


Review

# Chinese Path to Sports Modernization: Fitness-for-All (Chinese) and a Development Model for Developing Countries

Jiaomu Li <sup>1,†</sup>, Bin Wan <sup>1,†</sup>, Yaping Yao <sup>1</sup>, Te Bu <sup>1,\*</sup>, Ping Li <sup>1,\*</sup> and Yang Zhang <sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> College of Physical Education, Hunan Normal University, Changsha 410081, China

<sup>2</sup> Independent Researcher, Orlando, FL 34786, USA

\* Correspondence: w3171@hunnu.edu.cn (T.B.); 051550192@hunnu.edu.cn (P.L.)

† These authors contributed equally to this work.

**Abstract:** This policy review overviews the Chinese path to sports modernization within the theoretical framework of the Chinese path to modernization, which is centered on the principle of Fitness-for-All. Over a century of endeavors, the modernization of sports in China has created a new and comprehensive sports civilization in a developing country with a large population and inadequate sports resources. The essence of the Chinese path to sports modernization can be summarized as a people-centered process of sports modernization led by the Communist Party of China that relies on a top-level design with universal participation and seeks to develop a diverse global sports governance. The development of Chinese sports will not only make a transformative contribution to China's commitment to its second Century Goal, but it will also provide a renaissance for the ancient Chinese philosophy of health first into a people-centered modernization theory, and contribute a Chinese blueprint for the pursuit of the advancement of cross-cultural, diverse world sports civilizations and sustainable development goals.

**Keywords:** governance; 2030 Agenda; globalization; culture; health; physical activity; inclusive



**Citation:** Li, J.; Wan, B.; Yao, Y.; Bu, T.; Li, P.; Zhang, Y. Chinese Path to Sports Modernization: Fitness-for-All (Chinese) and a Development Model for Developing Countries. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 4203. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15054203>

Academic Editors: Alfonso Martínez Moreno, Arturo Díaz-Suárez, Vicente Morales Baños and José María López Gullón

Received: 20 January 2023

Revised: 20 February 2023

Accepted: 22 February 2023

Published: 26 February 2023



**Copyright:** © 2023 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

The origin of the modernization theory can be traced to the post-World War II response of American political elites to the emerging global order [1]. During this period of geopolitical transition, including the Cold War and the emergence of the Third World, American political scientists studied the characteristics of economic development, political stability, and sociocultural structures in non-Western societies and created modernization theory through the lens of Western thought. Modernization is generally interpreted as “a multifaceted process involving changes in all areas of human thought and activity” [2]. Earlier modernization theorists centered their assertions on a single modernity that the Western model of industrialization leads to advantageous socioeconomic development and democratization [3]. Not surprisingly, Western modernization theorists advocate the convergence of regime types or value orientations regardless of the political and sociocultural foundations or even the predominance of Western modernization. For example, Vassos Argyrou, a post-colonial scholar and social anthropologist, critiqued that “modernization is the mechanism by which [non-Western] societies are constituted as Western subjects” and “the West essentializes itself as the only true source of legitimate culture so that the practical manifestations of [non-Western] claims to modernity seem a poor version of the ‘original’” [4]. Despite the more rational definition of modernization that characterizes it as an economic and technological development that brings a coherent set of social, political, and peaceful transitions [3], and thus can be viewed as a goal of human development, its essences continues to be characterized by Western countries. It is thus necessary to reorient modernization theory through the visions and experiences of other non-Western developing countries to bridge the divide between the West and the East and develop a pattern of mutual promotion of modernization and civilization.

Since the mid-19th century, China has followed the global trend to modernize its country and culture. After more than a century of arduous exploration and creativity, China has developed a path to modernization that is uniquely Chinese. At the ceremony marking the centenary of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Xi Jinping first proposed the “Chinese path to modernization,” summarizing it as a new and unique path that “upheld and developed socialism with Chinese characteristics and driven coordinated progress in material, political, cultural-ethical, social, and ecological terms” and “a new model for human advancement” [5]. The report of the 20th National Congress of the CPC offered a comprehensive interpretation of the Chinese path to modernization [6]. The Chinese path to modernization is a modernization led by the CPC that is based on national conditions and shares the characteristics of modernization in all countries. It possesses the five qualities of being shared by a large population, common prosperity for all, coordinated material and cultural-ethical progress, harmony between humanity and nature, and peaceful development. This is the sign of the establishment of the theoretical framework of the Chinese path to modernization, which has far-reaching political, contemporary, and historical significance for China’s efforts to construct an all-round modern socialist country.

