 Games as "inclusive", this 'new' attitude of acceptance was differentiated from the PRC's former passive compliance to the global rules when it attempted to engage with the international community. In other words, through portraying the "change in the national mentality", *Interviewee General 2* advocates a more active, but inclusive, role for the PRC when interacting with the world via a western-oriented medium, i.e. the Olympics. In relation to *Interviewee General 1's* portrayal of the different messages that the UK and China convey via the 2012 and 2008 Olympics, we would argue that this change could be recognised as a reflection of the increased power and international status of China.

Consistent with the 'function' of the Beijing Games as an approach constructing the image of the PRC, the participants in the Beijing Games are often portrayed as the audience or receivers of the information conveyed via the 2008 Olympics. The director of the Administration Centre for Swimming states in his work summarising the 60-year development of Chinese swimming that:

In 2008, one year before the 60-year anniversary of the PRC, Beijing hosted the XXIX Olympiad, [by which] the Chinese nation fulfilled its century old wish. From a suffering and humiliated 'sick man of Asia', to [a country that is]...capable of hosting a 'truly exceptional' Olympics, to the number 1 in gold medals, China's tremendous change has surprised and convinced the world, [earning] the world's respect. ... When the fire went out, athletes from all countries gave thumbs up to Beijing and China, showing [their] respect and admiration, representing international appreciation for the magnificent 30-year reform and the great achievement of Chinese [elite sport].

Li, 2009, p. 242

In the above quotation, the Beijing Games is associated with the development of China, as a symbol of one stage of its development from the humiliating past to the glorious present. Consistent with his identity as a high profile sport official, Li referred to China's peak performance in the 2008 Games as a symbol of the final stage of this historical development, by which China was able to "surprise and convince" the world. In Li's account, there are two terms relating to the external world, to which China attempted to show its new image, namely "the world" and "athletes from all countries". These two terms are associated with words, such as "surprises", "convinces", "respects" and "admires", which, on the one hand, imply the success of the Beijing Games in fulfilling its expected extrinsic function of conveying a positive image of China to the world. On the other hand, these impacts of the Beijing Games also construct the identity of the world in the Beijing Games, as witness to the development of China.

In a manner similar to the politicisation of the successful bid of the Beijing Games, demonstrated in the preceding chapter, the success of the 2008 Olympics is also linked to the political character of the communist regime. In other words, the world's acceptance of the Beijing Games is portrayed as a recognition and an endorsement of "the magnificent task of the 30-year reform" of China and thus of the PRC regime in China. Liu Peng's speech at the 2009 All States Sports Minister Conference provides a more explicit example of this linkage constructed between the 2008 Olympic Games and global recognition of the communist regime and its development. The Sport Minister directly states that:

The successful Beijing Games and the outstanding results of Chinese [elite] sport are a true reflection of the PRC's glorious procedure of striving [to become] prosperous and strong; is a showcase of the great achievement of the reform and opening-up of Chinese society and the modernisation of China; is a successful practice of a mode of sport development with a Chinese character that is long with the status quo of China.... 2009 is the 60-year anniversary of the PRC, is a new beginning for Chinese elite sport; [Chinese elite sport] experienced its glory in the Beijing Games, is invigorated with its study and implementation of 'the scientific outlook on development', is facing the future, is working around the clock, tirelessly and continuously striving to transcend [its former success].

P. Liu, 2009, p. 1

In Liu's speech, the success of the Beijing Games *per se* and the outstanding performance of Chinese elite sport are not only associated with the former

achievements of the communist regime, but also linked to the future development of Chinese elite sport. It is worth noting the Sport Minister subtly constructs the 2008 Olympics' relationship with Chinese society and with Chinese elite sport from different perspective.

On the one hand, in terms of its relationship with the development of China, the Beijing Games is framed as a "reflection" and a "showcase" of the accomplishment of the PRC since its establishment. Implying a receiver of the information 'reflected' and 'shown', these two terms indirectly emphasises the international connection, and the exogenous origin, of the Olympics in the Chinese context. Thus it is suggested that the success in the Beijing Games should be interpreted not only as positive images conveyed to the world; but also a proof via an international means of the appropriateness of the socialist route that is implied in terms, such as "PRC's glorious procedure" and "the great achievement of the reform and opening-up".

On the other hand, the general success of the Beijing Games is also identified as "a successful practice of the mode of sport development with a Chinese character", i.e. of *Juguo Tizhi* and *Zhuanye* sport; even though, more precisely, it is the term "the outstanding performance" that should be separately linked to the "successful practice" of *Juguo Tizhi* and *Zhuanye* sport.

It could be argued that this implicit account reflects a traditional but 'superficial' knowledge, as D. Xiong (2002, p.10) suggests, which "regards the Olympic [movement] merely as a sporting competition". Thus, in contrast to 'the exogenous origin of the Olympics' stressed in the construction of the relationship between the Beijing Games and development of China, the Sport Minister identifies the Beijing Games as an original task of ZhuanYe sport that should be accomplished along with *Juguo Tizhi*. In other words, "the successful Beijing Games" is portrayed as an endorsement of the effectiveness of *Juguo Tizhi*.

Furthermore, via this vague statement, Liu not only associates the general success of the 2008 Olympics with *Juguo Tizhi*, but also portrays the excellent Olympic performance as a reflection of the achievement of the socialist development of China. In other words, it is suggested by Liu that the correctness of the socialist route is not only demonstrated via the 'externally originated' events, but also by the effectiveness of the 'planned-economy-base' *Juguo Tizhi*. Therefore, in order to "continuously transcend" such successes, reflecting the 'correctness' of the communist regime, the current direction and means of development have to be maintained after the "new beginning".

It could be argued that the statement combining the interpretation of the general success of, and the performance in, the Beijing Games reflects the

understanding of the Olympics in the Chinese context. It, on the one hand, emphasises the elite sport performance in the Olympics, while on the other hand, it colours the Olympic performance with political shades. Through associating the achievement in the Olympics with the political character of China, the Sport Minister also reinforces Juguo Tizhi's linkage with the socialist regime. This implicit interpretation of the Olympic success indirectly promotes the interests of SAD in the post-2008 era through stressing the political significance of Olympic victories.

Not only the Beijing Games and its impact, but also the interpretation of the peak performance of Chinese elite athletes is influenced by the Chinese political context. *Interviewee Baseball 1's* acceptance of the limited publicity given to the best Olympic performance ever of a Chinese baseball team provides an interesting example of the influence of political context on Chinese elite sport.

Setting aside its low ranking in the world baseball table, Chinese baseball has been dwarfed by Japan, South Korea and Chinese Taipei in the East Asia area, and had never qualified for any Olympic Games finals except those in 2008 in which it participated as the host nation team. Seeing themselves as "the weakest in the tournament" (*Interviewee Baseball 10*), hardly anyone expected the Chinese baseball team to achieve any wins in the temporary and

subsequently-demolished Wukesong baseball stadium.

Following its predictable 0-10 loss to Canada and a surprising 0-0 tie with Korea, Chinese baseball team astonishingly achieved a historical breakthrough beating Chinese Taipei for the first time in its history. However, compared to the overwhelming number of reports and comments on this match on the east shore of the Taiwan Strait, media in the PRC was almost silent in terms of comments on this significant victory for Chinese baseball.

Interviewee Baseball 1 gives her interpretation on this silence in the media:

Frankly, [in terms of] that game we won in the Olympics, if we beat any other teams, China would have publicised it greatly. Because we beat a team that is different to any others, the Central [government] won't [further] irritate them. If you want to argue, because it was coincidentally a sensitive period, there was policy from above.... It could have been a fantastic opportunity [to promote baseball]

In the brief statement concerning the social effect of the peak performance of Chinese baseball, the influence of the political interests on Chinese elite sport is reflected through prioritisation of the political concerns in the promotion of the sport. *Interviewee Baseball 1* acknowledges that it is "China", instead of Chinese media, which was in charge of (not) publicising the historic performance of Chinese baseball. It could be argued that this account normalises the government's power in setting the agenda of the Chinese Media and in silencing the challenges of others, which is exercised through

“policy from above”. Thus through controlling the acceptability of certain voices, the Chinese government promotes its interests by prioritising the political concerns in the Olympic discourse.

It is interesting to note that *Interviewee Baseball 1* ignores the name of Chinese Taipei and subtly replaces it with “that game”, “a team that is different” and “them” in the quotation, which is the only mentioning of this ground-breaking performance in the interview. It is difficult for us to argue, merely based on her circuitous rhetoric, that “Chinese Taipei” is regulated and acknowledged as ‘the one who must not be named’ in Chinese baseball discourse. We would however argue that this account reflects the government’s influence not only on the content of Chinese Olympic discourse, i.e. the intentional silence in 2008, but also on the way of framing the Olympic performance. In other words, this constructed rule of Chinese elite sport discourse of prioritising political interests not only constrains what could or could not be known and thought, but also influences how it could be understood and addressed.

Besides the direct discursive construction of the Beijing Games, comparisons between the 2008 Games and other Olympics in which the PRC has participated are also normally employed in the post-2008 discourse. These comparisons in Chinese Olympic discourse also indirectly frame the

characters of the Beijing Olympics. In his elaboration of the differences between the Beijing Games and other Olympics, *Interviewee General 2* states that:

We hosted the Beijing Games. It is totally different to the Athens and the London Games, in which we participated. Participating in an Olympics is like visiting another person's home, and means merely sport competition. [Chinese] people would not pay as much attention as they did to the Beijing Games. The Beijing Games, was the games for which the country acted as the host, for the first time in Chinese history. We paid so much money for it, and hosted it as the symbol of the rise of the Chinese nation.

Straightforwardly, *Interviewee General 2* differentiates China's role in other Olympic Games, as visitors to another's home, with its identity as the host country in 2008. Compared to the pre-2008 practice of the whole country, i.e. "acted as the host" and "paid so much money", *Interviewee General 2* points out the lower level of attention paid by the general public to other Olympics. Given the importance of the Olympic task to ZhuanYe sport, it could be argued that through acknowledging the general public's attitude towards other editions of the Olympics, *Interviewee General 2* indirectly suggests that the ZhuanYe sport system is the main stakeholder involved with these "sport competitions".

We would argue such different attitudes of the Chinese society towards the 2008 Games and other Olympics is influenced by the differences in the

significance of the Games, and in the identity of China in these Games, as comprehended by the Chinese society. However, the knowledge of the exceptional significance of the Beijing Olympics led the pre-2008 Chinese Olympic discourse to a direction that was similar to what it was for previous editions. This is to say that due to the historical emphasis on success in the Chinese context, the knowledge of, and the discourse about, the particularity of the Beijing Games also resulted in an accentuation of Olympic performance, and thus of *Juguo Tizhi*, before the Beijing Games.

In spite of the similar emphasis of Olympic performance in the pre-2008 era, the difference in significance between the Beijing Games and other Olympics is reproduced more clearly in the post-2008 Olympic discourse. We would argue that as *Interviewee General 2* differentiated between “merely sport competitions” and “the symbol of the rise of the Chinese nation”, the exceptional significance of the 2008 Games to Chinese society resulted in the defining character of the post-2008 Chinese Olympic discourse, i.e. the accentuation of the extrinsic function of the Olympics and the recognition of the effective achievement of such functions in the Beijing Games. As evidenced in the prior quotations in this section, the general success of, instead of the peak performance in, the Beijing Games become accentuated in the post-2008 Chinese Olympic discourse. This account, on the one hand, reflects the knowledge on the part of Chinese society of the most significant

achievement of the Beijing Games; and, on the other hand, constructs China's new Olympic identity as the host of the 2008 Olympics, which enjoyed general success in its organisation of the Games. Thus, even though Chinese elite sport achieved its top Olympic performance in 2008, elite sport performance is less emphasised in the post-2008 discourse evaluating the Beijing Games, and is portrayed merely as a part of, or evidence of, a successful Olympics.

Nonetheless, this is not to deny or to ignore the astonishing performance that Chinese athletes accomplished in the Beijing Games, which is also frequently mentioned in the post-2008 discourse as a distinguishing feature of the Beijing Games. For example, in *Interviewee General 2's* account, this exceptional performance, which shows the "maximised effectiveness of all the means that could be utilised in Juguo Tizhi", is identified as something that "had never happened before and will never happen again". It could, of course, thus be argued that what essentially differentiates the Beijing Games and other Olympics, in terms of elite sport development, is the effectiveness of Juguo Tizhi in its preparation for the 2008 Olympics.

However, when making this argument, we cannot help wondering about the underlying condition that enabled such "extreme methods and extreme results" for the Beijing Games (*Interviewee General 2*); or, from a counter

perspective, wondering about the conditions that constrain the implementation of this “extreme” Juguo Tizhi for the development of Chinese elite sport.

Comparing the preparation for the Beijing Games with what Chinese elite sport has done for other Olympics, *Interviewee General 3* states that

[The preparation for] other Olympics... only concentrates relatively less social resources but mainly the resources within the Chinese elite sport system ... the Beijing Games engaged the whole Chinese society.... This is to say that the support for the 2008 Games and for the elite sport system differentiates the Beijing Games from others, which were more like a one-man show. ... If the 2008 Games was not in Beijing, then it would be the same as other Olympics... in which [though] we would still fight for gold, the influence would not be as significant as it is now.

In line with our previous argument, the pursuit of gold medals with the resources within ZhuanYe sport system is portrayed as a routine job of Chinese elite sport for the Olympic Games in general. It is thus indirectly indicated by *Interviewee General 3* that the factor that differentiates ZhuanYe sport's preparation for the Beijing Games and other Olympics is the resources that were invested in the preparation for the Olympics. Given the dominance of Juguo Tizhi over Chinese elite sport, it could be argued that the boosted social support (resources) to Chinese elite sport for the preparation for the Beijing Games considerably increased the resources that SADs controlled and distributed with Juguo Tizhi. Even though an increase in the resource might

not necessarily lead to a growth in Olympic gold medals, financial investment is regarded as one of the most important elements that influence elite sport performance (Houlihan & Green 2008; De Bosscher & De Knop 2002). Thus, it could be argued that with such growth in the resources invested in Juguo Tizhi before the Beijing Games, it increased the possibility of a improvement in the elite sport performance.

Additionally, there were also changes and development in the practices in the Juguo Tizhi system for the Beijing Games, such as the increase of the numbers of foreign coaches and the different versions of *Statements of Liability for Undertaking the Task of the 2008 Games* that had also been issued and signed from the top of the hierarchy (the GAS) to the bottom level (coaches of key training groups of national teams) of the Chinese Olympic squad.

However, in terms of the essential changes in the pre-2008 operation of Juguo Tizhi, which is analysed in detail in the following section, we would like to quote *Interviewee Diving 1's* statement assessing the actual development of the core mechanism of Juguo Tizhi framework for the Beijing Games. He states that:

[The development of Chinese diving]... has hardly any relation with the Beijing Games, therefore your question [concerning the relationship between the 2008 Olympics and the development of Juguo Tizhi] is difficult to answer. As a matter of fact, I know what you want ... how can I express [in the way

you need]. A better way is to say that the Beijing Olympics... enabled us to have [more] detailed preparation with more [material] support.

In general, we would argue that knowledge of the significance of the Beijing Games not only led to a change in discourse concerning, and attitude towards, Juguo Tizhi, but also in the resource that was controlled by the stable and unchanged Juguo Tizhi system. These changes are recognised as the underlying condition that boosted the 2008 performance of Chinese elite sport in the post-2008 discourse.

6.1.2 The discursive construction of the Olympics

Consistent with the increased emphasis on the general success of the Beijing Games after 2008, there is also a growth of the content of post-2008 Chinese Olympic discourse concerning the extrinsic function of the Olympics Games in general. Taking the scenario of Chinese elite sport policy, we would argue that this trend is reflected in the change of the statement concerning the significance of the Olympics in the three editions of the *Strategic Plan for Winning Olympic Glory (1994-2000, 2001-2010, 2011-2020)*.

Straightforwardly, related content is noted in different ways in the three editions of the Olympic-targeted documents. In the first two versions of the Plans, brief statements concerning the implication and extrinsic function of the Olympics are separately addressed in different sections of the documents.

In contrast, the significance of the Olympics are intensively stated in the second part of the *2011 Summary*, following the leading section summarising the achievements of Chinese elite sport since the first edition of the Plans.

Content wise, there are two brief statements in the *1994 Summary* relating to the social impact of the Olympics. The first focuses on the Olympic performance and its impact on “the socialist material progress, and cultural and ethical progress”. The second emphasises the benefit of “promoting the Olympic ideology and [of] advocating the Olympic spirit ... for stimulating the opening-up of our country and its international communication”. For the second (2001-2011) edition of this series of document, thanks to the successful bid of the 2008 Games, the *2001 Summary* focuses solely on the social influence of the Beijing Olympic, which is portrayed as:

... another great opportunity of Chinese sport development, and will have significant impact on the economic and social development [of China] in the new century, on the establishment of an ‘all-dimensional’, multi-tiered and wide-ranging ‘opening-up’ of our country, as well as on enhancing its international status.

GAS, 2002, p.1

Compared to the brief statements in the *1994 Summary* and the 2008-focused account in the *2001 Summary*, the authors of the *2011 Summary* not only assign the significance of the Olympics to different international events but also

associate these sporting events with various strategic practices of states. It is stated that:

International sport events, represented by the Olympic Games, [could be used as means for] international comparison, [performance in which] is the benchmark and character of the progress [for becoming a] 'Sport Power' ... Elite sport and the Olympic strategy will remain its significant role and implication in the economic, social and cultural development in the following decade... the Olympic Games...has become an important platform for the international communication, competition and cooperation as well as a show window for the image of general strength of nations.

GAS, 2011, p. 1

Straightforwardly, it could be argued that the above quotation provides a more detailed account than the statements in the previous two versions of the Plans that cover the same topic. From an international perspective, more terms which imply state practices associated with the Olympics are employed in the above quotation, such as "competition", "cooperation", "international comparison", etc. Domestically, the Olympic strategy associated with Chinese elite sport is assigned a "significant role ... in the economic, social and cultural development" of China. We would argue that these terms implying different practices of States not only suggest an increased Chinese understanding of the extrinsic function of the Olympics; but also construct various relationships between the participant countries of the Olympics, or the different identities that China or other countries may take in the Olympic

Games. Furthermore, we would argue that with the inclusion of this content concerning the significance of the Olympics, the *Plans* are changed from elite sport performance focused elite sport policy, to a certain extent, to a diplomatic document in the domain of sport.