Modernization encompasses various facets of social transition, such as technological innovation, industrialization, tertiary education level, urbanization, and ecological rationality. Despite sports having taken on greater economic, political, and cultural significance alongside a relatively stable human civilization and economic globalization in the late 20th century [7], studies on their modernization remain primarily anthropological. Sports modernization in the context of sports anthropology focuses on the evolution and inherent differences between pre-modern and modern sports [8]. Given that the Industrial Revolution has irrefutably reshaped global development over the past two centuries, existing conceptions about sports modernization are often framed through the prism of Western civilization. Susan Brownell, an American cultural anthropologist, studied sports anthropology through the lens of Western imperialism and modernization. In the encounter between the West and “the Rest,” Brownell revealed that sports were used as “intercultural spaces” or “contact zones” [9]. In the late 19th century, Western intellectuals studied the “savage” practices of “the Rest,” bolstered the identity of the West by defining “who we are not” [9], and constructed a “Western-centric” history of “Western civilization” [10].

Before all ethnoses can cooperate to build a shared future, two fundamental issues must be clarified. First, if one defines the West in opposition to its Others—the Orient and exotic “savages” [9]—there is no foundation for cooperation or competition. We must acknowledge that the Industrial Revolution has contributed to a more productive world, but we must also recognize that the mono-Western value bias is becoming increasingly problematic in the modernization of developing countries with divergent cultural values [11]. Likely, the answer to the modernization theory lies somewhere between the West and the Others—societies with distinct cultures and rich historical roots such as Brazil [12] and India [13]—all of which could play a role in the diverse modernization process. The second issue relates to what constitutes sports modernization and its ultimate goal of sports civilization. Stronger sports performance that are also civilized [8], that empower women in sports [14], use institutionalized governance [15], and with advanced infrastructures that are also environmentally sustainable [16] are all characteristics of sports modernization. In ancient Chinese philosophy, despite sports such as archery and Taijiquan originating for military purposes, physical activity is meant to nourish life [17], and the Chinese underlying philosophy places health benefits to be sports’ most important aspect [18]. Should this Chinese perspective be understood as another layer of sports modernization and human modernization in general, we find that sports modernization stagnates in many regions of the world. Even for a small (~5.4 million population in 2022) but highly modernized (ranked second on the UN’s Human Development Index in 2022) nation such as Norway, the population exhibits a concerning decline in physical activity [19] and increase in BMI [20], both of which are associated with various forms of non-communicable diseases and decreased life expectancy [17].

Population health is a prerequisite for a working economy, a competent nation, and an essential foundation for an ethnos to survive in the long run. China distinguishes itself in the world sports civilizations by emphasizing the importance of sports to the health of the entire Chinese population. Without determined national policy support [21], global physical inactivity is increasing, which is not conducive to human modernization in general. No modernization stands still. Thus, an overview of the Chinese experience, focusing on the CPC's governance in sports, can contribute to the comprehension of an evolving model of new sports modernization and civilization in today's complex world.

The Chinese path to sports modernization is a necessary condition for the development of a strong sports powerhouse and a Healthy China 2030 [22], as well as a crucial aspect of the Chinese path to modernization. Summarizing the development of the Chinese path to sports modernization could further support the development of sports in China, and its Chinese experience could serve as a model for other developing countries, which will be helpful to the rapid growth of global synergy. Therefore, this policy review summarized the century-long history of the Chinese path to sports modernization to offer a Chinese development blueprint for building healthier, more inclusive, and cooperative world sports civilizations.

## 2. Chinese Path to Sports Modernization in Retrospect

### 2.1. *Starting Stage: Introduction and Learning (1840–1949)*

After the Opium War, China was compelled to become a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. In the midst of an internal and external crisis, the Self-Strengthening Movement, which intended to explore China's prosperity with the aid of Western knowledge and skills, initiated the modernization process [23]. Under unprecedented internal and external conditions, Chinese sports have begun the modernization process.