Even though, there is such remarkable change in the knowledge of the Olympics in Chinese context before and after the Beijing Games, it is difficult to argue that the 2008 Games worked as the turning point at which the PRC government and SADs suddenly comprehended such insight. However, as shown in the Sport Minister's different speeches that are quoted in the previous chapter, it could be argued that this development of knowledge gradually took place along with the imminent approach of the Beijing Games, and is reflected in the gradual change in the official account framing the 2008 Olympics in diplomatic, socialist and other terms. After the Beijing Games, Liu Peng concisely stressed in the 2009 All States Sports Minister Conference that in economic, diplomatic, cultural and social terms:

The development of Chinese sport and the success of the organisation of the Olympics fully prove the significant influence of sport, which is a new driving force of economic development, a platform of international communication, an important content of cultural development, a necessary condition of social life, on the full development of individuals and society

P. Liu, 2009, p. 1

Interviewee General 1 positively reviews the extrinsic function of the Olympics and the ‘improvement’ of the understanding of such functions in the Chinese society. He elaborates as follows:

As a matter of fact, ... [the social and political meaning of the Olympics] is good. It is not only good for China as the host country, but also good for the Olympic Games. [Because] it shows that the Olympics could incorporate [social and political implications], ... there is nothing in the world that could incorporate as much as the Olympics does... Chinese society used to have little respect for sport. But one Olympics has lifted [the image of] sport, making [Chinese] people aware that sport could have so many functions ... some of which the UN does have, some of which are irreplaceable.

The above interpretation of the extrinsic function of the Olympics covers two aspects. Firstly, the speaker not only normalises the association between the Olympic Games and its social and political implications, but also positively acknowledges such association as “good for the host country... and for the Olympics.” Thus, he suggests, as the second aspect, that such a positive function of the Olympics changes the portrait of sport in China, or “lifts [the image] of sport”. In other words, this account acknowledges the significance of the extrinsic function to the value of sport, more precisely to the value of elite sport in the Chinese context. Or, we would argue that given the limited association between ZhuanYe sport and social economy, the value, or the usefulness, of ZhuanYe sport and Juguo Tizhi, to a great extent, relies on its implication in political and social domains. This is, on the one hand,

consistent with the emphasis of the nationalist, socialist and other political elements of the Beijing Games in the pre-2008 Chinese Olympic discourse. On the other hand, it also, to a degree, explains the notion of elite sport performance, which is often stressed as the 'political task' of Chinese elite sport, in the Chinese context.

We would thus argue that even though Chinese elite sport successfully finished its glorious and formidable job in 2008, its 'political task' of maintaining its performance is continuously stressed in the Chinese context. For example, although there is no direct mention of elite sport performance in the above quotation from the 2011 Summary, given the high media exposure, and thus public attention on the Olympic medal table, it could be argued that the notions of "international comparison", "competitions" among different states and the "benchmark" of being a 'sport power' subtly constructs elite sport performance as the criterion of 'comparison' between delegations from different NOCs. Thus in order to maintain its role as a 'sport power', which was stressed by the then-President of China (J. Hu, 2008), it is subtly suggested in the policy from the GAS that elite sport performance needs to be maintained. In other words, Juguo Tizhi should be steadily promoted in the post-2008 era for China's status in the sporting world and international community.

It could hence be argued that the increased understanding of the extrinsic function of the Olympics indirectly but continuously promotes the significance of elite sport performance, and thus of Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye sport, in the Chinese context. However, the significance of elite sport performance, especially of Olympic performance is differently constructed for different sports. For instance, it is stated by *Interviewee Diving 6* and *Table Tennis 2* that:

[The expectation of] the Chinese people for the [Chinese national diving] team is that you have to win Olympic gold medals. In order to do that ..., we thus give up other routes [of development], such as professionalisation. ... If you are the one who is responsible [for the sport], no one cares about professionalisation but all focus on [Olympic] performance. You dare not risk [Olympic performance for professionalisation], even if you are the political leader [of Chinese diving]. If [Chinese diving] failed to attain an excellent performance, who would dare to take the responsibility? Thus we don't...promote a stance [for reform].

Interviewee Diving 6

The national team is mainly supported by the country, thus ... the need for [the reform for] civil-society-based development is not so urgent. Only those who are starving are eager to reform, isn't it? ... What are you going to do, if the country stops funding? This is the original driving force for the reform...At present, ... [Chinese table tennis] still has an important duty, winning Olympic glory...Thus, [professional] clubs, in other words the professional league is still [a] supplementary element [of the national team], ... which has not been highly promoted.

Both diving and table tennis are regarded as key sports for the Chinese Olympic strategy, each of which have won more than 20 Olympic gold medals for China since the 1984 Olympics. In the above quotations from *Interviewee Diving 7* and *Table Tennis 2* concerning of the limited civil-society-based development in diving and table tennis, i.e. the introduction of professionalisation, the significance of the Olympic performance is differently constructed by the interviewees from the two sports

Through explicitly emphasising the “Olympic gold medal” as an expectation of “the Chinese people” that “has to” be met, and employing other terms with a political denotation in the Chinese context, such as “political leader” of sport, “taking responsibility”, etc., *Interviewee Diving 7* maintains a ‘traditional’ tone portraying the Olympic performance as the political task of Chinese elite sport. Furthermore, he also consistently stresses the importance of Olympic performance from the perspective of Chinese elite sport reform, stating “no one cares about professionalisation but all focus on Olympic performance”. In other words, we would argue that this account constructs a consensus (or general knowledge), in Chinese diving, of the considerable difference in the importance between the reform and Olympic performance. Additionally, he

further acknowledges that the Olympic performance is so important that no one “dare to” risk it by promoting reform. It could be argued that such a constant emphasis on Olympic performance is a causal factor, if not the factor, resulting in the abandoning of the essential reform in Chinese diving, or, as he exemplifies, of “the route ... [of] professionalisation”.

In addition, the reform in elite sport also affects the discursive construction of the significance of Olympic performance, such as is evidenced in the above quotation from *Interviewee Table Tennis 2*. Interpreting from a financial perspective, *Interviewee Table Tennis 2* associates the promotion of “winning Olympic glory” with the support from the country and portrays the reforming element, i.e. the professional league, as “supplementary” to the Olympic strategy and to the financial support from the country. In other words, with the existing professional league, Chinese table tennis is attempting to be, to a degree, self-sufficient, which is portrayed as the “original driving force” of the reform, even though its main source of support continues to be the national government. We would argue that the simultaneous inclusion of the Olympic strategy and professional league in the quotation from *Interviewee Table Tennis 2*, on the one hand, reflects the coexistence of the two sources of finance for the national squad and the Chinese Table Tennis Association. On the other hand, this account also constructs the co-existence of the ‘promotion of Chinese elite sport reform’

and 'the winning of Olympic glory', i.e. the goal of Juguo Tizhi, in Chinese elite sport. The latter is however given greater emphasis. We would further argue that given the importance of these two key sports to the Chinese Olympic strategy and their reliance on government funding, the significance of the elite sport performance is consistently emphasised by the two interviewees. However, even though both indicate a positive attitude to Chinese elite sport reform, they nevertheless construct the relationship between elite sport performance and Chinese elite sport reform differently, especially in terms of the introduction of professionalisation. This different account reflects the difference in the degree of civil-society-based development in the respective sports, and of the dominance of Juguo Tizhi discourse, which emphasises elite sport performance as a key element of the vested interests of the ZhuanYe sport system.

By contrast to such emphasis on the significance of elite sport performance and Olympic glory, the significance of Olympic performance, more precisely of the Olympic Games *per se*, is differently interpreted by *Interviewee Baseball 5* from Chinese baseball.

Sport is a game, the Olympics, ultimately, is also a game. It is a game to which the people assign different layers [of implication] ... It is this kind of sport [such as baseball], about which no one cares, that either ends [as a ZhuanYe sport] or reverts to its essence [as just a game].

Given the marginal position of Chinese baseball in the Olympic strategy, it could be argued that the advocacy of the essence of the Olympics and of sport in general, and the construction of the direction of Chinese Baseball reflect the necessity of civil-society based development of Chinese baseball. This is to say that the development mode of ZhuanYe sport, which associates the sport with governmental funding, would naturally lead to an accentuation of Olympic performance. However, for such a sport that has rarely produced any Olympic achievement, continuously emphasising Olympic performance is meaningless for gaining recognition and attention in the ZhuanYe sport system.

Through deemphasising the extrinsic function of, and related significance of, the Olympics and of sports in general, *Interviewee Baseball 4*, on the one hand, portrays, or normalises, the limited 'value' of Chinese baseball as the true nature of all sports. On the other hand, he also deemphasises both those 'values' that are exogenously imposed on sport and the ways that emphasises those imposed 'values'. We would thus argue that the notion of "its true self" embraces a two-fold meaning, including the nature of elite sport, as "just a game", and as a 'natural' medium of development, i.e. the civil-society-based mode of development.

Based on our analysis in this section, we would make a brief conclusion

before starting an investigation of the influence of the Beijing Games on post-2008 Chinese elite sport development. Even though Chinese elite sport achieved its peak performance in the 2008 Olympics, the further emphasis on the extrinsic function of the Olympics (including both the 2008 edition and other Olympic Games) and of elite sport is the defining character that differentiates the pre- and post-2008 Chinese Olympic discourse. Such 'improved' knowledge of the Olympics constructs an alteration in the attitude of the PRC in relation to its interaction with international community, and reflects the increased power and international status of China.

The increased emphasis on the extrinsic function of the Olympics and on the general success of the Beijing Games does not decrease, but maintains the importance of *Juguo Tizhi* in Chinese elite sport, which is consistent with the vested interests of the *Zhuanye* sport system. However, the interpretation of significance of the Olympics in terms of its extrinsic functions varies among different sports in various positions on the power hierarchy of Chinese elite sport. This different account, on the one hand, reflects the different roles of these sports in the Olympic strategy and their respective interests. On the other hand, it also shapes the direction, and progress, of development of the respective sports in the post-2008 era, which is investigated in the following two sections.

6.2 Being a 'Sport Power' and the post-2008 development of Juguo Tizhi

Becoming "a Sport Power"⁶⁰, which was advocated by the then-President of China (Hu 2008c) at the Awards Ceremony for the 2008 Olympics and the Paralympics, is recognised as the next mission assigned to SADs. This important addition to the Chinese elite sport discourse in the post-2008 era immediately became the main slogan for Chinese (elite) sport development. For example, it was employed by the Minister of Sport (P. Liu 2009b) as the title of his speech at the 2009 Conference of All-State Sports Ministers. In the latest version of *the Strategic Plan for Winning Olympic Glory* (GAS 2011a), i.e. the 2011 Plan, it is identified as the ten year goal of the development of Chinese sport in the section *Guiding Theory and Principle*. Rhetorically, in that section, the term of 'sport power' is introduced following reference to socialist theories and the related terminology employed by each generation of the Chinese top leaders, even before reference to "the needs of Chinese people in sport" (GAS 2011a, p.1).

⁶⁰ The notion of a 'Sport Power', representing the future target of Chinese elite sport, is combined by Hu with the term 'Sport Giant' in his speech, which refers to the status of China after the Beijing Games. These two terms are also translated as "Strong Sporting Nation" and "Major Sports Nation" (Research Group of the Studies on Theory and Practice of stepping from a Major Sports Nation to a Strong Sporting Nation 2010).

Even though Hu did not provide an elaboration of the concept of ‘being a Sport Power’, this “new outline and objective for the future development of Chinese sport” (Research Group of the Studies on Theory and Practice of Stepping from a Major Sports Nation to a Strong Sporting Nation 2010, p.1) is given great attention by, and is seriously studied and discussed in, Chinese elite sport. For example, not long after Hu’s speech in September 2008, the GAS summoned a group of the best-known Chinese sport intellectuals working with the China Institute of Sport Science (a directly affiliated public institution of the GAS; CISS, hereafter.) and produced a book in 2010, which is entitled ‘*Studies on the Theory and Practice of stepping from a Major Sports Nation to a Strong Sporting Nation*’ (hereafter, *the Research of Sport Power*). Given the leading role of the CISS and the influence of the GAS in this research, it could be argued that this report could be recognised as an official interpretation of this crucial concept of Chinese sport in the post-2008 era.

As is the case with D. Xiong’s (2002) specification of the intrinsic and extrinsic functions of sport, the research group identifies two defining criteria for a country to be recognised as a Sport Power. Intrinsically, it is “a country with *fundamental strength* in high level sport and *core influence* [in sport]⁶¹” (Bao 2010,

⁶¹ The fundamental strength incorporates infrastructures and facilities, the number of active people, quantity and quality of sport talent, the scale of the sport market and spending, etc.

The core performance refers to the international performance of elite athletes, the number of

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p.6). The performance in international events is an important element of the latter. It is identified with referencing to extrinsic purposes as follows:

A country is a Sport Power as long as its sport development can integrate into, and fully promote, the development of its politics, economy, society, culture and its people; in other words, as long as that the positive externality of the sport in that country is huge and powerful.

Bao, 2010, p. 6

In addition, following the officially-recognised three components of Chinese sport, i.e. mass sport, elite sport and the sport industry, it is also specified that the sport of a Sport Power embraces three characteristics: a) it is people-oriented, b) it is beneficial to the development of the country, c) it is comprehensive, harmonious, and sustainable.

From this broad, but vital, elaboration of the defining criteria and characters of 'a Sport Power', we would argue that, on the one hand, consistent with the character of post-2008 Chinese Olympic discourse, this official account emphasises the extrinsic function of Chinese sport, especially those relating to the development of the country, in China's procedure of being a 'Sport

sport stars and famous clubs, the influence in IFs, and powerful sport media (Research Group of the Studies on Theory and Practice of stepping from a Major Sports Nation to a Strong Sporting Nation 2010, p.6).

Power'. On the other hand, the importance of elite sport, more precisely of Zhuanye sport, is subtly maintained, while other parts of Chinese sport, i.e. mass sport and the sport industry are explicitly given more accentuation in the statement.

Despite the close relationship of Zhuanye sport with the concept of "core performance" and related elements of "general strength", which is explicitly indicated in the portrayal of the defining criteria; Zhuanye sport is also subtly portrayed as an element with which all other components in Chinese sport need to cope in the statement concerning the character of a 'Sport Power'. For example, it is stated that 'the comprehensive, cohesive, and sustainable development of sport' is basically manifested as "the cohesive development of elite sport and mass sport, of amateur sport and professional sport, and of the sport cause⁶² and sport industry" (Bao, 2010, p.6). Given the power and

⁶² 'Sport cause' is translated from the Chinese term "Tiyu Shiye"(体育事业). As we previously indicated, "Tiyu" is normally translated as 'sport', in spite of other meanings relating to physical activities. The term, "Shiye" can be translated as a) "cause and undertakings", i.e. revolutionary cause; and b) "(non-private) enterprise; (non-private) facility" (Oxford FLTRP English - Chinese 2010). Though "Tiyu Shiye" has been mentioned in many quotations in this thesis, following the first English meaning, it is normally translated as 'Chinese sport' or 'sport'. Such as '[we] have to scientifically plan the development of the sport of our country in the next decade' (GAS 2002, p.1) and '...the development of sport is insufficient ...' (SPCSC 1993d, p.1).

significance of Zhuanye sport and Juguo Tizhi in Chinese “elite sport” in general, which we have sought to demonstrate in this thesis, and the ‘public-institutional’ denotation of the term “sport cause” referring to the government-run Zhuanye sport (as elaborated in the footnote), which is the key point denoted in these two terms, we would suggest that the development of Zhuanye sport is continuously promoted in this official interpretation of ‘Sport Power’.

With its second meaning, ‘Shiye’ is usually combined with the Chinese word of ‘institution’, forming a nominal term ‘public institution’, referring to ‘the public service organizations that are established by the state organs or other organizations by using the state-owned assets’ (The State Council of the People’s Republic of China 1998, p.1).

In the above quotation, “Tiyu Shiye” is compared with “sport industry”, which is a market-oriented concept that has been promoted in the Chinese elite sport reform. We would argue that through this comparison, the authors emphasise the ‘non-private’ and ‘public-institutional’ feature of “Tiyu Shiye”. Given the innate planned-economy characteristic of Zhuanye sport, it could be argued that it is Zhuanye sport that is connoted in the term of ‘Tiyu Shiye’ to be compared to the sport industry.

This comparison between the two is also evidenced in other Chinese elite sport accounts, such as the Sport Minister’s (Liu, 2007,p.1) speech elaborating the difference between the two that:

Sport cause and sport industry are different and oppose one another... [We have to] correctly manage the relationship between the two, in order to achieve the coordinated development of the two, [and make them] facilitate each other.

However, this is not to say that the post-2008 Chinese elite sport discourse is merely a duplication of what it was in the pre-2008 era, especially with the increase in emphasis on promoting sport reform and the development of sport industry. Thus, in order to grasp the subtle development, we separately analyse the post-2008 development of Zhuanye sport and Juguo Tizhi and of Chinese elite sport reform in the following sections.

6.2.1 The concept of 'Sport Power' and the maintenance of Juguo Tizhi

As previously argued, the concept and interpretation of "becoming a Sport Power" have increased the significance of 'mass sport' and 'sport industry', which are the two other elements of the three-fold notion of Chinese sport (besides elite sport). That is to say that given the power structure of Chinese society and the governmental nature of SADs, this 'new' discourse, "becoming a Sport Power", because it was promoted by the top leader of the communist regime gained significantly in influence in Chinese sport discourse in the post-2008 Chinese context. This 'privileged' discourse, which frames a 'new' power structure of different parts of Chinese sport, re-constructed the understanding in Chinese society of a more appropriate, and more balanced, way of sport development. This 'new knowledge' of Chinese society increased the emphasis on the development of 'mass sport' and 'sport industry', and, in return, overshadowed the significance of elite

sport achievement in Chinese society.

For example, since 2010, mass sport has replaced elite sport, as the first section of the Sport Minister's speeches at the annual All States Sports Minister Conferences. In addition, there were two noticeable documents published by the State Council after the Beijing Games, which are *the Guidance for accelerating the development of sport industry* (The General Office of the State Council of the PRC 2010) and the new version of the *Sport-for-all Fitness Programme*⁶³ (The State Council of the People's Republic of China 2011). Even though the new version of *the Sport-for-all Fitness Programme* is a projected renewal of the previous edition, such a trend of increasing emphasis on the balanced development of Chinese sport is associated with the decrease in the pressure on Chinese elite sport for excellence in performance in the post-2008 era. It is stated by *Interviewee General 1* that

After the Beijing Games...neither the GAS, nor other SADs, have ever relaxed [in preparing for the Olympics]. Within the [Chinese elite sport] system, it was claimed for "preparing for the London Games in the same way of the preparation for the Beijing Olympics" ... [However] relatively speaking, the

⁶³ The former version of the programme was published in 1995, one year after the first edition of the Olympic Strategy. It is indicated in the programme that it covered the period from 1995 to 2010. One year after the State Council announced this new edition of the Programme, a White Paper on the achievement of the former version of the Programme was published by the GAS.

balance [between different parts of Chinese sport] has been better since the Beijing Games. It was so unbalanced before the Beijing Games that Chinese elite sport had basically been under great pressure in the process of 'battle preparation'. Non-Olympic sports, let alone mass sport (which was so much less-emphasised), were inhibited as well. The balance became better after the Beijing Games ... but is still not very satisfactory.

Interviewee General 1 constructs two different trends within and outside the Chinese elite sport system in terms of the importance of elite sport performance after the Beijing Games in the above quotation. On the one hand, consistent with the requirement of 'balanced development' in the notion of 'Sport Power', he indicates an improved balance between Olympic sports and other parts of Chinese sport, especially mass sport, the latter of which was "repressed" in the "battle preparation" for the Beijing Games. On the other hand, through quoting the slogan of the SADs concerning the preparation for the London Olympics, *Interviewee General 1* explicitly portrays a consistent emphasis on the Olympic performance that has been maintained by the GAS and SADs within the Chinese elite sport system. We would argue that this internal attitude towards elite sport performance, on the one hand, reflects the vested interests of Zhuanye sport, which has been realised through providing satisfactory elite sport performance. On the other hand, it is also heavily influenced by the official interpretation of the role of elite sport performance for the 'Sport Power' nations, the competition among which is explicitly addressed. For instance, it is stated in the general report of the 'Research on

Sport Power', and is emphasised by the Sport Minister from the perspective of the extrinsic function, and symbolic meaning, of sport in international competitions:

At present, the competition among the major sport countries in their general strength in sport, which includes mass sport, elite sport and the sport industry, has become more and more fierce ... we have to be soberly aware that the main force controlling international sport is still the West. Along with our transferring procedure from a Sport Giant to a Sport Power... we will have competition with them across all sports dimensions ...

Bao, 2010, p. 3

Constructing a Sport Power...is the strategic deployment made by ... the Secretary General ... at the height of realising the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation...the world becomes multi-dimensional, globalisation is irreversible ... the competition among powerful countries in their comprehensive national power has become more and more fierce...In modern society, sport has become an important symbol of the development and the civilisation of... a society, [sport] has been a crucial manifestation of the comprehensive national power and competitive power of a country, and has been an indispensable vital driving force for building the socialist modernised powerful country.

P. Liu, 2010, p. 1

In both quotations, “competition” is employed as the main term constructing the relationship among countries, especially those recognised as ‘Sport Powers’, in the era of globalisation. It is also explicitly indicated that China

“will have all-dimensional competition” with these Sport Powers. This notion, on the one hand, suggests an equal position of China with other countries, which is consistent with the goal of the nationalist term the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” that is employed in the quotation from Liu Peng’s speech. On the other hand, it also identifies the competitive nature of the interaction between China and external worlds, and the symbolic meaning of sport in this type of international relationship.

It could be argued that through portraying the competing relationship between China and other countries in the world, sport is constructed not only as an “arena” of such contest, but also a means, or a symbol, of the competition. Even though, it is projected that there will also be general competition in other parts of Chinese sport, i.e. mass sport and the sport industry, in the first quotation; Liu Peng specifically emphasises that “elite sport represented by the Olympics has strong international comparability, and is hence the distinctive indicator and representation of a Sport Power” (Liu, 2010, p.1). We would argue that due to the essential characteristic of elite sport, i.e. the international comparability, it could naturally and easily be utilised as the means for such competition. In other words, it could be argued that the continuous emphasis on the “competitive feature” of sport in the post-2008 Chinese sport discourse, especially in the notion of “becoming a Sport Power”, directly maintains the importance of elite sport performance

after the Beijing Games. On the other side of the coin, given elite sport is also identified as “the vital support and driving force” for other elements of Chinese sport in the official interpretation of “Sport Power” (Hu 2010, p.45), the increased emphasis on the importance of other parts of Chinese sport indirectly promotes the significance of elite sport in the post-2008 era.

This maintenance of the importance of elite sport performance and thus of *Juguo Tizhi* is also evidenced in the 2011 Summary, directly or indirectly. As quoted in Section 1.2 of this thesis, the significance of, and the extrinsic function of, the Olympic Games is stated more explicitly in Section 2 of the 2011 Summary, ‘*the Opportunity for and Challenges to the sustainable development of Chinese elite sport*’. Following the statement that is quoted in Section 1.2, it is stated that

All countries and regions pay more attention to elite sport in the 21st century...governments’ leadership in elite sport has been reinforced... competition has become fiercer...Especially, the rapid development of professional sport has accelerated the civil-society-based development of, marketization of, and the professionalisation of elite sport, has changed the traditional system and mechanism of elite sport...; a new form of elite sport development that is closely associated with the Olympics and has its own characters is [thus] established.

GAS, 2011, p. 1

Straightforwardly, it could be argued that through normalising of the

governments' role in elite sport, the policy makers consistently legitimate the SADs' dominance in elite sport in the quoted policy statement. However, it is worth noting the portrayal of professional sport, which is restated after its absence in the 2001 edition. On the one hand, consistent with its reforming connotation, professional sport is identified as an accelerator of elite sport reform that is represented by terms in the above quotation, which relate to the essential reform of Chinese elite sport, such as "civil-society-based development", "marketization" and "changing the traditional system and mechanism of elite sport". On the other hand, and more importantly, professional sport is officially recognised as an element of "a new form of elite sport development that is closely associated with the Olympics". This account, which is similar to, but more explicit than, the positive attitude towards professional sport in the 1994 Summary, is different from the statement of the 2001 Summary, in which professional sport is isolated from the Olympic task. We would argue that this account associating this commercial phenomenon with Olympic performance constructs the consistency between the two and increases the reforming tone of the policy.

Nonetheless, it is stated in the practical section, *the [implementation] measures*, of the 2011 strategy, that the principle for promoting professional sport is that "[professional sport should be] administered in an orderly fashion, [its] development is controllable, [it should] serve the Olympics" (GAS 2011a, p.1).

Though it is further analysed in the following section concerning professional sport, we would argue, at this stage, that terms such as “administrated”, “controlled” and “serve” construct the relationship between professional sport and SADs. In other words, through restating professional sport in the 2011 Summary, the policy makers maintain, if not reinforce, the SADs’ control over professional sport, while obeying the concept of ‘Sport Power’ through indicating the ‘new’ recognition of, and attitude towards, professional sport.

The influence of ‘Sport Power’ is also evidenced in other sections of the 2011 Summary, for example, it is stated in the following section, *the guiding theory and principle*, that

...[we should] regard becoming a Sport Power as the goal, regard fulfilling the people’s need in sport as the starting point ... insist on the development route of elite sport with Chinese characteristics, consistently implement the Olympic strategy... regard promoting the all-around development of human beings... [in order to] promote the comprehensive and sustainable development of Chinese elite sport, and positively contribute to the development of a moderately prosperous society and a socialist harmonious society.

The GAS, 2011b, p. 1

Besides the direct reference to ‘Sport Power’, which is identified as the ultimate goal for which the Olympic strategy works (or, as the ultimate

outcome of winning Olympic medals), a number of sub-concepts related to the characteristics of 'Sport Power' are also employed in the above quotation, including "all-around development of human beings", "the comprehensive and sustainable development of Chinese elite sport" and the socialist development of the country. Meanwhile, a protective attitude towards Juguo Tizhi and Olympic performance is also constructed through employing terms such as "insisting on" and "consistently implement" in the above quotation. This is consistent with our previous assertion of the continuous emphasis on elite sport performance and the increasing weight assigned to other parts of Chinese sport that is associated with the reform and civil society-based development of Chinese elite sport.

In the following section on *the objectives of development and main tasks* in the 2011 Summary, a co-emphasis of these two directions is also evidenced. For instance, "the refinement of developing mode" of Chinese elite sport is stressed as the leading *objective* and (or but) is accompanied by the requirement of excellent elite sport performance in international events. In the subsequent statement, while the maintenance of excellent performance is stressed as a priority *task*, another two additional tasks, "boosting the reform of elite sport system" and "exploring the development route of professional sport with Chinese characteristics", closely relate to elite sport reform, and are newly introduced in this part of the Olympic strategy.

Similarly, in the following *[implementation] measures* section, even though two specific *measures*, i.e. *Deepening Reform, Innovating the Developing Mode of Elite Sport* and *Exploring the Development Route of Professional Sport with Chinese Characteristics*, are designated to elite sport reform; Juguo Tizhi and Olympic strategy is consistently emphasised in a leading article that is entitled “*Aiming to become a Sport Power, maintaining and refining of Juguo Tizhi and continuous implementing of the Olympic strategy*”. Additionally, another four *measures* (2, 3, 4, 6), which cover respective areas of the Zhuanye sport system and Juguo Tizhi framework, are subsequently identified as supplementing the first. Furthermore, even in the reform-related parts, for example the previously quoted statement relating to the development of professional sport, elite sport performance and government control remain subtly but significantly addressed.

6.2.2 The development of Juguo Tizhi discourse and of the Juguo Tizhi system

Compared to the ten year review of Olympic strategy, swiftly changing accounts, such as the annual speech of Sport Minister, and external interpretation of the development of Chinese elite sport, rapidly and subtly reflect and restructure the knowledge concerning, and the power structure of, Chinese elite sport, while constructing a relatively stable post-2008 theme, i.e.

that of 'becoming a Sport Power'. In considering the discursive construction of Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye sport, there are apparent differences in Liu Peng's speeches at the 2009 and 2013 All States Sports Minister Conferences, even though both are consistently emphasised.

In his 2009 speech, Liu answers the questions "concerning the value, task, direction and mode of Chinese sport in future; and with Juguo Tizhi, harmonious development and government's role in sport" through stating that:

We have a clear understanding of Juguo Tizhi ... [which] is an effective elite sport operations system. It is impossible for China to achieve its historical breakthrough [in 2008] without Juguo Tizhi; destabilising Juguo Tizhi... would lead to a collapse in elite sport performance and negatively affect mass sport. Thus we have to maintain and refine Juguo Tizhi, utilising its cohesiveness and effectiveness [in battle preparation] as well as its effectiveness in the integration and coordination [of interests and resource] ... in terms of the government's leadership over sport, it should only be reinforced but not be weakened...in terms of the problems of Chinese sport, we should neither reject [solving the problems] nor ... using these problems deny the glorious achievement, core value and fundamental experience of Chinese sport.

P. Liu, 2009, p. 1

We would argue that similar to the narrative in the pre-2008 era, which was just one year prior to this speech, a generally protective attitude towards Juguo Tizhi is constructed as the main theme of the quotation. For example, in

his evaluation of Juguo Tizhi, Liu, on the one hand, directly, employs the achievement in elite sport to endorse this 'effective operation system'. On the other hand, he also emphasises the necessity of maintaining the stability of Juguo Tizhi through projecting the potential negative impacts on mass sport if Juguo Tizhi were to be withdrawn, even though there is a struggle for resources between the two. In addition, such a protective tone in the account concerning Juguo Tizhi is also reflected in the indication of "the glorious achievement, core value and fundamental experience" of Chinese sport in general, all of which, nonetheless, is mainly associated with elite sport and thus can be, directly or indirectly, linked with Juguo Tizhi.

However, the Sport Minister's account also implies an attempt to retain the possibility of both directions of reform and Juguo Tizhi in this speech. These attempts to balance both tendencies are reflected in the framing of the statement "neither...nor", which rejects a radical move in either direction; and is reflected also in Liu's emphasis on the different features of Juguo Tizhi that need to be utilised for the post-2008 development of Chinese elite sport. This is to say that the features of "cohesiveness and effectiveness [in battle preparation]" construct the link between Juguo Tizhi and elite sport performance; while the features of "effectiveness in the integration and coordination [of interests and resource]", which are normally promoted in reforming rhetoric, imply the inter action between Juguo Tizhi and civil

society.

Contrary to the pre-2008 Chinese elite sport discourse, in which the essential reform was superficially addressed, this emphasis on elite sport reform has been increasingly accentuated along with the post-2008 development of Chinese elite sport. Liu Peng's 2013 speech covering the same domain provides a good example of the change in weight between the account related to Juguo Tizhi and to elite sport reform. It is stated that:

[We should] maintain and refine Juguo Tizhi, reinforce its sustainability, openness and inclusiveness, and promote Juguo Tizhi's integration with interaction with [Chinese] society and market...[we should] cultivate sport culture [in Chinese society] to promote the soft power of China...

On the basis of maintaining and refining Juguo Tizhi, [we should] continuously reform and innovate [Chinese sport], resolve the problems in the system and mechanisms [of Chinese elite sport] that make Chinese elite sport imbalanced, discordant and unsustainable, and [we should] endeavour to explore multiple ways for elite sport development and a development mode for professional sport, which are consistent with the status quo of China.

P. Liu, 2013, p. 1

The phrase, "maintain and refine Juguo Tizhi", appears in the quotations from both the 2009 and 2013 speeches, and is consistently followed by the acknowledgement of its features that are to be utilised. However, we would argue that the perspective implied by the same term in these two documents varies from one to the other, which constructs a change in the attitude

towards, and power relationship between, Juguo Tizhi and elite sport reform. As previously argued, the indication in the 2009 speech of 'cohesiveness and effectiveness in battle preparation, in the integration and coordination of resource' covers both Juguo Tizhi and elite sport reform. By contrast, in the quotation from the 2013 speech, Liu Peng highlights the 'sustainability, openness and inclusiveness' of Juguo Tizhi and its integration and interaction with Chinese society and the market. Even though the notion of 'sustainability' could also be interpreted from the perspective of stressing the sustainable development of elite sport performance, given its usual reforming connotation, we would argue that the three features indicated in the quotation from the 2013 speech imply the increasing interaction, even "integration", between Juguo Tizhi (also Zhuanye sport) and civil society.

From another aspect, i.e. that of 'solving the "problems" of Chinese elite sport', Liu constructs the appropriate moves in a different manner, which provides another good example of the changing attitude of the Sport Minister. We would argue the *genres* employed in the quotation from the 2013 speech, i.e. "reform and innovate", "resolve" and "endeavour to explore multiple ways", focus on 'one side' of the "neither...nor" phrase that is indicated in his 2009 speech. This partial emphasis not only identifies the appropriate moves that the GAS is implementing, but also constructs a more determined attitude towards the reform of Juguo Tizhi 5 years after the Beijing Games. In addition,

such a decrease in the weight of 'the other' half of the "neither...nor" phrase is also evidenced in the general account of the whole report. In the 2009 version, Juguo Tizhi and the Olympic Games had each been mentioned 13 and 27 times respectively, which were reduced to three and twelve times in the 2013 edition. Thus, we would argue that even though the maintenance of Juguo Tizhi is consistently indicated in the Chinese elite sport discourse, the power structure in Chinese elite sport discourse had been continuously modified throughout the post-2008 era, for example by the top sport bureaucrat of China.

However, the effect of modifications in the discursive domain, not only the rapidly changing account but also relatively consistent policy and political theme, is not immediately evident in the practices of Chinese elite sport. For example, it is stated by *Interviewee Diving 6*, a Chinese Olympian, that "so far, there is no [change], especially no difference in Juguo Tizhi", even though the post-2008 reform was projected before the Beijing Games and is advocated in the interpretation of the concept of 'Sport Power'. There are also other interviewees who attempted, but eventually failed, to provide more characteristics that differentiated the pre-2008 and the post-2008 development of Juguo Tizhi except the tremendous resources invested in, and pressure on, Juguo Tizhi before the Beijing Games. *Interviewee Diving 1* states that

There must be impact, [which] however, cannot be easily demonstrated ... because diving has always had fabulous performance... [The development of Chinese diving] has hardly any relation with the Beijing Games... I know what you want ... [but] how can I express it [in the way you need]. [I would] say that the Beijing Olympics... enabled us to have [more] detailed preparation with more [material] support.

During the interview, *Interviewee Diving 1* repeatedly claimed that “the Beijing Games had significant impact” on Chinese elite sport and implied that he understood the researcher ‘needed’ him to address some changes in the Zhuanye sport system in the post-2008 era, in order to show the significance of the Beijing Games. However, like many other interviewees, the senior official in the Centre of Aquatic sport was also not able to change his focus from resources and pressure.

We would argue that this stability of Zhuanye sport after the Beijing Games is influenced by the discourse of, and the practice of, Chinese elite sport in the post-2008 era. In terms of the influence of Chinese elite sport discourse, it is consistent with the protective tone of the discursive construction of *Juguo Tizhi* in the Chinese elite sport documents, such as in the interpretation of ‘Sport Power’ in the annual speeches of the Sport Minister and the 2011 Summary. For example, it is stated in a sub-report of the *Research of Sport Power* that:

Given the scarce resource of China and the unbalanced development among elite sports, maintaining Juguo Tizhi...[and] implementing Olympic strategies is a necessary and inevitable choice ...After the Beijing Games, as evidenced by the general strength of elite sport, there is no doubt that China has become a Sport Power in elite sport...Reinforcing and maintaining this advantaged position in elite sport is the primary requirement of the implementation of the strategy of becoming a Sport Power, [which aims to] lead the overall development of Chinese sport with the development of elite sport.

L. Hu, 2010, p. 45

Besides associating the implementation of Juguo Tizhi with the character of Chinese society, a supporting narrative that is evidenced in the pre-2008 discourse, Hu also stresses maintaining the 2008 success and links this with the powerful notion of 'Sport Power'. Even though, it is well acknowledged that Chinese elite sport achieved its peak performance in 2008, this emphasis on maintaining elite sport performance is also commonly evidenced in the post-2008 discourse, such as "at least [it should be] maintained... [in] the 'leading group' [top three]" (*Interviewee General 1*). It could be thus be argued that the author associates excellent performance with the characteristics of Sport Power, i.e. sustainability, and thus utilises this powerful statement to legitimise the maintenance of Juguo Tizhi in official discourse while other parts of Chinese sport are also increasingly accentuated.

Another example for the similar utilisation of 'Sport Power' in 'protecting'

Juguo Tizhi is the interpretation of the “comprehensive and harmonious” features of ‘Sport Power’ from the perspective of the all-around development of Olympic sport rather than of sport in general. Examples may include the *Research on Chinese Olympic Performance* (Long 2013), and *Strategic Research on Elite sports in Strong Sporting Nations* (Hu 2010), etc.

In practical terms, the Zhuanye sport system is interpreted as a causal factor that proactively restrains the potential impact of the Beijing Games on the development, or reform, of Juguo Tizhi. For example, *Interviewee Diving 2* states that:

Even though all are satisfied with the peak performance [in 2008], we can't eliminate the need [for excellent elite sport performance]. Moreover, it is impossible [for Juguo Tizhi] to be weakened rapidly; the most fundamental reason is that there is such a [gigantic] system ... dozens of Centres, provincial Sport Administrations, etc. ... It is impossible to [start] reform of the [elite] sport system from inside, [would] anyone want to have a revolution against himself? [Thus the reform] has to be from top to bottom, for instance, the State Council's reform of institutions [in 1998]⁶⁴...Therefore, as long as the current system exists, [it is impossible to reform from its inside], [however] this is not to say there was no change after the Beijing Games, everyone gradually gave more attention to other issues including the People's need, mass sport.