From 1840 to 1911, China studied Western sports through the "Western Learning Spreading to the East". During the Self-Strengthening Movement, China adopted Western military training methods and military education principles, and military exercises used to train the army became one of the obligatory courses at the military school [24]. In addition, as modern-style academies and church-affiliated missionary schools grew, China introduced Western sports such as fencing, boxing, and soccer [25], established early sports tournaments, and expedited the convergence of traditional Chinese sports with modern Western sports. During the Reform Movement, China aimed at learning from the superior systems and concepts of the West and introduced the idea of "martial spirit" [26] to strengthen and rescue the nation.

Between 1911 and 1949, China initiated the modernization of sports. Under the banner of science and democracy, works such as Mao Zedong's "A Study of Physical Education" emerged in China during the New Culture Movement that dealt with indigenous modern sports thought [27]. Meanwhile, contemporary schools gradually standardized physical education courses by including them in the curriculum and standardized assessment as part of the Renxu School System [28]. During the period of the Central Revolutionary Base (commonly known as the Central Soviet Area), Chinese sports utilized the Soviet model to build structured and standardized mass sports and red sports competitions in the Central Revolutionary Base [29], laying the foundation for the development of Chinese sports.

China introduced modern Western sports from the "Western Learning Spreading to the East" and accumulated some experience in modernizing sports by initially learning from the Soviet sports model. Furthermore, by inheriting traditional Chinese sports culture and learning modern Western sports culture, China began the era of awakening to sports modernization.

### 2.2. *Exploratory Stage: Establishment and Stagnation (1949–1978)*

The establishment of the People's Republic of China marked the emergence of a new socialist state on the historical stage of globalization, ushering in a new era of China's history. Before 1949, China's society and economy were backward, the national physique was

poor, and the country's sports system was plagued by a low sports level, a dearth of sports talents, and deteriorating sports venues [30]. After 1949, China initially adopted the Soviet sports model and established a nationwide support system pooling institutional resources on key national undertakings (hereafter, nationwide support system) [31]. It clearly outlined the mass sports strategy of "developing sports and enhancing people's physique" and presented the sports development policy of "combining popularization and improvement" [32]. This established the direction of sports modernization throughout the period of communist building in China and paved the way for the modernization of sports for a large population. In 1952, the State Physical Culture and Sport Commission, the first sports administration organization in New China, was founded, marking the beginning of sports' segmentation and specialization. In addition, the establishment of youth spare-time sports schools, the construction of sports stadiums, and the enhancement of the system for training sports talent [31] have contributed to the rapid development of competitive sports in New China. By the year 1954, all of the previous Chinese swimming records and the vast majority of track and field records had been broken.

The development of Chinese sports was interrupted by the Great Leap Forward in 1958 [31] and the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976 [33]. In any event, the tide of modernization sweeping across Chinese society was inevitable, and Chinese sports followed this trend. In 1971, China gradually ended its isolation from international sports by establishing Ping-Pong Diplomacy [34] and building amicable international sports links. During the course of exploration, Chinese sports gradually established the path of government-led modernization and integration into world sports civilizations.

### *2.3. Formative Stage: Base and Reform (1978–2012)*

In 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the CPC was held, and China's socialist modernization began in a new period of reform and opening-up, while sports modernization made advances in various fields. Regarding mass sports, the system of radio gymnastic exercises and workplace exercises was reinstated, and a variety of mass sports activities and employee physical activities were implemented to serve as the foundation for the development of mass sports [32]. The Compulsory Education Law and the Working Regulation of School Physical Education were enacted to update the curriculum and management structure of school sports. In competitive sports, it emphasized the nationwide support system and began to demonstrate the international competitiveness of a major sports power.

In the report of the 14th National Congress of the CPC, it was stated that "the objective of the reform of the economic structure will be to establish a socialist market economy," which marked the comprehensive reform of China's socialist modernization. Meanwhile, China has accelerated sports reforms to establish a modern sports system that is compatible with the socialist market economy and to form a sports development path with Chinese characteristics. The 1992 "Hongshankou meeting" [35] marked the beginning of the professionalization of Chinese soccer, followed by basketball and volleyball. In 1993, the State Physical Culture and Sport Commission issued an "Opinion on Deepening the Reform of Sport System" [36], and national sports associations began their entity reform. In school sports, the "Teaching Programme of Physical Education" for various grade levels and the guiding principle "Health First" [37] have been promulgated to encourage the all-round development of young people. In the field of mass sports, the State Physical Culture and Sport Commission implemented the "Outline of the National Fitness Program" [38] and advocated a "state leadership, social support, universal participation" management method for mass sports. Thus, Chinese sports entered the era of commercialization, entrepreneurship, and socialization. With Beijing's successful candidacy for the Olympic Games in 2001, Chinese sports have seized a significant opportunity for modernization. The success of the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics elevated China's capabilities of hosting mega-events to a new level, and the world witnessed the initial outcomes of the Chinese path to sports modernization.