⁶⁴ The State Council's reform of institution in 1998 resulted in the restructure of the former SPCSC, a department of the Central government, into the GAS, a direct affiliated institution of the Central government.

Even though the interviewee acknowledges that the maintenance of Juguo Tizhi could be associated with the remaining need for elite sport performance, the Chinese elite sport system *per se* is explicitly identified as an obstacle, if not the obstacle, against potential change. It is interesting to note two terms or expressions employed by him, “weaken” and having a “revolution against himself”, respectively portraying the potential impact of elite sport reform on, and the nature of elite sport reform of, Juguo Tizhi. We would argue that the two terms construct a conflicting relationship between Juguo Tizhi and this expected reform, as we argued in the previous chapter. In order to provoke such a move that would be perceived as challenging the dominant position of Juguo Tizhi, the interviewee suggests a top-down approach that references the reform of institutions of the State Council in 1998. We would argue that this statement indirectly evidences the significance of the notion of “Sport Power” in the post-2008 era, which was indicated by the top leader of the PRC. However, as we have argued, the impact of this powerful discourse is influenced or directed by the interpretation placed upon it, especially by the official interpretation, i.e. that of the GAS.

In conclusion, it seems contradictory that we, on the one hand, argue that the Beijing Games significantly influenced Chinese sport, and its success in the 2008 Olympic Games, at least partially, produced the requirement of China becoming a ‘Sport Power’. On the other hand, we also claim that there is

limited tangible change in the development of the system and the operational mode of Juguo Tizhi. We would argue that this reflects a stratified diffusion of the impact of the Beijing Games and its effects at various levels in Chinese society. It is stratified in the sense that the Beijing Olympics' legacies are realised at different times in the discursive and operational domain, i.e. in the ways in which elite sport is understood (or is portrayed), and in the way in which elite sport is administered and operated, to "brew and ripen" in Chinese society. For example, while claiming the limited impact of the Beijing Games on Juguo Tizhi, many interviewees acknowledge changes in terms of the social cognition of Chinese elite sport, such as the increase of people's understanding of the sport.

In terms of the impact [of the Beijing Games on Chinese table tennis], there would be a positive side...I think it has increased the understanding of Chinese table tennis.

Interviewee Table Tennis 1

In terms of the further impact of the [Beijing] Olympics, in fact, I think it just makes more people understand it ... when I was [in my] diving [career], people used to say it is good because I could have a good husband, or I could be an Olympic champion and become rich

Interviewee Diving 7

This change in the cognition of Chinese elite sport, more precisely Zhuanye

sport, is also recognised in terms of the attitude towards Zhuanye sport and related elements. It is stated by *Interviewee General 1* and *Interviewee Diving 2* that:

Speaking from my perspective, there have been some changes in the role of Chinese elite sport in Chinese society... quietly taking place since the Beijing Games. This is to say that there has been a great increase in the attention people pay to commercial and professional sport rather than to the Olympics. Of course, I am not saying it exceeds the Olympics fever... [But] people's interest in the Olympics is decreasing ... it reflects that there are some quiet changes in people's selection.

Interviewee General 1

What is the aim of [promoting] the concept of 'Sport Power'...that was...indicated in the speeches of political leaders, after the Beijing Games? ... Actually, it is to deemphasise elite sport [in Chinese sport]... Of course, it has been four or five years, and is not easy to tell whether the goal is achieved... But, at least, the political leaders released a signal, implying that the direction of Chinese sport will return to mass sport, to the society ... which I think is very important.

Interviewee Diving 2

The two interviewees construct a similar decrease in the importance of Zhuanye sport recognised by the general public and China's political leaders. It is portrayed in the above quotations that these two groups exert their influence in relation to Zhuanye sport through different ways, i.e. the general public decreases its attention on Zhuanye sport and the political leaders

proactively “deemphasise elite sport” in Chinese society. It could be argued that the ways in which political leaders influence Chinese elite sport is more direct than the influence exerted by the general public, suggesting a close relationship between Chinese politics and Chinese elite sport. This is consistent with our previous argument concerning the political origin and significance of Chinese elite sport.

However, both interviewees directly or indirectly acknowledge the limited impact of this changed recognition of ZhuanYe sport, including the authoritative statement of ‘Sport Power’, on the operation of Chinese elite sport. This is consistent with our previous argument concerning the time gap between the impact of the Beijing Games on the discursive and practical domain. We would thus further argue that given this difference in the speed of reaction to the influence of the Beijing Games, the impact of the Beijing Games in Chinese elite sport discourse would have an additional (constructing or reproducing) effect on the influence of the 2008 Olympics over the practices of Chinese elite sport, especially its reform.

6.3. *Reform or resistance? The post-2008 development of three sports*

Consistent with the pre-2008 projection of Chinese elite sport reform in the post-2008 era and the emphasis on the comprehensive development of Chinese sport in the concept of 'Sport Power', Chinese sport reform, especially in terms of elite sport, was increasingly accentuated after the Beijing Games. In a way similar to that of the reforming discourse of the pre-2008 era, the conflicts between the planned-economy foundation of Juguo Tizhi and the market economy which had been established in Chinese society is recognised as the main factor contributing to the problems in Chinese sport. This claim is made in the sub-report concerning elite sport development in *the Research on Sport Power* that:

With the reform of the society and of the economy and the refinement of the Socialist Market Economy ... the increasing problems, deficiency and conflicts of Juguo Tizhi [with Chinese society] is the outcome of the inherent conflicts between its reliance on planned economy and ... the Socialist market economy.

L. Hu, 2010, p.51

Through acknowledging the conflicts between the base of Juguo Tizhi and the market economy, the author indirectly constructs a connection between Juguo Tizhi and the communist features of the regime. However, similar to the communist features of the reformed Chinese economy, such as the government's 'macro control' stressed by top leaders (Hu 2007; Jiang 1997; Xi

2014), we would argue that these conflicts do not inevitably lead to a termination of Juguo Tizhi in a socialist society with a market economy. In other words, just as there is a coexistence of the socialist character and market features of the reformed Chinese economy, a balance between the socialist-related elements, and the market-oriented direction, of Chinese elite sport is an essential feature of the post-2008 development of Chinese elite sport. Both features are recognised as necessary to Chinese elite sport. It is suggested by He and Xiong (2010, pp.11, 12) that:

Even though 'winning glory for the country' embraces the interests of the general public, [because] this kind of interest, on the one hand, depends on an abstract concept, i.e. 'the country'; and on the other hand, is limited within [the sphere of] spiritual needs, therefore this pure national and ideological interest will definitely [negatively] affect the interest of various stakeholders...[However, because] 'winning Olympic glory' is a public good that satisfies public needs, the State has to undertake the role of the major stakeholder (investor), while proactively seeking support from the society.

The authors interpret the relationship between the country and 'various stakeholders' involved in elite sport, especially Zhuanye sport, from the perspective of the interests and the role of the two parties. It is important to recognise that the interpretation is made with a precondition, that it is absolutely essential that Chinese elite sport should 'win Olympic glory', and this reflects an internalised knowledge of the 'political task' of Chinese elite sport. With such preconditions for Chinese elite sport, it could be argued that

the key to its reform is not replacing Juguo Tizhi with a reformed system, but achieving a balance between “the interests of general public” realised via Olympic success and “the interests of various stakeholders”, which is promoted in the reform. Even though this balance was broken in the pre-2008 era with the significance of success in the 2008 Games, it “became better after the Beijing Games” (*Interviewee General 1*). As we generally analysed in the previous section, the reform related content is considerably increased in the 2011 Summary, especially those passages concerning the essential part of Chinese elite sport, even though the importance of Juguo Tizhi is still maintained.

For example, besides the introduction of the notion of ‘Sport Power’ and related concepts, such as human-oriented development in the section on ‘guiding theory’, the most noticeable modifications of the statement of the 2011 Summary include the reinstatement of professional sport and the promotion of the reform of the administration system of Chinese elite sport. Both topics are not only briefly mentioned in the section on general strategy, *the guiding theory and principle*, but also specifically stated in the section on *the objectives of development and main tasks* paragraphs and on *[implementation] measure*.

As we previously argued, there is a remarkable increase in the content related

to the development of professional sport. It is noteworthy that the “integrated development between ZhuanYe sport and professional sport” is explicitly indicated for the first time since the first edition of the Olympic strategy published in 1994. Even though the ‘government’s direction’ and ‘performance enhancement’ are consistently emphasised in the statement related to professional sport, the introduction of the inclusive statement reflects a change in the government’s knowledge and attitude towards professional sport.

In terms of the reform of the administration system of Chinese elite sport, besides the rise in the sequence of points made in the section on *tasks*, related content is designated with a specific article in the section of *the objectives* and *the [implementation] measures*. Especially in the section on the *[implementation] measures*, the content concerning *deepening the reform*, which used to be combined with “maintaining and refining Juguo Tizhi” in the 2001 Summary, has become an independent article, the fifth article, that is described as “deepening reform, innovating the developing mode of elite sport”. It is stated

[We should] continue the institutional innovation, deepen the reform of the system and mechanism of elite sport...reinforce macro control; further change the role [of SADs], [further] separate administration and operation, [further] strengthen [the function of] supervision and public service ...; [in order to]

establish a [new] elite sport administration system that is mainly directed by the government and is able to fully utilise the enthusiasm of the society.

[We should] further deepen the elite sport administration system, gradually establish an administration system that fits global [rules] and the requirement of the Socialist market economy, reinforce the development of, and the administration system concerning, National Sport Associations ... improve the administrative effectiveness and ability and the level of scientific management of National Sport Administrations.

(GAS 2011b, p.1)

A number of reforming terms and concepts are included in the quoted policy statement, including the explicit indication of issues related to the role of Sport Associations in, and civil-society-based development of, Chinese elite sport. It could be argued that this addition of the reforming content in the above quotation implies a change, at least, in the discursive domain of Chinese elite sport. However, SADs' control is also continuously emphasised through indicating, for example, the need to "reinforce macro control", to provide "a [new] elite sport administration system that is mainly directed by the government"; or indirectly via the portrayal of the lack of competence of Sport Associations.

This maintenance of SADs' dominance is in line with its control over the tempo of the post-2008 development of Chinese elite sport, i.e. the general increase of reforming content in Chinese elite sport discourse and the

maintenance of Juguo Tizhi and of the notion of 'winning glory for the country'. Consistent with this general protection over Juguo Tizhi, five out of eight articles in the section of *measures* directly concern Juguo Tizhi with an additional one (Article 8) emphasising the importance of ideological edition to elite athletes. Such maintenance of Juguo Tizhi is also recognised in the 'non-official' interpretation of the Chinese elite sport in the post-2008 era, which is identified as "an elite sport [system] that is [continuously] directed towards 'winning glory for the country'" by He and Xiong (2010, p.12). They (He and Xiong, 2010, p.12) argue that 'winning glory for the country' had to be maintained after the Beijing Games, because

it is the precondition and foundation for elite sport to obtain resources from [Chinese] society in which the reform of economic system has not been completed, and the development of organisations in commercial and voluntary sector is inadequate.

Even though the authors associate resources from society with "elite sport" as a whole, given the isolation of Zhuanye sport from the market and the resources that stakeholders in civil society invest in professional sport, it could be argued that it is Zhuanye sport that relies on 'winning glory for the country' to obtain resources. In other words, this account interprets the importance of 'winning glory' for Zhuanye sport. Similar to a pre-2008 Chinese elite sport discourse, the inadequate involvement of Chinese society with elite sport, which would incorporate the civil-society-development of

Chinese elite sport, is employed as a causal factor in this pro-Juguo Tizhi move. However, we would argue that both elements, i.e. the necessity and significance of 'winning glory' and the inadequate development of Chinese civil society in sport, in the post-2008 era are different from what was the case before the Beijing Games.

In terms of discourse concerning the two elements, changes in Chinese elite sport discourse are not only evidenced in the increasing pro-reform account in official documents and social consensus, but also in the statement related to the decreased attention paid to Olympics. *Interviewee Table Tennis 6*, for example, states that:

There is less attention paid [to Chinese elite sport]. Because...China became No.1 [in Beijing]... After 2012, we feel that there will not be more suspense [in the Olympics]... that's it.

Even though the 'political task' of Chinese elite sport is still stressed in official documents, the account by *Interviewee Table Tennis 6* reflects a decrease in Chinese Olympic fever, which, as we previously argued, was a condition reducing the importance of Juguo Tizhi in Chinese elite sport. In addition, elite sport performance is not only insufficient to fulfil the expectation, or to catch the attention of Chinese society, as indicated in the above quotation; but also is officially recognised as inadequate to fully 'accomplish' its new 'political task', i.e. 'becoming a Sport Power'. Thus, as we previously analysed,

a change in discursive domain is evidenced in the post-2008 era.

On the other hand, the practical implication of such general discourse change on the development, especially the reform, of Chinese elite sport in the post-2008 era, is investigated in this section through examining three 'niche markets' of Chinese elite sport reform. Even though the focus remains on discourses in the three sports, we would argue that the changes in the discourse at micro level of Chinese elite sport reflects the impact of the changed general discourse on power relationships in Chinese elite sport. In other words, the discourse in the three sports would be our weathervane at the top of the complex construction of Chinese elite sport.

6.3.1 Baseball: a case of 'compelled civil-society-based development'

Chinese baseball is a marginal sport in the power hierarchy of ZhuanYe sport system. It is governed by the baseball office of the Administration Centre for Handball, Hockey, Baseball and Softball, which is also known as the Chinese Baseball Association (hereafter, the CBA). There are only a handful provincial elite baseball teams competing in the Chinese Baseball League (hereafter, the CBL) and the National Games. The CBL was terminated in 2012 due to insufficient funding. There have also been serious concerns about its place in

the National Games, even though this non-Olympic sport will at least be maintained in these Games (the domestic equivalent of the Olympics) until 2017⁶⁵.

In contrast to the dim future in the Zhuanye sport system, organisations in the commercial and voluntary sectors⁶⁶ have become increasingly active in the post-2008 era. For example, Major League Baseball (hereafter, the MLB) restarted its promotion campaign for baseball around China with the new CEO of its China office, who replaced his predecessor after quitting his former job as the senior manager of Olympic sponsorship affairs in Lenovo in

⁶⁵ Baseball and softball were maintained in the 12th National Games in 2013, because of a) the possibility of returning to the Olympics (*Interviewee Baseball 12*); and b) it was easy for the host province, Liao Ning, to earn points, as the host cut the number of participants at the final stage from eight to six (Liao Ning eventually finished at six and earned 12 points, which was 4-points more than it would have won if ranked eighth) (*Interviewee Baseball 3*).

It is also in the schedule of the 13th National Games in 2017, as the host city, Tianjin, is dominant in baseball. However, Guangdong (Canton) province has eliminated the sport from its Provincial Games (the equivalent of the National Games at provincial level, participants in which are mostly youth players) since 2011, 6 years earlier than its potential final curtain call in the National Games. This move is interpreted as an official termination of youth development of Guangdong and a sceptical projection of the future of this sport in the Zhuanye sport system (*Interviewee Baseball 3 and 12*).

⁶⁶ The CBA is not considered a voluntary sector organisation here, because it has another identity as the Administration Department

November 2008. A grass-root league was started, the national final of which consisted of teams qualified from group matches in a number of provinces. However, the increasing resources invested in, and the cumulative attention paid to, baseball from the commercial and voluntary sectors have limited relation to, and interest in, Zhuanye baseball, which was the focus of the CBA.

In spite of the differences in their respective foci in Chinese baseball, all interviewees (directly or indirectly) recognise that winning the Olympic bid had more impact on Chinese baseball than had the Games *per se*. The interpretation of the impact was mainly from the perspective of Zhuanye baseball, emphasising the increased benefits and media coverage before the Games. *Interviewee Baseball 1*, for example, a senior baseball official, recalled that:

Before 2001...there had not been a platform for a national team for Chinese baseball ... Elite athletes of the [Olympic] sports in which China is dominant, such as table tennis, diving... have [always] been accommodated in the Training Bureau of the GAS. They have a dorm, dining hall, etc [in the GAS]; [by contrast] we didn't have a position [of a permanently established national team in the GAS], which was then gradually provided to us after [winning] the bid.

Terms, such as “2001” and “the bid”, explicitly indicate the time at which changes took place. Besides the quoted material, the interviewee also provided more evidence to demonstrate the differences in the benefits

provided to Chinese baseball before and after 2001, which is attributed as an outcome of winning the bid. We would, however, argue that it is important to recognise this improvement as the outcome of the changes of the identity of Zhuanye baseball from a *potential* Olympic sport to a sport that would form part of the Olympic programme. This is to say that the change in the circumstances, in which Chinese baseball would compete, altered the significance of what had been a marginal sport in Chinese elite sport, and thus enhanced the benefits provided via Juguo Tizhi.

This knowledge of the significance of Olympic identity to Zhuanye baseball provides us a stable perspective to interpret the post-2008 development of Chinese baseball, which has been heavily influenced by the termination of its place in the Olympic programme and by the subsequent decrease of the importance of baseball in the Zhuanye sport system. Two Interviewees within the Zhuanye system, *Baseball 10* (a key player in the 2008 team) and *Baseball 9* (a coach at the basic level of the three-level training framework) commented that:

The Olympics is significant ... athletes and coaches of Olympic sports are like the GAS's own flesh and blood, but we ... ~.

Interviewee Baseball 10

Even though I could not reach the final stage of the Olympic competition, ... [as long as it is an Olympic sport, the GAS] would not reduce or cancel the sport's funding or let it run its own course, because it is Zhuanye baseball ... in line with the USSR approach. It is same for the whole [Zhuanye sport] system.

Interviewee Baseball 9

In a manner similar to *Interviewee Baseball 1*, the Chinese Olympian also makes a comparison the benchmark of which, however, changes from “Olympic sports” rather than “the [Olympic] sports in which China is dominant”. It could be argued that this change in the ‘standard’ indirectly reflects a change in the identity of Zhuanye baseball, from that of “GAS’s own flesh and blood” to “orphans”, after its removal from the Olympic roster. This linkage between Zhuanye sport and the Olympics is also evidenced in the quotation from *Interviewee Baseball 9*. His emphasis on the character of ‘Zhuanye’ sport and system is noteworthy. We would argue that through deemphasising the significance of participating in the Olympics, and stressing the identity of Chinese baseball as a ‘Zhuanye’ sport, the interviewee indirectly demonstrates his support for maintaining government funding.

Without providing the exact amount of funding, *Interviewee Baseball 1*, nonetheless, states that the CBA would be delighted if the GAS would provide 25% of the amount of the annual funding provided from 2001 to 2008.

It is also acknowledged that the annual income of the CBA at the time of

interview could barely cover a two-week overseas training camp for the national squad. Thus the CBA, which relied on the resource from Juguo Tizhi, was forced to shift its operational pattern to expand its source of finance.

Interviewee Baseball 1 indicates that

We are not in the era of Norman Bethune⁶⁷, in which resources are provided [to you] for free...For a [sport] association, it doesn't work if it only focuses on Zhuanyue teams or on whether or not it could participate in the Olympics; especially [for baseball] ... a non-Olympic sport. [We] have to find some option, at least for survival ... The only way out is [establishing] a chain [with] not only Zhuanyue, but also amateur baseball including [involvement from] civil society and the education sector ... Merely focusing on one area is not sustainable.

Similar to the mentioning of 'the USSR' in the quotation from *Interviewee Baseball 9*, another term with strong communist connotation in the PRC context, i.e. "Norman Bethune", is employed in the quoted material. Through associating the termination with the communist era and its non-Olympic identity, the interviewee indirectly frames a linkage in the above quotation

⁶⁷ Henry Norman Bethune, a Canadian physician who is best known in the PRC for his service to the Chinese communist military force in the second Sino-Japanese war (the Asian part of the WWII). He was a member of the Communist Party of Canada. After refusing the invitation from Chiang Kai Shek, he went to Yan'an to join Mao Zedong's communist side. He died in 1939 of septicemia, which he contracted through a finger cut in an operation. Mao wrote a famous article *In Memory of Norman Bethune* (Mao 1939), in which he was portrayed as a devoted, kind-hearted internationalist without any thought of himself.

between the political features of the Zhuanye sport system, the Olympic identity of the sport, and the support provided via Juguo Tizhi. This relationship could be characterised as Olympic sport being supported by the socialist-based Zhuanye sport via Juguo Tizhi.

Hence, due to the change in its Olympic identity, Chinese baseball has to expand its focus from Zhuanye baseball to establishing a relationship with civil society for its “survival”. The Interviewee also admits, “those civil-society-based ways [of development] were all implemented after the ‘de-Olympic-isation’”. However, we would argue from another perspective that such ‘relegation’ of Chinese baseball in the power hierarchy of the Zhuanye sport system, to a degree, has promoted the civil-society-based development of this sport in the post-2008 era, for example, in terms of the attention paid by the CBA to this domain. This is in line with *Interviewee Baseball 12’s* comment on the relationship between the Olympics and the domestic development of Chinese baseball. He indicates that

[At present], with a step backwards, everyone could, nonetheless, gain a better understanding of...the rule of [the development of] this sport... [which] is to let more people participate. In fact, ... if it had been maintained in the Olympics, I think Chinese baseball would have found it difficult to flourish ... I am wondering what would happen if there were no Zhuanye, or even national, team of baseball? I think the obstacle confronted by Chinese baseball [in terms of its development] is not at this [elite] level, but is how to make the Chinese nation... accept the sport.

Both *Interviewee Baseball 1* and *12* argue that the promotion of the Olympics-focused Zhuanye sport on its own is not enough to achieve strong development of the sport; or, as *Interviewee Baseball 12* expresses it, is not even necessary. We would further argue that even though they all associate the development of baseball with civil society rather than government, the two interviewees constructs different goals of such civil-society-based development. These divergent goals are in line with the two interviewees' respective relationships with, and interests in, the Zhuanye sport system. This is to say that while *Interviewee Baseball 12*, a sports correspondent who subsequently started an after-school baseball club, advocates a bottom-up approach to development and deemphasises elite level baseball; *Interviewee Baseball 1* employs "survival" to portray the critical situation confronting Chinese baseball, or more precisely confronting Zhuanye baseball, despite the increasing level of activity of actors from the private and voluntary sectors.

Thus, the involvement of civil society has become gradually more important to the CBA in the post-2008 era. This is partly related to the CBA's reliance on resources from non-state sources. However it is also well recognised that civil society had become a crucial source of political kudos for the CBA. This increasing involvement of sporting civil society not only provided more resource and opportunity for the CBA to 'survive', but also influenced the dominance of the department of the GAS in baseball.

Interpreting the CBA's cooperation with the MLB and Score Sport (the organiser of the amateur league), *Interviewee Baseball 1* states:

I think [we] have to appreciate them. ... Even though there are some conflicts in our cooperation with the MLB ... we are able to communicate with each other, thus the cooperation has worked pretty well. After all, they are helping us, in spite of different goals... if we merely focus on our own, there won't be any great achievement in Chinese baseball with the CBA ourselves. Thus, we have cooperation, communication and coordination with them, and [attempt to] expand the cooperation through continuous communication.

[Score Sport] attempted to work together with us [for the amateur league] in 2011, [a request that] we did not approve... they listed the CBA as one of the consultants, but this transferred all responsibility to us in the event of accidents... they apologised to us, and we told [them] you may finish this first, and we will work together later.

We would argue that the different terms employed by the interviewee in relation to the interaction between the CBA and the two partners constructs the different relationship between the authority of Chinese baseball and the two organisations in sporting civil society. In terms of its interaction with the MLB, *Interviewee Baseball* repeatedly employs the term "communication", which implies a more equal relationship between the two parties in the post-2008 era. By contrast, the interaction between the CBA and Score Sport is portrayed with terms implying a more hierarchical relationship, as the latter's activities had to be "approved" by the CBA, and there was a need to "apologise" for its behaviour to the CBA, and was subsequently "told" by the

CBA that it may provide authorisation for appropriate practice in future.

It could be argued that the CBA's different attitude, on the one hand, is affected by the differences of the resource and capability of the other party in the cooperation. As the dominant power in the baseball world, the MLB has met all expenses for the annual overseas training camp of the baseball national team, which is more than the annual income of the CBA. This is portrayed as the CBA's strategy of "'borrowing another person's hen to lay an egg for us', ... since we cannot do it [ourselves] at the moment" (*Interviewee Baseball 1*). However, Score Sport is only "a small non-governmental group ... has beautiful plans which are difficult to achieve" (*Interviewee Baseball 1*).

On the other hand, the different attitude of the CBA to the two organisations is also a consequence of the different areas to which these two organisations contribute. Even though the importance of development in civil society, such as school and amateur baseball, has been increasingly emphasised (*Interviewee Baseball 2 and 10*), it is explicitly indicated that the CBA "has never given up [at least] developing the national team" and expects to regain its 'Olympic identity' (*Interviewee Baseball 1 and 4*). We would argue that given this consistent attitude of the CBA to the national team, since Score Sport focuses on an area that makes it "very difficult to have influence on Zhuanye baseball" (*Interviewee Baseball 10*), it has less to negotiate with, and thus less influence on

the CBA than the MLB, whose involvement with Zhuanye sport not only includes supporting the overseas training camp but also establishing two Development Centres (hereafter the DCs) for young baseball players.

Thus, even though the MLB is negatively perceived at provincial or basic level of Zhuanye baseball, for example, the DCs are blamed for “stealing” young talent from other sport schools (Interviewee Baseball 9) and are “looked down on by everybody” (Interviewee Baseball 3), it is ‘dialectically’ interpreted by *Interviewee Baseball 1* that:

However, I think we must pick up the main trends [which are positive] instead of the negative points made by others, which is the way to refine our cooperation... The CBA can't develop the sport solely on its own ...It is impossible for any sport to be powerful, if its development only relies on one group of people or on one association.

A statement by *Interviewee Baseball 4*, a junior member of staff at provincial level, provides a clear portrait of this complex relationship between the MLB and Zhuanye baseball and the different attitudes towards it at different levels of Zhuanye baseball:

The [MLB] is in an awkward situation... is isolated from the development of [Zhuanye] baseball in the country... Everyone feels that you are rich, have a lot of resources, which I can take away from you. [I] feel they are viewed as an ATM machine... few people see them as partners for development...

This isolating stance of the MLB, on the one hand, could be seen as an

outcome of its sole cooperation with Zhuanye baseball at the national team level and of DCs' conflicts with other sport schools. On the other hand, this arm's-length relationship is also portrayed by *Interviewee Baseball 5*, a senior manager of MLB China, as a projected by-product of the strategic plan of its cooperation with the CBA. He elaborates on this point:

[Gathering as many fans as possible] is the ultimate benchmark of our work in the promotion campaign, as [those fans] could continuously consume baseball, otherwise how could [we] sell the product? ... Thus, I don't care so much about the serious fans and Zhuanye baseball, who love and are involved with the sport anyway, as I do to the new fans ... I have been 'criticised' or 'sneered' at by those from Zhuanye system, which makes me feel happy and that I am correct.

According to the quotation, the neglect of Zhuanye baseball is portrayed as a proactive choice of the MLB China based on its marketing strategy, which is in line with its commercial interests. In a manner consistent with the previous statement of *Interviewee Baseball 4* concerning the relationship between MLB China and Zhuanye baseball, *Interviewee baseball 5* also acknowledges the distant, if not conflicting, relationship through portraying his reaction to the "criticism" and "sneering" of the Zhuanye system.

Even though the MLB is isolated by stakeholders at the practical and provincial level of Zhuanye baseball, the MLB's influence at the top level of the CBA and of Zhuanye baseball and its commercial interests, which are

mainly gained from non-government sources, are hardly affected. We would argue that such 'immunity' from the influence of the Zhuanye sport system, on the one hand, is an outcome of the reliance of the CBA, especially at the top level, on the support of the MLB, which has grown remarkably since baseball lost its 'Olympic status'. The influence of this change of the CBA's identity is also emphasised by *Interviewee Baseball 5*.

The government [the CBA] had embraced all of the benefits, drawn money from the market but had not paid back to the market [before 2008]...[the CBA] remains [a department in the] government sometimes, and a [sport] association [at other times]. ... It thus did care much about market... [until] the privileges of the CBA disappeared, without the Olympic [identity] ... It was pushed towards civil society, as the current [Zhuanye] system and mechanisms were not able to support the baseball personnel in the government. This, however, gives a new opportunity for the sport.

Active and passive voices are respectively associated with the CBA before and after the Beijing Games. For example, the CBA "embraced...benefits, [and had] drawn money" before 2008, and "was pushed towards civil society" after the Games. It could be argued that this different tone constructs a change in the CBA's relationship with civil society, especially with the market. Even though the interviewee recognises that the CBA maintains its character of 'one group with two banners', he also acknowledges the decline in the CBA's "privilege" along with its increasing reliance on civil society due to the decrease in the resource it controls, which accompanied the change of its

identity in the Zhuanye system. This is in line with its low-profile attitude in the cooperation with the MLB. In addition, it is worth noting that the traditional hierarchical administration system of Zhuanye sport also limits the 'bottom-up' influence of the negative attitude of personnel at provincial level, who also seek resources from the [MLB]"ATM machine" (*Interviewee Baseball 4*).

On the other hand, the 'resistance' of the MLB could also be regarded as an outcome of its knowledge of, and obedience to, the character of Chinese elite sport and of Chinese society. This is to say that thanks to the stability of the structure of Chinese elite sport, at least when the data were collected, the CBA still held the important position, as the Administration Department, in Chinese baseball. This is also recognised and highly respected by the MLB China. It is stated that:

[When we started] the cooperation, what the Centre worried about ... was whether we would take [everything from] the market and get them fired. I told them ... neither you nor I were able to [develop Chinese baseball] alone; I would help you to develop it, what I asked was only a share of it... [you have to let the CBA know that] it is the master [in Chinese baseball], and it is the government, which means it will always be the master.

The reform should not fully reject the current system ... We hence cooperate with the CBA if we can, and do it by ourselves if we cannot ...

Cooperation ... [means a] 50/50 [investment], I could pay 100%, if you don't have the money, but you also need to invest [in other ways], which is the core

of cooperation. What does the CBA have? It represents the government, ... [which] is its value [and the reason why we cooperate with the CBA]... Since [those in the Zhuanye system] cannot [develop baseball in society], I have to do it, and let those who make decisions see it. There are no ways of attracting them to cooperate other than: firstly, offering them the political kudos; secondly, making money for them...

Interviewee Baseball 5

Even though the MLB has gained considerable influence in Chinese baseball, the interviewee's portrait of the 'right way' of obtaining this influence reflects MLB China's knowledge of, and the attitude towards, the structure of Chinese elite sport in the post-2008 era. This is different from the approach of the former CEO, a Chinese-speaking American who is viewed as, "having no respect for local features" (*Interviewee Baseball 1*) and "thinking their [the former CEO and the MLB] ways are the best" (*Interviewee Baseball 2*).

In this interpretation of the concerns of the authority in the first quotation, the "Centre", rather than the CBA or the baseball office, is identified as the counterpart negotiating with the MLB China to gain its cooperation. We would argue that this account indirectly reflects the essence of the power structure of Zhuanye baseball, or even of Zhuanye sport. In other words, it identifies the more important identity of the 'two banners' that are used by the one group of people, i.e. the CBA. The interviewee further identifies the two aspects that the Centre valued: a) its position in the Chinese elite sport

system, b) the market and resources this could provide for baseball. In both quotations, the interviewee employs a number of terms that are in line with the interests of the CBA, such as “help you develop”, “forever be the master”, “offering political kudos”, etc., conveying the MLB’s respect and potential contribution to the dominance of the authority and the financial benefit the MLB could contribute.

Besides its obedience to the structure of Zhuanye baseball, the autonomy of the MLB China is also acknowledged through suggesting its capacity, for example, to accomplish its goal without the CBA’s cooperation and of demanding the authority’s “investment in other ways” with its advantage in resource. However, it is worth noting that these ‘capabilities’ and the MLB China’s autonomy also benefited from the MLB’s understanding of the character of the structure of Chinese sport. For example, even the personnel from the Zhuanye system regarded the MLB China’s cooperation with the education sector for youth development as a right move that is in line with its commercial purpose, because “there are hardly any students in the Zhuanye system, ...more and more parents send their kids to have fun rather than join the Zhuanye system (*Interviewee Baseball 3*).

In summary, as a marginal activity, or a weak link, in the chain of Zhuanye sport, Zhuanye baseball and its authority have seen their position drift further

away in the hierarchy of Chinese elite sport. Even though this change took place after the Beijing Games, it is seldom interpreted as an outcome of the Games but rather seen as an outcome of the decision that the IOC made in 2005 to exclude baseball from the programme of the Olympic Games.

Along with its increasing resource dependence on civil society sources, the CBA has made concessions in its cooperation with the stakeholders from civil society, which has had an impact on the power structure of Chinese baseball. Considering the scenario of the MLB's influence in the post-2008 era, it could be argued that it not only affects the practices at the lower level of Zhuanye baseball through its strategic deployment, but also shapes the agenda at the top level of the CBA in terms of dealing with potential conflicts between the CBA and MLB. To a certain degree, the MLB's commercial approach is perceived by the Zhuanye baseball system as an appropriate direction in which to move that would be in line with its commercial interests.

However, it is worth emphasising that in spite of the increasing power of the MLB, the CBA maintains its significant, if not dominant, role in Chinese baseball. This is both acknowledged by *Interviewee Baseball 5*, and evidenced in the CBA's dominance over Score Sport which is regarded as less beneficial to the SAD's ultimate goal, i.e. winning international competitions. In other words, it could be argued that the CBA's acceptance of its loss of power is

driven by its ultimate goal, which is consistent with the theme of Zhuanye sport, i.e. winning glory for the country.

Following *Interviewee Baseball 5's* statement concerning the identity of the CBA as “the government”, we would argue that this maintained dominance of the CBA is closely associated with its identity as the Administration Department, which is rooted in the government dominated structure of Chinese elite sport. This is to say that even though the power of the CBA was decreasing, if Sport Associations remains a ‘banner’ of SADs, the civil-society-based development of baseball would remain under the shadow of the government-run Juguo Tizhi.

6.3.2 Table tennis: a case of ‘lagging professionalisation’

Even though table tennis is, surprisingly, not the sport in which China has won most medals in the Olympics⁶⁸, it is recognised as the national sport and as one of the core symbols of Chinese elite sport. The introduction of professionalisation to table tennis began in 1995, when the ‘Clubs League’ was started. Former Zhuanye provincial teams were identified as ‘clubs’ with

⁶⁸ Diving provides the most Olympic gold medals, 33, and the second most Olympic medals in total, 59 for the PRC. Table tennis ranks three in the table with 24 Olympic gold medals and 47 in total, following gymnastics with 29 and 68 respectively.

the name of respective sponsors in their title and participated in this league. In 1998, it was renamed as 'Jia Ji' league, following the naming pattern of the professional football and basketball league, both of which were named as 'Jia A' leagues⁶⁹. In 1999, it was transformed into the Chinese Table Tennis Super League (hereafter, the CTTSL). However, the member clubs of the CTTSL, which still belonged to provincial SADs, were identified as Zhuanye teams as they were (Lan 2008)

Given table tennis has been an important contributor to China's Olympic success, the progress of the professionalisation of Chinese table tennis, especially the development of the CTTSL was "slow and cautious" (*Interviewee Table Tennis 2*). The influence of the Olympic strategy and Zhuanye sport system have resulted in a number of long-lasting problems in in the CTTSL, such as an unstable timetable (being required to make way for not only the Olympics but also other international events, such as World cup and World championships), ambiguous identity of players (clubs did not own, but lease players, who are staff of Zhuanye teams), scarce support from the Zhuanye system (the result in CTTSL bears little relation with the points in National Games), etc. (Sun 2014, *Interviewee Table Tennis 5*).

⁶⁹ "Jia" means first in Chinese. "Jia Ji league" is the Chinese equivalent of the top league.

It is commonly admitted by interviewees that there had been little change in the general development of Chinese table tennis. However, the interpretation of this 'general' development is often actually made from the perspective of elite sport performance and of the development of Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye sport. For example, *Interviewee Table Tennis 4*, a senior coach of the national squad, indicates, "there has been nothing special [in Chinese table tennis] after 2008 ... since we have been so dominant around the world". This perspective is consistent with *Interviewee Table Tennis 8's* portrayal of the operational pattern of Chinese table tennis, in which he states:

They only think that the mission for this four-year is finished, [so we need to] consider the next four years. Even though they always claim to implement innovation and to be open minded... I think they are basically going in the same direction.

The combination of the claim of 'innovation' and maintenance of Juguo Tizhi in practice is portrayed by the interviewee as a character of the development of Chinese table tennis in the reforming era. Such a narrative is also explicitly evidenced in the top Chinese table tennis official's report in a series of books, entitled *60 Years of New China's Sport*, which is edited by the GAS and published by the People's Press⁷⁰. The director of the Centre of Table Tennis

⁷⁰ The People's press, initially established by the CPC in 1921 in Shanghai, is "an important press of political books of the Party and the country" (People's Press 2002). Mao Zedong's handwriting of the name of the press is used as the symbol of People's press.

and Badminton (hereafter, the CTTB) positively states “the success in the Beijing Games exemplifies that significant achievement has been accomplished in the innovation of the sport of Chinese table tennis” (F. Liu 2009, p.349).

Particularly indicating “the sport of Chinese table tennis”, the top table tennis official frames the perspective of his report precisely on the development of elite performance. We would argue that this narrative, on the one hand, exemplifies *Interviewee Table Tennis 8’s* account concerning the ‘internal’ perspective of Chinese table tennis. On the other hand, through associating the exceptional performance in 2008 with the notion of “innovation”, the top official in Chinese table tennis subtly clothes the foundation of such achievement, Juguo Tizhi in a reforming rhetoric, which would maintain the current Zhuanye sport system in the post-2008 era. In other words, we would argue that the interpretation of the impact of the Beijing Games, at least those supporting Zhuanye sport, not only reflects the stability of Zhuanye table tennis after the 2008 Olympics, but also reproduces, or reinforces, the dominant part of Chinese table tennis, and thus further limits the promoting effect of the impact of Beijing Games on the reform of Chinese elite sport.

In terms of the reforming narratives in the post-2008 era, even though, as we previously argued, the termination of the Beijing Games is portrayed as a

trigger of reform, the limited impact of the Beijing Games is also recognised. Two 'reformist' officials, *Interviewee Table Tennis 1* and *2*, for example, respectively state that:

In terms of elite sport performance, Chinese table tennis clinched its place at the summit, which made us rethink how [Chinese table tennis] should be [further] developed...2008 is a new start for administrators like us...it is [also] an important signal for the comprehensive or multi-directional development [of the sport]... [because] firstly, it was the summit of [Chinese Olympic sport]; secondly, along with the reform of Chinese sport, Chinese people require not only elite sport achievement, but also the comprehensive development of Chinese table tennis.

Interviewee Table Tennis 1

It was publicly discussed that [since] the 2008 Olympic Games were very successful, [the Olympic mission was achieved] ... sport departments were going to reform...This is the external [element], such a topic was hot for a while, but there was no subsequent institutional reform.... [This is because] it was still supported by government funding, thus had less of a requirement to be self-sufficient, [the reform for] civil-society-based development became less urgent.

Interviewee Table Tennis 2

In the first quotation, through associating '2008' with "new start" and with terms that imply elite sport performance, the interviewee portrays the Beijing Games as a watershed dividing two eras with respective 'themes', i.e. the performance-focusing pre-2008 era, and the "comprehensive"

development-emphasising post-2008 era. It is worth noting that this new start is closely associated with the identity of “administrators”, which suggest a top-down trend in these changes; and is linked with terms, such as “rethink” and “signal”, implying that the change began at strategic rather than operational level.

Essential moves in the operation of CTTSL had not taken place until another four-year cycle finished in 2012. This delayed diffusion of the impact of the Beijing Games at practice level as associated by *Interviewee Table Tennis 2* with the continuous support provided by government. In the second quotation, the direction of post-2008 development of Chinese table tennis is portrayed as an indicator of the influence of the interaction between the external and internal elements of the Zhuanye system. The interviewee directly identifies the external pressure in the post-2008 era. However, through associating this pro-reform element with terms, such as “discussed”, “topic” and “requirement”, he indirectly suggests that this external pressure is merely in the discursive domain, which is in line with the first quotation concerning the post-2008 change in the internal discourse. In contrast, *Interviewee Table Tennis 2* indirectly portrays government support, a defining feature of Zhuanye sport, as an element, to a degree, being able to constrain the impact of external pressure at discursive level and thus maintain the dominance of Juguo Tizhi at operational level. We would argue that the internal element, government

funding, greatly influenced (supported) the power of Zhuanye system in its interaction with civil society. This, on the one hand, is in line with *Interviewee Diving 2's* argument of the necessity of a top-down pressure from the central government for reforming the Zhuanye system; on the other hand, further exemplifies the stable and overwhelming influence of government in Zhuanye sport.

This hierarchical dominance of Chinese elite sport in general by the central government is extended to the development of professional sport, and is portrayed as a defining feature of Chinese professional sport in the official interpretation of the concept of 'Sport Power'. It is stated that:

Chinese professional sport...is transferred from Zhuanye teams...[and] is 'government promoted and directed' (or policy promoted and directed) ... Professional sport ... [orthodoxly] aims to maximise its profit... [and thus] conflicts with the planned-economy feature of Juguo Tizhi. These conflicts result in [problems in Chinese elite sport, such as]: the multiple natures of professional clubs, the ambiguous property rights of the clubs, [professional] leagues are constrained by the gold medal strategy. [To solve] this [dilemma] we need to maintain Juguo Tizhi, and create a new mechanism, promoting the healthy development of professional sports which have different interests [from Juguo Tizhi].

L. Hu, 2010, p. 53

In the above quotation, the author normalises the government's dominance of Chinese professional sport, which is "government promoted and directed"

professional sport. Given the nature of Juguo Tizhi, it could be argued that this official account subtly acknowledges the government's overwhelming influence on both sides of the conflict, i.e. the socialist government's promotion of Zhuanye sport, and professional sport's pursuit of profit. Thus, through stressing the necessity of maintaining Juguo Tizhi, the author indirectly identifies professional sport as a target of moves to solve the dilemma of introducing professional elements into Zhuanye sport. This is then described as making Chinese professional sport "healthy". On the other side of the coin, Juguo Tizhi, is protected in this conflict of socialist and market values; and its goal, winning glory for the country, has been maintained as a 'healthy practice' of professional sport. Given the complementarity of the goal of Juguo Tizhi and the political interests related to elite sport performance, it could be argued that this emphasis on 'healthy practice' is in line with the government's interests.

This practice, which promotes political interests, is accentuated in the post-2008 official discourse, such as "organising [professional] leagues, we have to ensure that the core aim of winning glory for the country is unaffected" (Liu, 2009). In the case of the CTTSL, we could argue that the emphasis on 'healthy' practices reflects the knowledge of the dominance of Zhuanye table tennis, which is internalised by stakeholders as the only professionalised sport in which China is dominant.

The CTTSL was projected to become the equivalent of the NBA in table tennis by Cai Zhenhua⁷¹ in 2005 (Shi et al. 2009). After being ‘suppressed’ during the preparation for the Beijing Games, the CTTSL also “missed its best opportunity” of reform in 2009 after Chinese Table Tennis clinched its best performance in the 2008 Olympics (*Interviewee Table Tennis 2*). After another 4-year cycle, the most significant move in the history of the CTTSL, i.e. ceding to clubs the ownership of table tennis players⁷², was finally made following the London Olympics (Wang 2013; Wu 2012). This move, delayed until after the 2012 Games, is regarded as an outcome of policy makers’ concerns

⁷¹ Cai Zhenhua, was a former Chinese national table tennis team player and current deputy Minister of Sport. Before being promoted to his current post in 2007, Cai, with 13 years experience of coaching the national squad, was nominated as the director of the CTTB in 2004. The 53-year-old, the youngest deputy Minister of Sport, was selected as the Chair of the Chinese Table Tennis Association, Chinese Football Association and Chinese Badminton Association in a 8-day time span in 2014 (17 – 24 January) (Fei 2014; Cai 2014).

⁷² Before 2012, most clubs did not own but leased players from provincial Zhuanye teams for a two-year period, after which the athletes would return to their Zhuanye team and be ‘auctioned’ by the Zhuanye team to CTTSL clubs. According to the new policy in 2012, all players in the CTTSL should sign a 4-year contract with their clubs. After the termination of this contract, if a player signed a contract with any team other than his/her former club, the former club would be paid a transfer fee by the new ‘owner’ of the athletes rather than return the player to his/her Zhuanye team for nothing. In addition, the new policy is only effective in the CTTSL, players continue to play for their Zhuanye provincial team in the National Game and National Championship system (Wang 2013; Wu 2012).

relating to the interests of the Juguo Tizhi system. Interviewee Table Tennis 1, for example, states that:

Frankly, the greatest difficulty [in the reform] is to find a balance [between the CTTSL and Juguo Tizhi] in this 'dual-track system'. It is very difficult; especially when [we] need Juguo Tizhi to sacrifice [its interests], because we also worry about whether the marketization is so fast that it may hinder the interests of Juguo Tizhi...[we] always worry about what we should do if there is no balance [in relation to these issues].

Through associating the interests of Juguo Tizhi with terms, such as “sacrifice” and “hinder”, the interviewee indirectly portrays the hesitation in the development of the CTTSL as a consequence of concerns about potential harm to the interests of Juguo Tizhi (whether it be proactively ‘sacrificed’ or simply passively ‘hindered’). This suggests that even though he argues for a ‘balanced development’, it is the interests of Juguo Tizhi that are essentially emphasised. This is in line with his subsequent indication of the principle of developing the CTTSL, which is that “the CTTSL should never make trouble” for Juguo Tizhi. In other words, it could be argued that the realisation, or prioritisation, of the interests of Juguo Tizhi is recognised and portrayed as a precondition of, or a context for, the development of the CTTSL.

In addition, it is worth noting the repeated linkage between ‘us’, ‘our’ and Juguo Tizhi. It could be argued that these terms not only convey the internal identity of the interviewee, but also the relationship between the CTTSL and

the Zhuanye system. More explicitly, he also acknowledges that the nature of the CTTSL is still an element “ complementary to the traditional competition system...despite the [financial] value that it shows is growing”. This internalised understanding of the nature of CTTSL is not only reflected in the general portrait of the professional league, but also reproduced at the level of clubs and professional players, which, we would argue, is an outcome of the self-construction of their identities. *Interviewee Table Tennis 5*, a manager of a CTTSL club, complains:

[After the Beijing Games,] putting us, the provincial team, aside, I think the GAS and the CTTB should operate in a market-oriented way ... The CTTSL... is exhausting [for us] ... [because] we have to win gold medals [in the National Games], and play in the CTTSL [at the same time].

[Only through combining] the government’s direction, market-oriented operation, and civil society’s involvement, will the CTTSL be able to survive. ... The CTTSL... cannot be successful without governments [working] as directors... Governments should provide the funding to run the clubs; however, we are striving to look for sponsorships... there has not been a penny from our [Administration Department of] table tennis.

Straightforwardly, even though the interviewee urges market-oriented development in the post-2008 era, he also supports direction by the GAS and implies funding from the government for his ‘professional’ clubs. We would argue that this emphasis on the government’s involvement in the ‘professional league’ is consistent with the terms that the interviewee employs in relation to different organisations. This is to say the continuous reference to

the notion “the GAS”, “CTTB” and “the government” indirectly constructs the nature of the dominant stakeholders’ involvement with the CTTSL as institutions in Zhuanye sport. Even the club that the interviewee manages is recognised as a “provincial team”, which has its core mission in the National Games. We would argue that this self-recognition of the nature of the ‘professional club’ reflects the dependence of the ‘professional club’ on government resources. This also is in line with his requirement of government involvement and with his attitude towards gold medals in the National Games (in that he recognises that gold medals that “have to” be won). As we previously demonstrated, the performance in the National Games is well recognised as a benchmark for provincial sport officials. However, we would argue that the expected increasing direction by, and funding from, the government signals transformation of the CTTSL into another government-run Zhuanye competitive body rather than it developing into a market-oriented professional league.

At the athlete’s level, the realisation of individual interests also relies heavily on the Zhuanye sport system. *Interviewee Table Tennis 2* states that

... all of these [professional] players have been cultivated and trained in the national team... If any club wants one athlete to become successful or famous, [then] he/she will have to join the national team, ... and [have to] win glory [for the national team], ... [by which] the market price of the athletes is decidedAs long as [the athletes] perform well in the national team, no

matter how poorly they play in the league, they [the athletes] still command the same price....

From an athlete perspective, *Interviewee Table Tennis 7* (a former national team player) ascribes the factors differentiating importance among the Olympic Games, the National Games and the CTTSL, stating that:

For athletes, the country's interests override [others]...since you are cultivated by the country ... otherwise you have no chance to play in the CTTSL... and to be paid so much. Your value in the CTTSL is shown through your performance in the national squad...

The National Games of course [is more important]... after all, the Beijing team trained me, ... CTTSL must give way to the National Games. If there is no role for the National Games to play, then the CTTSL will become my primary task, which is where my money comes from.

Not only is the development of elite athletes associated with the Zhuanye system, which relates to the well-established three-tier training framework, but both interviewees suggest that an athletes' value in the CTTSL is also influenced, if not decided by their national team performance. This is consistent with the interests of the Zhuanye system. In other words, it is indirectly acknowledged that athletes have to provide 'healthy practices' to "win glory for the national team" in order to realise their personal interests in the CTTSL, from which their "money comes".

The CTTSL is identified as a 'cash cow' not only for the individual need of Zhuanye table tennis, but also for the strategic deployment of Chinese table

tennis. For instance, the initial purpose of introducing professional elements into Chinese table tennis, which is recognised by all interviewees in this sport, is to stop the draining of talent to foreign countries through exploring another source of income for elite table tennis players. It is also acknowledged by *Interviewee Table Tennis 2* that the interests of the national squad and of the CTTA are the “original driving force” of the important 2012 reform, which in addition also benefited other stakeholders in the CTTSL. He states that:

The 2012 reform is... a substantive step in the professionalization of the CTTSL, ...[which was] a fake professional league... all clubs were, in fact, shell companies, because they have to recruit staff [athletes] every two years... We could only maintain the high level of the national squad with enough money. What shall we do if the government cancels the funding? This is the original driving force of this [2012] reform.

Even though the pre-2012 CTTSL was identified as “a fake professional league” for the dependence of the league, clubs and the athletes on the Zhuanye system, it was still recognised as a professionalised sport in China (Lin 2001; Bao 2009; Hu 2010). We would argue that this acceptance of the ‘former’ CTTSL as a professional league reflects the concept of ‘professional sport with Chinese characteristics’ in the Chinese context, which is influenced by the dominance of Zhuanye sport. Even after the 2012 reform, as we previously argued, *Interviewee Table Tennis 5’s* support for government’s involvement in governance and financial terms reflects the continuous influence of such understanding.

In summary, even though all interviewees, especially from the perspective of Zhuanye sport, acknowledged that the Beijing Games had hardly any impact on Chinese table tennis, it would be radical to thus eliminate the influence of the Beijing Games from the post-2008 development, even from the 2012 reform of the CTTSL, which was implemented 3 years after missing the “best opportunity” to reform (*Interviewee Table Tennis 3*). However, this lagged, or postponed, realisation of the impact of the Beijing Games is, to a degree, a consequence of the Zhuanye system’s absorbing of the 2008 Olympics. Or, as *Interviewee Table Tennis 2* states, it reflects the “great resistance against the reform inside [the GAS]”.

We would argue that the Zhuanye system’s capability of resisting the influence is an outcome of its continuous control over the resources provided by the government, which results in the CTTSL and other stakeholders’ dependence on this traditional system of Chinese elite sport. Such reliance on the Zhuanye system also leads to the acceptance of the dominance of Juguo Tizhi and of the form of ‘professional league’ that is identified as appropriate and ‘healthy’ in different eras. This is to say that, in practical terms, thanks to the consistency of the resources provided to Zhuanye table tennis, Juguo Tizhi has maintained, if not enhanced, its dominance in Chinese table tennis with the additional resource provided by the CTTSL. We would thus argue that the CTTSL, to a degree, reinforces the dominance of Juguo Tizhi in

Chinese table tennis.

6.3.3 Diving: a case of ‘failed combination of elite sport and the HE sector’

As the most successful Chinese Olympic sport, diving is portrayed as “the pride, and the ‘dream team’, of Chinese elite sport” (Li 2009, p.231). Diving is thus well supported by, and ‘protected’ in, the Zhuanye system, in which the socialist characters and socialist narratives are dominant. For example, it is stated in the summary report of the 60-year development of diving under the PRC regime that:

There have been great changes in Chinese aquatic sport after 60 years... the most fundamental [reason] is the Party and national government’s positive leadership and great attention [to detail]...The 60-year development of Chinese aquatic sport is a microcosm of the new-born socialist China...

Concentrating all resources for highly challenging tasks...is a feature of the superiority of socialism ...and of Juguo Tizhi. [This feature] is consistent with the People’s common interests, with the CPC’s ‘in-power’ status and its principle of ‘service to the people’, ... with the structure of the political and economic system of a socialist regime ..., [and] with the rule and internal requirement of [elite] sport development. It is clearly evident that Juguo Tizhi is the most steady, most reliable and most powerful guarantee of [the performance of] Chinese aquatic sport.

(Li 2009, pp.229, 240, 241)

There are more examples of strong ‘socialist’ and political discourse in this

report. The top leader of Chinese aquatic sport associates the development of his sports, including diving, swimming, etc. with the political character of the regime and with the corresponding elite sport administrative and operational framework, i.e. Juguo Tizhi. It could be argued that such portrayal of socialist features, in this case, of the development of diving legitimises the dominance of Juguo Tizhi, through which Chinese diving has historically achieved its excellent performances and thus realised its interests.

We would argue that the significance of Juguo Tizhi to the Zhuanye diving system indirectly reflects Chinese diving's reliance on resources derived from government and, it also implies the limited involvement of the non-government resources from civil society in Chinese diving. This not only results in a continuous emphasis on Olympic performance in Chinese diving discourse, which is argued in section 1.2 of this chapter; but also leads to a de-emphasis on the particularity of the Beijing Games and on its significance in the post-2008 development of Chinese diving. This feature of 'deemphasising-2008' in the 'pro-Juguo Tizhi' discourse is consistent with our previous argument in section 3.2 concerning the limited promotional effect of the Beijing Games on Chinese elite sport reform. For example, it is stated by *Interviewee Diving 1* that:

... the Beijing Olympics, to a certain degree, is no different from any another Olympics, ... [it] was only one more Olympics in which we tried our best and had good preparation ...

A number of sports achieved great leaps forward in terms of developments in the Beijing Olympics...[but this was] not the case for Chinese diving... The influence of the Beijing Games on Chinese diving is less obvious than its influence on less-developed or potential sports.

Through comparing a) the significance of different Olympic Games to Chinese diving and b) the impact of the Beijing Games on diving and other sports, the senior official in the Centre for Swimming of the GAS portrays the 2008 Olympics as another routine job for Chinese diving, the sport which is the major contributor to the 'Olympic glory of China'. We would suggest that through arguing for the inappropriateness of describing Chinese diving as having made a 'leap-forward' in terms of development, the interviewee rejects a common post-2008 reforming narrative, which argues "elite sport is no longer enough [for China], [after it had] reached its summit, thus what the next direction is" has to be considered (*Interviewee General 2*). In other words, this de-emphasis on the importance of the Beijing Games indirectly constructs a continuity of the Olympic task for Chinese diving along the on-going story of Chinese Olympic history, in which the 2008 edition "is no different from any another past" and future Olympics. It is thus subtly suggested that, in order to fulfil this task, *Juguo Tizhi* is, and should be, consistently implemented, at least for Chinese diving.

This is in line with our previous argument concerning the relationship between the Olympic task and Juguo Tizhi. That is to say that the continuity of the Olympic task legitimises the implementation of Juguo Tizhi, since the *raison d'être* of Juguo Tizhi is to fulfil this significant task. *Interviewee Diving 5* attributes this stability of Zhuanye diving to its consistent performance and the vested interests in it. The interviewee states that:

There has been no change [in Juguo Tizhi after the 2008 Olympics]... because [diving] has maintained its excellent performance. [This is because] people are satisfied, and everyone would be worried if there were to be any change...[the current system] is thus maintained. For those who have realised their interests, they definitely would not want to share. This power could not be modified by any individual, but is [influenced by the] big [picture], this is not simply a problem for diving...furthermore, the most important thing is that people still value gold medals highly.

In the above quotation, the limited impact of the Beijing Games on Juguo Tizhi is described as a consequence of people's consistent attention to excellent performance, which reflects a typical stance in Chinese elite sport in terms of the relationship to the needs of the people, the Olympic task and Juguo Tizhi. The interviewee also employs other terms, such as "people are satisfied", "everyone will be worried", "cannot be modified by individuals", to portray the resistance to change in Juguo Tizhi as a choice made by, or provoked by, the structure of Chinese society.

However, on the one hand, the fact that the general public has paid declining

attention to elite sport is well recognised, at least by most interviewees. For example, it is stated that: “people [now] pay more attention to their well-being and to those sports in which they can participate, ... however, it is very difficult to let everyone participate in diving, [thus its popularity has had a tendency to drop] (*Interviewee Diving 4*). On the other hand, it is also acknowledged in the above quotation that it is “those who have realised their interests” who reject sharing their benefits. We would thus argue that it is those who have realised their interests through implementing *Juguo Tizhi*, rather than the ‘Chinese people’ in general, who stress the importance of consistently excellent performance. This not only maintains the importance of the Olympic task and thus endorses *Juguo Tizhi*, but also constrains, or absorbs, the impact of the Beijing Games on momentum towards the reform of Chinese diving.

As one, if not the only, reforming move of Chinese diving in terms of civil-society-based development, the attempt at ‘combining [elite] sport [development] and education’, especially at the top level, is a sensitive topic in Chinese diving after the famous conflict between the *Zhuanye* system and Tsinghua University.

The ‘combination of [elite] sport [development] and education’ (hereafter, the Combination), especially with higher education, is recognised as an approach

that would lead to the “healthy, sustainable and rapid development” of Chinese elite sport (Yu & Zhang 2006, p.79). It is expected that this approach may combine resources from both [elite] sport and the education sector for elite athletes development, or even enable the education sector to develop elite athletes with its own resources (Yu & Zhang 2006).

In terms of the Combination in diving, Tsinghua University, one of the top two universities in China, attempted to not merely cooperate with the Zhuanye system, but also to develop Olympic-level divers within its own system. In 1997, Tsinghua recruited the former deputy head coach of the Chinese diving national team, Yu Fen, after her contentious departure from the national team. A number of top-tier divers had then been ‘developed’ by Yu in Tsinghua, including the Olympic medallists Fu Mingxia⁷³, Lin Yue⁷⁴

⁷³ Fu Mingxia had been trained by Yu in the National squad before her first retirement in 1996. At that time, she had already won three Olympic gold medals. She went to Tsinghua in 1996 after her retirement, and had continued her cooperation with Yu since Yu subsequently took the role of the head coach of the Tsinghua team in 1997. Fu won her fourth Olympic gold medal in 2000, and then retired permanently. She graduated from Tsinghua with a BA in economics in 2004.

⁷⁴ Lin Yue, was sent to the primary school of Tsinghua University by his parents after the Guangdong diving centre, in which he was trained, was disbanded in 2001. During the conflicts between Tsinghua and the national team, he left Tsinghua in 2004 and joined Beijing team. Lin won a gold medal in the Beijing Olympics when he was 17-year old.

and Zhou Lvxin⁷⁵. Apart from Fu Mingxia, most of these Tsinghua divers had started to train with Yu in the primary school of Tsinghua University and were under a 15-year training and education contract with Tsinghua University. However, when the GAS terminated its 'dual-registration' policy⁷⁶ in 2001, Tsinghua divers started to leave the University team and joined provincial teams in the Zhuanye system. Some of them were subsequently selected for the National team. It is worth noting that since the policy change, no diver registered at Tsinghua has been selected for the national squad. During the data collection procedure in 2013, all divers training in Tsinghua, the only HEI that had a diving team at that time, were either amateurs, who participated as a personal hobby, or young divers from

⁷⁵ Zhou Luxin was recruited to the primary school of Tsinghua University by Yu in 1998 when he was 10 year old. During the conflicts between Tsinghua and the national team, Zhou left the Tsinghua diving team in 2005 and was subsequently selected for the national team. In the Beijing Olympics, he won the only silver medal for the Chinese diving national team, which had 7 gold, 1 silver and 3 bronze.

⁷⁶ With the 'dual-registration' policy, members of Tsinghua team were able to register in, and compete for, provincial teams in domestic events. After this policy was terminated, athletes had to choose between Tsinghua and a provincial team; the member of the former one was not able to participate in the National Games. Even though members of the Tsinghua team, on paper, still had a chance of being selected for the national teams, the opportunity was slim. Thus members of Tsinghua team started to leave the University and joined provincial teams. (F. Yu, 2010, Interviewee Diving 7).

a provincial team, who had no link with the university in educational terms.

Given the framework of institutions in the PRC, policies relating to the Combination are commonly jointly published by two or more institutions. These policies, such as *the Opinions of the GAS and the Department of Education in terms of Improving Nation-wide School Football* (GAS & The Department of Education of the PRC 2013), generally focus on school sport rather than elite sport. In Liu Peng's 2009 speech, the promoted cooperation between the Zhuanye and education systems represents a closer association at primary and junior school level, a relationship which becomes more distant when an athlete becomes more mature or the level of the athlete's performance is higher. He states:

[We should] ... at county level, insert 'youth sport schools' at primary and junior middle school level into the education system; at city level, [we should] insert sport schools that are at primary and junior middle school level into the education system in the form of cooperation with [common] schools; [we should] improve education in sport high schools, the training which is operated by sport departments, while the education [in sport high schools] is operated by the education sector, [we should] improve the education for teams at provincial or higher level.

...[we should] provide vocational training especially to those athletes who cannot achieve the highest level; pursue new policies for graduates from sport [high] schools to entre HEIs.

...[We should] increase vocational opportunity for retired athletes, further pursue a national policy of 'exam-exemption' to allow outstanding athletes to enter universities.

P. Liu, 2009, p.1

In the first of the quotations from the Minister's speech, the relationship between ZhuanYe sport and the education system clearly changes when the adolescent athletes reach high school age. Even the educational needs of the teenagers in sports high school and for those in provincial teams or national teams are differently addressed. Responsibility for students at sports high schools is explicitly assigned to the education sector, while the education for those in provincial or national teams is generally noted as requiring improvement. Liu further differentiates the education for these two groups through associating "graduates from sport high schools" with higher education while delaying the provision of education for "outstanding athletes", the education for who was absent in his speech, until their retirement. Given most divers reach, or are close to, their prime in their late teens or early twenties⁷⁷ (British Swim, 2010), we would argue that through ignoring the education for top elite athletes in their sporting prime, which for divers normally overlaps with university age, the Sport Minister decreases the

⁷⁷ The average age of male Olympic diving medalist is 21 (platform) and 23 (springboard), and the average age of female Olympic medalist of platform is 20 (British Swim 2010).

possibility for HEIs to be associated with the prime performance of elite athlete and to meet the needs of elite athletes except in their post-athletic careers.

In practice, such protective moves became the main form of the Combination between Chinese diving and the HE sector, which benefited “outstanding athletes”, especially world champions. For example, a number of diving world champions were sent to, and accepted by, Renmin University after the Beijing Olympics ended. It is admitted by the university that they are exceptionally recruited due to their identity as world Champions, and they do not need to attend the University until after retirement from the national squad (Xia 2008).

As we previously argued, maintaining athletes’ elite performance is closely associated with the interests of the Zhuanye system that are realised through the Zhuanye system accomplishing its ‘political task’. In his speech in 2013, Liu (2013, p.1) explicitly acknowledged the influence of SAD’s interests on the education for elite athletes. He indicates that:

It has been more than a year since the publication of ‘the notice’⁷⁸, especially the education issues [which] vary considerably between different provinces...

⁷⁸ The notice refers to the State Council’s notice of publishing *the Guiding Opinion on Further Strengthening Elite Athletes’ Education and Social Security* jointly made by the GAS, the

The key factor for [solving] this problem is whether SADs could essentially open their mind ... break the 'fences' of the [ZhuanYe] system and the constraints [created by...vested] interests.

In his account of the factors inhibiting the development of athletes' education in general, Liu explicitly identifies interests as a factor, if not the factor, 'constraining' development in this area. It is worth noting that the Sport Minister indirectly acknowledges that it is not a problem of merely one or two provinces but of "SADs", as the self-protected "system" could, but did not, break "the fence" that protect its interests. This considerable influence of 'the system' is also evidenced in *Interviewee Diving 6's* statement, that:

Everyone knows about Juguo Tizhi and the exceptional performance in Beijing, if you change [it to a new system that] combining the education sector and

Department of Education, the Treasury Department & the Department of HR and Social Security (2011), in which the higher education of athletes is mentioned. In terms of related content, the statement relating to SAD includes mention that:

Graduates from sport schools...and national team members... are encouraged to study in HEIs. ... Elite athletes in services are encouraged to flexibly receive higher education through adult education and distance learning.

Responsibility of the other co-authoring departments is also stated, such as the HEIs should establish special modules for athletes.

elite sport, and then performance decreases ... no matter how high profile he/she is, he/she cannot take this responsibility.

In line with our previous quotation from *Interviewee Diving 5*, who portrayed the stability of Juguo Tizhi as a choice that is in line with the interests of Chinese society, *Interviewee Diving 6* also portrays the understanding of the relationship between Juguo Tizhi, i.e. 'the system', and Olympic performance as common knowledge i.e. known by "everyone". In contrast, the challengers are associated with pronoun in singular form, such as "he", "she" and "you" (in its singular form in Chinese). We would argue that this account not only constructs a structure-agents relationship, but also suggests an 'appropriate' move in terms of 'the Combination' issue for Chinese diving from a collectivist perspective. In addition, the interviewee also indirectly indicates the 'punishment' that any challenger would receive in the government dominated Zhuanye system.

Additionally, consistent with the previous quotation from *Interviewee Diving 2* suggesting a 'top-down' approach for elite sport reform, the Sport Minister also refers to a document published by the State Council, i.e. *The Notice*, as the backdrop of his criticism. In other words, it could be argued that even though Liu is also a member of this protected vested-interest system, the account of the top sport bureaucrat in the PRC indirectly acknowledges the significant 'top-down' power of the central government, which provides the resource for

the Zhuanye sport system.

This reliance on the resources from the government and Zhuanye Diving's dominant control over these resources is identified by *Interviewee Diving 6*, a senior academic in the sport department of Tsinghua University, as the factors that constrain the Combination in Chinese diving. He states that:

As long as the [Zhuanye] sport system exists, it is nearly impossible [for the two systems] to develop harmoniously, because it relates to interests. Resources are mainly embraced within the sport system...including funding...There are two big dilemmas [constraining the Combination]. Firstly, ...HEIs lack resources...athletes [thus] choose the [Zhuanye] sport system for performance...Secondly, even if they want to come to HEIs, they won't be allowed to do so by the current [Zhuanye] system... The current system still survives on winning glory for the country. If this function is changed, what will they do [for life] ?... the country has invested a lot of money in the sport system?...isn't the resource all in their [system]? Are there any resources for the HE sectors? No. ...Tremendous resources are all in there... Thus the Olympics have no impact on this policy [of the Combination].

The interviewee's elaboration of this conflict focuses on the perspective of resources. On the one hand, Zhuanye Diving's monopolistic control over resource via Juguo Tizhi and its dominant position in sport is implied with terms, such as "embraced within", 'allowing' athletes to choose their route, "tremendous resources are all in there". This is recognised as a key factor that not only limited the related investment in the HE sector; but also forced

athletes to rely on the Zhuanye system.

On the other hand, through employing terms, such as “survive on winning glory for the country”, “invested in”, the interviewee also acknowledges the Zhuanye Diving’s reliance on government’s support and on its ‘political task’. We would argue that this account constructs an orthodox Zhuanye relationship in the “current” Chinese diving context, in which Zhuanye sport earns its ‘salary’ from the government through providing satisfactory performance. Thus, ‘the Combination’ in diving, especially the Tsinghua model, is portrayed as ‘life-threatening’ to the Zhuanye Diving system and to its interests, as the university divers represented another route for ‘producing’ Olympian, or even gold medallists. Therefore, in order to maintain its ‘income level’, the Zhuanye diving system strived not only to maintain its level of performance, but also to limit the entrance of competitors providing a similar product.

This competing relationship between the two systems also has influence at individual level. Recalling her memory of the experience in the Tsinghua system, *Interviewee Diving 7* states:

The university set identical goal [for all of us]...that you need to be an Olympic champion as well as a university student... [We then] had to compete with kids in the Zhuanye [system for the opportunity of participating the Olympics]. Thus they definitely hate you, [and ask] why you [could

continue] study while competing with them [for the Olympic opportunity]... [Thus] if [the education system] insisted on competing with the national team, this would have to be rejected unless the leader of the national team were changed.

A strong word “hate” is employed by the interviewee to portray the relationship that she perceived between the HE sector and Zhuanye Diving, at least at individual level. The interviewee explicitly identifies this contending relationship as a consequence of a competition for the realisation of individual interests. While the Tsinghua divers could, to a degree, choose between education and elite sport performance in seeking to realise their individual interests, those in Zhuanye sport mainly rely on the latter route.

The interviewee use the term “rejected” to portray a difference between the powers of the contending parties, i.e. the rejected Tsinghua model and the Zhuanye system (represented by “the national team”), with the former being effectively axed by a policy change by the GAS. However, it is interesting to note that the interviewee re-focuses on the individual level, portraying this conflict as a competition between “you” (in its singular form in Chinese) and the leader of the national team. On the one hand, this is in line with the long-lasting conflicts between Yu Fen, the head coach of the Tsinghua team and Zhou Jihong, the leader of the Chinese diving team, who dismissed Tian Liang from the national team for his involvement in commercial activities. On the other hand, given the harmonious relationship between the national

shooting team and the Tsinghua shooting team, which are respectively coached by the Olympic gold medallist Wang Yifu and his wife Zhang Qiuping, one is forced to consider to what extent conflicts at individual level hindered the fate of the Tsinghua diving team and the future of the Combination in Chinese diving?

Through looking at the post-2008 development of three sports in terms of their interaction with civil society, it could be argued that there are differences in the speed of realising the projected and promoted change in the practical domain of Chinese elite sport. We would argue that such difference is influenced by the source of resources invested in particular sports and by other stakeholders' reliance on the *Zhuanye* system of respective sport.

Given the stable government-run nature of Chinese elite sport, whether *Zhuanye* or professional sport, Sport Associations maintain their dominance in Chinese elite sport with another significant governmental identity (that of the SAD). Even though their dominance is or was affected by the involvement of other stakeholders and is influenced by the new opinion released by the top leaders, hardly any changes in the operational domain are identified as a direct consequence of the 2008 Games, which, however, set the backdrop of for the development of the powerful notion of a 'Sport Power'.

Chapter Seven Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the tangible evidence of changes in the discourse relating to the Chinese elite sport system after the Beijing Games. We aim to unveil the structural factors, particularly the power and interests relationship within Chinese sport, that interact with (for example, enable and/or are reframed by) these changes in discursive domain, through employing Critical Discourse Analysis.

As the conclusion of our thesis, we start this chapter with revisiting the theories that enlighten us of the construction of the social reality that is independent with social actors, and that enable us to peel off the rhetoric flesh, see through the skeleton of social structure, and ultimately interrogate the spirit of power operating and running through the whole system of Chinese elite sport. Then, we present the research findings through answering the three research questions, followed by a discussion of the limitation of this research and of further study that could be and need to be done in relation to Chinese elite sport for which a number of important policies has been published by the Chinese government at the very late stage of our research.

7.1 Contribution to Theory

2010), the thesis has adopted a 'depth realist' ontological position while at the same time acknowledged the constructive effect of social agency. Critical Realism, on the one hand, enables us to understand the effect of the stratified social structure⁷⁹ on social actors' constructive activities. Accordingly, our research analyses the development of Chinese elite sport policy statements, addresses the causal factors leading to these changes, and further discuss the implicit references to, and reflection of, struggles of power and interests embedded in such changes. Examples include the changes in the discourse of Juguo Tizhi in the annual speeches of the Sport Minister in the post-2008 era, which relate to the notion of 'Sport Power' and the political origins of Chinese elite sport. On the other hand, Critical Realism also requires us to investigate the dialectic relationship between structure and agency, to consider the social structure (at least, partially) as a product constructed by social agency (including discourse), such as the diversely interpreted essence of Juguo Tizhi, which has influenced the reform of Chinese elite sport. However, such a constructive effect is also enabled and constrained by the structures within which it operates, specifically in terms of which social groups are able to

⁷⁹ The difference between the tangible *empirical* level and the intangible *actual* and *real* level can be exemplified as the differences between policy statement (what the government says they do), policy narratives (what the government say how they do) and the power and interests relationships embraced within the policy procedure.

exercise power over policy discourse in Chinese society before and after the Beijing Games in the significantly developing political climate.

In order to unveil the development of Chinese elite sport and its significance in the post-2008 era, we employ Critical Discourse Analysis with a protocol modified from Fairclough's (2003, 2005, 2009) framework, since the revealing of the interests and power constructed with and within discourse in a given society is recognised as the 'critical' feature of this approach. To deconstruct the process of evolution of Chinese elite sport and of the power relationships, we investigate the development of Chinese elite sport, as a context, and the discourse of and about policy through analysing official documents, documentary material, academic research, and media coverage and through interviewing stakeholders in three sports concerning their respective perspectives on the development of Chinese elite sport, particularly after the Beijing Games.

Even though language systems are not hermetic to each other, implementing CDA across linguistic borders (analysing in Chinese and reporting in English) results in concerns in terms of reliability and validity of the research. However, arguing the significance of warrantability, i.e. the soundness, robustness, convincingness, of the research and the explanations which it constitutes, we have striven to maintain the consistency of our portrayal of

the connotation implied in the Chinese data (as well as the 'literal' denotation of terms in that data) between the two languages. Thus, our analysis, which bridges the two language systems, focuses on teasing out the connotation of the terms and of elements of the *order of discourse*, which reflect, challenge and/or (re)produce the social structure.

7.2 Research Findings

We present our research findings through reviewing and answering the three research questions:

1. *Across the three periods in contemporary Chinese Olympic history, 1993-2001, 2001-2008 and post 2008, to what extent have Chinese elite sport policy and discursive accounts of that policy changed?*
2. *To what extent are the changes in Chinese elite sport regarded as a consequence of the experience of preparing for and staging the Beijing Olympics?*
3. *In what ways are policies and their interpretation of the aftermath of the Beijing Games related to explanations of the socialist features of the regime?*

Within the period we consider (from 1993 to 2012), a consistent theme, i.e. the co-existence of the requirement of reform and of satisfactory elite sport performance, was maintained in the policy discourse of Chinese elite sport. The co-existence of these two goals, which were, to a degree, contradictory to

each other, resulted in a policy dilemma, and thus in conflicting policy discourse, on Chinese elite sport. The development and change of Chinese elite sport policy discourses is symbolised and significantly influenced by the interaction of these two types of strategic goal.

The power of discourses in relation to the duo has varied across the period and has been influenced by a number of factors. However, the dominant group within society (promoting the reforming trend of the society while requiring satisfactory performance) and within Chinese elite sport (accentuating the significance of performance while indicating its willingness to reform) has maintained the power of these two types of Chinese elite sport discourse with their power over discourse, and thus these two types of voice have remained prominent in Chinese elite sport.

The first type of Chinese elite sport discourse emphasises elite sport performance, which has been a consistent focus of Chinese elite sport, especially of ZhuanYe sport. This continuous accentuation of elite sport performance is consistent with the understanding of the significance of 'being successful' for the 'extrinsic function' of sport, which is stressed in the Chinese context. Victories in elite sport events (especially in the Olympic Games) are recognised as approaches for, and a medium for manifesting the achievements in the process of, realising 'extrinsic functions', such as

'restoring the Chinese nation' or 'reflecting the superiority of socialism'. This accentuation of elite sport performance is thus accepted by Chinese society not only as an available perspective within Chinese elite sport discourse, but also as an appropriate account for its consistency with the innate feature and connotation of elite sport in the Chinese context.

Elite sport performance has also been proactively and constantly highlighted within the ZhuanYe sport system. This 'internal' discourse is consistent with the 'political task' of Chinese elite sport, i.e. winning glory for the country through providing satisfactory performance, for which the ZhuanYe system is provided with financial and other resources by the government. Hence, this emphasis on elite sport performance, for which ZhuanYe sport is provided with resources, is in line with the interests of the ZhuanYe system and SADs. Given its effectiveness in elite sport development, Juguo Tizhi is promoted in this type of Chinese elite sport discourse as the most appropriate perspective through which to view and operate elite sport (at least before the Beijing Games). In other words, such emphasis on elite sport performance greatly empowered the discourse in favour of Juguo Tizhi, which was recognised as the target of Chinese elite sport reform, before the Beijing Games as the dominant voice within Chinese elite sport.

'Reform' provides the theme of the other major type of Chinese elite sport

discourse. It has been officially embraced within Chinese elite sport since 1986, following the reforming trend in Chinese society ushered in by Deng Xiaoping. The 'political sensitivity' of Chinese elite sport discourse is consistent with the 'government-run' nature of Chinese elite sport. The inclusion of a 'reforming' account, which aims to refine Juguo Tizhi, prompts concern about its potential negative impact on the essential task of Chinese elite sport, and thus on the interests of Zhuanye sport. It not only reflects the influence of generic political elements in Chinese society on Chinese elite sport, but also symbolises the government's power *over* discourse in this domain. Such power places substantial constraints suggesting what is 'unthinkable', 'unspeakable' or 'unable-to-be-done', and by contrast what can be done, in Chinese elite sport.

The inclusion of reforming accounts has not only led to corresponding changes in Chinese elite sport discourse promoting in some contexts for example debates about professionalisation, but also has enabled reforming rhetoric in the construction of other positions (including those that are contrary to the reform) of the SADs. Given the power of reforming discourse in the opening-up era of the PRC, through being associated with reforming rhetoric and assigned with reforming meanings, the practices and policies, even those reinforcing the dominance of Juguo Tizhi, are legitimised and empowered with the these 'market-oriented reforming' narratives. In other

words, through utilising its power over discourse, the SADs directed the power of reforming discourse in favour of their interests seeking to achieve a balance between promoting reform and maintaining Juguo Tizhi. For instance, SADs, thus, on the one hand conform to the political priorities of the regime (opening up), while on the other realise their interests by protecting the Juguo Tizhi approach at a time when there was a clamour for reform. The struggle to maintain this balance is reflected, for example, in the dilemma expressed in the narrative of the 1993 Policy.

This balance was influenced by the successful Olympic bid in 2001, and the relationship between the two was subsequently restructured during the preparation for the 2008 Games. With the imminence of the Beijing Olympics, performance-focused forms of discourse were increasingly evident, largely as a function of their well-recognised association with, and potential usefulness in realising, the Chinese Olympic dream. At the same time, reforming narratives had not only been sidelined in policy discourse and practices, but reform itself in elite sport was identified as a move which would have been inappropriate at this moment and thus promotion of reform in sport was, for the time being, voluntarily silenced.

This voluntary silence, we would argue, embodies an exercise of power (at this specific juncture) in a manner consistent with what Lukes describes as,

supreme and [the] most insidious [level]... to prevent people, to what-ever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things...because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial.

Lukes, 2005, p. 26

From a Foucauldian perspective, the production of 'truth' is viewed as the necessary condition for the exercise of power (Foucault 1980e). In terms of this insidious exercise of power, we would argue that it is based on a truth constructed in the Chinese context in relation to a) the priority of the 'political task' for Chinese elite sport and the significance of elite sport performance in fulfilling this 'political task' and realising its political, economic and cultural functions, and b) the respective impact on elite sport performance of Juguo Tizhi and the reform. As Foucault (1980c, p.86) states, such dominance becomes "tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms". In terms of our case of Chinese elite sport, such knowledge is not only proactively promoted by the SADs and within the Zhuanye sport system, and utilised and reinforced in the portrayal of the significance of the Beijing Games, but it is also more importantly, historically constructed and socially accepted as 'the truth' in the Chinese context. Given the dominance of such truth, even though there were diverse interpretations of the successful bid and the 2008 Games,

only those that were consistent with this truth were defined and regulated as appropriate accounts, and are thus empowered in the Chinese context.

These empowered discourses, on the one hand, reinforced 'the truth' well accepted in the Chinese context in terms of the Beijing Games. On the other hand, given its consistency with the interests and dominance of Zhuanye Sport and Juguo Tizhi, as we previously demonstrated, Zhuanye Sport and Juguo Tizhi were also strengthened in the production of such a 'truth'. In return, the vested interest groups within the Zhuanye sport system, for example the SADs, utilised their power over discourse to ensure the implementation of the power of the 'appropriate' discourse in reproducing and reinforcing 'this truth'. In other words, in a Foucauldian account, through discourse, we know the world, through the power of discourse, we change the world, for "we are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth" (Foucault 1980e, p.93).

In the post-2008 era, the concept of 'Sport Power' has significantly influenced the constructed truth of Chinese elite sport, after the Chinese President brought 'Sport Power' as a concept into public discourse. Due to the emphasis given to comprehensiveness in Chinese sport in the concept of 'Sport Power', elite sport performance was no longer to be regarded as the only or sufficient

means by which to fulfil the new political task. As a consequence, reforming discourses, such as those contained in accounts concerning the civil-society-based development of sport, and the development of the sport industries, became increasingly accentuated (and/or legitimated) as elements of the newly emerging 'multi-dimensional' political mission.

We would thus argue that the power relationship between the two types of Chinese elite sport discourse had been significantly influenced by the successful bid, which resulted in a widely accepted and compliant emphasis on the performance-focused narrative from 2001 in the period of preparation for the Beijing Games. Given the significant influence of the concept of 'Sport Power', the changes in Chinese elite sport discourse in the post-2008 era can not be easily characterised as an immediate legacy of the Beijing Games *per se*, even though the concept of 'Sport Power' is, to a degree, associated with the success of the Beijing Games. This is consistent with statement of many interviewees suggesting the limited impact of the Beijing Games *per se* on the development of their sport, supporting Fan, Fan & Lu's (2010) projection of the continuity of *Juguo Tizhi* after the Beijing Games.

However, the interpretations of the Beijing Games and of the concept of 'Sport Power' vary among different agencies. These diverse interpretations, on the one hand, constructed the direction of the post-2008 development of

Chinese elite sport through, for example, framing knowledge concerning the Beijing Games. For instance, the 2008 Olympics is portrayed as another example, as with other Olympics, of the effectiveness of *Juguo Tizhi*. Given that consistent elite sport performance is interpreted as a necessary condition of the realisation of the concept of 'Sport Power', *Juguo Tizhi* has been continuously emphasised in the immediate post-2008 era. On the other side of the coin, through stressing the summit performance in 2008 and the realisation of the Olympic dream, which set the backdrop for the introduction of 'Sport Power', the newly empowered reforming discourse accentuates the necessity for the development of sport to move in another direction.

On the other hand, these different interpretations also reflect and restructure different agencies' roles and identities in relation to the *Zhuanye* system in the post-2008 era. In the case studies of the three sports, the different discursive styles are influenced by the differing relationships of resource dependence between the agencies and the *Zhuanye* system. This relationship not only shapes the power of different discourses, such as the degree to which a challenging account is accepted by the 'dominant' discourse; it also manipulates the direction of development to be taken by each of the three sports.

Given that government resource remains the main financial source for

Chinese elite sport, the SADs' accounts have retained their position as the dominant voice in this area. For example, elite sport performance has been constantly stressed in the interpretation of the concept of 'Sport Power'. Zhuanye Sport and Juguo Tizhi have been continuously emphasised, at least in the immediate aftermath of the Beijing Games. However, the effects of this attempt to protect Juguo Tizhi have been declining with the increasing accentuation placed on elite sport reform by the top leader, particularly by the new President Xi (who reportedly is a football fan), and the boosting investment from the civil-society into sport.

In addition, those elements that are consistent with the political mainstream of the PRC regime, i.e. consistent with socialism with Chinese characteristics, have been constantly embraced in Chinese elite sport discourses. Both the promotion of Juguo Tizhi and Zhuanye Sport (which are highly related to the planned economy) and the promotion of a reforming account are associated with the dominant ideology. This account, which associates Chinese socialist ideology as an element of social structure, and the reform of Chinese elite sport, has legitimised and empowered the reforming discourse in the PRC through endorsing its political correctness. By contrast, ideologies, as "representations of aspects of the world which contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation" (Fairclough 2003, p.218; cited by Wodak & Meyer 2009, p.9), are also constructed and

reproduced by social actors via discourse. Examples include Deng Xiaoping's statements, which have significantly influenced the interpretation of socialism in the Chinese context, as well as Jiang Zemin's emphasis on *Juguo Tizhi* and Hu Jintao's idea of 'Sport Power', both of which have brought new narratives and concepts to the interpretation of socialist ideology in Chinese elite sport.

We would argue that the dominant socialist ideology frames a constant (but, crucially, not universally held) truth in Chinese elite sport, which is in line with the dominant power in the Chinese society. This constant truth facilitates and enables the 'appropriate' discourses and practices, through "function[ing] as ... [the] infrastructure, ... material, economic determinant, etc." (Foucault 1980d, p.118), while rejecting opposing discourses that could also be "supposed to count as truth" (*ibid*, p.118).

As demonstrated in the Literature Review chapter changes in the political climate of the PRC, such as the beginning and the termination of the Cultural Revolution, provoked changes in the language used in Chinese society. Significant events in relation to Chinese sport, such as China's return to the IOC in 1979, also influenced Chinese elite sport discourse. However, given the stability of the communist regime of the PRC and the dominance of *Zhuanye* sport system and *Juguo Tizhi* within Chinese elite sport, there has been a consistent theme of language, especially after the opening-up and reform of

the PRC in 1979, within Chinese elite sport discourse, i.e. the socialism with Chinese characteristic and the emphasis on elite sport performance.

Following Deng Xiaoping's (1993) statement in terms of the economic reform and the socialism with Chinese characteristic, it could be argued that the reforming theme of Chinese elite sport discourse is a consequence of such change in the language used in Chinese society. And, as we discussed in this concluding chapter, the emphasis on elite sport performance has been consistently promoted by the SADs and other stakeholders within the Zhuanye sport system and been accepted by Chinese society as another theme of Chinese elite sport discourse.

We would thus argue that there has been a similarity of terms used in Chinese elite sport discourse throughout the period we investigate in the thesis. Since 1979, the reforming account has been introduced, legitimised by the government, and thus has become the dominant voice in the Chinese society. Thus, additions of new terms in the government-dominated Chinese elite sport discourse, such as the introduction of professionalisation and of 'sport power', are rather a complement to the dual-themed Chinese elite sport discourse than changes or challenges to it.

However, it is worth noting that, firstly, this is not to ignore the transgression at micro or practical level of Chinese elite sport, for instance the emergence of

Tsinghua mode and thus the increase of power of related narratives such as 'the Combination, which, nonetheless, were subsequently and eventually diminished. Secondly, related to the first point, even though there is consistent *power over discourse* and the language used in Chinese elite sport is rather stable than volatile, changes in the *power of discourse/language* have also been well evidenced, for instance the power of reforming discourse before or after the Beijing Games, and the consistency of, but the decreasing emphasis on, Juguo Tizhi in the post-2008 era.

7.3 Research limitations and further research

The first point in relation to research limitations was brought up by a Chinese sport official who was seeking to reject our request for interview, which he eventually accepted. The interviewee suggested that the selected three sports were not able to represent the full picture of Chinese elite sport, since according to the traditional typology of the Zhuanye sport system, table tennis and diving are the 'sports in which China enjoys advantage', while baseball belongs to the category of 'sports in which China falls behind'. Thus, the interviewee suggested that a sport 'in which China has potential to have advantage', such as fencing and cycling, and another team sport, ideally one of the three big ball sports, needed to be included to fully represent Chinese elite sport.

This may well be the case to some degree, given that the addition of another type of sport could provide another perspective, and it is undeniable that the selection of cases in a sense provides a frame for, and enables and constrains, the field of analysis. It is thus worth reminding the reader of the relationship between the cases selected and the objects of the research. This is to say that given the dominance of Zhuanye sport and Juguo Tizhi, the majority of Chinese elite sports, especially the Olympic sports, are within the (fully) control of the Zhuanye system despite of the category in which it falls. In this thesis we have sought to unveil the mechanisms of power within, Chinese elite sport, and as a consequence have chosen to focus on sports in which dominance is differently interpreted, is maintained and is (at least, said to be) manifested in the relationship between different stakeholders, rather than to investigate a variety of sports, which, though, variously positioned in respect of their differing potential for winning Olympic gold medals, were consistently dominated by powerful groups. Furthermore, given that our interests lie in the relationship between the Olympics and Chinese elite sport, it did not make sense to select Chinese football⁸⁰, since the weak association

⁸⁰ Chinese men's football team has been in the final stage of the Olympics 5 times, and has never taken any victory back to China.

Regime	Year	Host City	Score	Opponent
The ROC	1936	Berlin	0-2	GB

between the former Olympic silver-medal-winning women's football team and the concept of professionalisation, and the even 'weaker' association between the qualification potential for the Olympics and the professionalised Chinese men's football renders these cases less relevant to our concerns.

Secondly, as with elite sport systems in other countries, Chinese elite sport has its own confidential code, and is thus, to a degree, closed in terms of not only documents and strategic files, but also its attitude towards studies from outside. Thus, some of our analysis is based on documents, only the summaries of which are publicly available, and on interview data, some of which relies solely on note taking (rather than on recording, transcription and

	1948	London	0-4	Turkey
	1960	Roma	1-4	Italy
			0-5	Brazil
			2-3	GB
The PRC	1988	Seoul	0-3	West Germany
			0-2	Sweden
	2008	Beijing	0-0	Tunisia
			1-1	New Zealand
			0-2	Belgium
			0-3	Brazil

Though, the Chinese women's football squad has better result than the men's side. The professionalisation of Chinese women's football has been less developed than the men's league. For more information in relation to the development of Chinese women's football, please see (X. Li 2007; Zhou 2004; Fan & Mangan 2003)

subsequent analysis). Thus though we have striven to provide the best available analysis given available sources, the limitations of these sources have to be recognised.

In addition, the State Council published a number of significant reforming policies in 2014 in terms of the development of the sport industries and the promotion of civil-society-based development of Chinese elite sport, most notably *Several Opinions of the State Council on Accelerating the Development of Sport Industry and Promoting Consuming in Sport* (The State Council of the People's Republic of China 2014). The GAS also made corresponding policies and moves, such as *Several Opinions of the GAS on Promoting the Reform of the Mechanism of Approving Sport Events* (GAS 2014) and the abandonment (and subsequent reinstatement and then re-abandonment) of the medal table of the National Games as an indicator of performance (Sun 2015; Wang 2015; Yao et al. 2015). These practices, on the one hand, have been interpreted as an outcome of the influence of President Xi's interests in, and focus on, sport, and as a reflection of the change of the central government's thinking in respect of the driving force for the development of China after the decrease in its GDP growth rate. On the other hand, these moves are also recognised as consequences of pressure for the reform of the GAS, which began to be investigated in Xi's major anti-graft campaign in mid-2014. Thus, further research of the impact of these significant and critical moves in the political

climate of China and of the impact of Chinese bid for the 2022 Winter Games on the development of Chinese elite sport would provide a fitting extension to the current study.

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Appendix Interview Questions

General Questions

1. What is the most significant impact of the Beijing Games to Chinese elite sport (or your sport)?
2. How is it different with the impact of the Athens and the London Games?
3. Has there been any change in Chinese elite sport (or your sport)?
4. Why there has (not) been change?
5. Whose interest is promoted in the post-2008 situation, or in the change?
6. What do you think the ideal environment for the development of Chinese elite sport (or your sport)?
7. Has there been any change in the role of Chinese elite sport (or your sport) in the Chinese society?
8. Has there been any change in your role in Chinese elite sport (or your sport)?
9. Would Chinese elite sport (or your sport) be the same, if the 2008 Games was not in Beijing?
10. Has there been any change in media? And how?
11. Why there has (not) been Change? How does it affect the governance of Chinese elite sport (or your sport)

Sport specific Questions

1. Table tennis
 - a) What is most fundamental feature of the Chinese table tennis super league, comparing with other Chinese elite table tennis competition?
 - b) What is the most significant obstacle of development?
 - c) How are the conflicts between commercial and collective interest sorted?

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- d) Has there been any change in players' self-recognition on their role?
Why?

2. Diving

- a) How does the Beijing Games influence the relationship between the elite system and education system?
- b) How does the diving system in education sector affect the elite one?
Why has there been decline?
- c) How should these two systems be balanced?
- d) How should the individual interests and collective interests be balanced?

3. Baseball

- a) How do you perceive the development of Chinese baseball after being de-Olympicised? How do you think the way of development shall be?
- b) How do you perceive the development of baseball in mass sport, education sector? How does these affect the elite baseball?
- c) How do you perceive the cooperation between the Chinese baseball association and other organisations in private sector? How do you think about the effort?