The formative stage of the Chinese path to sports modernization is crucial to the modernization of Chinese sports, bridging the solid foundation of the early development of Chinese sports to the rapid growth of Chinese sports with Chinese characteristics. By exploring the path of sports development within a socialist market economy, China has created a new model with government leadership and universal participation for sports modernization.

#### *2.4. Development Stage: Advantages and Characteristics (2012–2022)*

In 2012, the Chinese government set “Two Centenary Goals”: by 2021, the centenary of the CPC, the goal is to “build a moderately prosperous society in all respects” and, by 2049, the centenary of the People’s Republic of China, the goal is to “build a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious.” During the critical period of striving to achieve the first Century Goal, sports, as an integral part of the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, placed a greater emphasis on coordinated, all-round, and sustainable growth. It was stated in the “Plan for Development of the Sports Industry During the 12th Five-Year Plan” [39] that the 12th Five-Year Plan phase should give full play to the significant role of sports in assuring the improvement of people’s well-being and in promoting social progress. In 2014, the “Several Opinions of the State Council on Accelerating the Development of the Sports Industry and Promoting Sports Consumption” [40] was issued to promote the well-rounded development of the sports industry as a pillar industry of the Chinese economy by addressing the institutional mechanism that hinders the development of the sports industry, increasing domestic demand for sports consumption, and promoting the integration of sports into the national economy. In the meantime, the Fitness-for-All was elevated to a national strategy, and the National Fitness Program (2011–2015) [41] was launched to enhance the development of mass sports and well-being services by building a national fitness public service system. In addition, competitive sports, sports and culture, and sports management continued to deepen reform, and the quality of development and effectiveness of the sports industry was continuously enhanced.

Throughout the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016–2020), sports continued to play a vital role in building a prosperous society and attaining the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The Chinese soccer reform served as a pilot field to advance the socialization of professional sports and market-oriented reform, thereby building a new nationwide support system [42]. The Chinese government launched the National Fitness Program (2016–2020) [43], the Health China 2030 [22], and other programmatic guidelines to increase Fitness-for-All coverage. The government has further issued “Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving School Physical Education in the New Era” [44] and “Opinions on Deepening the Integration of Sports and Education to Promote the Healthy Development of Adolescents” [45] in the training of sports talents to meet China’s need for talents with comprehensive development of morality, intelligence, physical education, art and labor in the new era.

Amid increasing globalization, so do Chinese competitive sports. As the benchmark of modernized mega-sports events, the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics achieved the best medal record in China’s Winter Olympics history and hosted an ecologically civilized Winter Olympics [46], signifying the advancement of China’s modernized capacity to host mega-events, its development as a world sports power, and its dedicated support for the sustainable Olympic Movement.

During the development stage of the Chinese path to sports modernization, it underwent historic changes in the process of helping to build a moderately prosperous society, and the modernization process of sports has increased its efficiency, creating unique advantages in the development of sports modernization and laying the foundation for sports development at a higher level.

### 2.5. Uplifting Stage: All-Round and High-Quality (2022–2035)

In the new period, the “Outline for Building a Leading Sports Nation” [47] specifies that by 2035, the sports field should form a new pattern of government-led sports development, with the coordinated participation of the market, social organizations, and people that is compatible with the basic realization of modernization, and the modernization of the sports governance system through the use of digital technology and the improvement of the public service system. The “14th Five-Year Sports Development Plan” [48] stated that “China should become a modern leading sports socialist country by 2035,” indicating that sports modernization is increasingly focused on all-round and high-quality development. The “Opinions on Building a Higher Level of Public Service System for National Fitness” [49] recommends promoting the development of national fitness toward diversification, standardization, legalization, marketization, and digitization, enhancing people’s physique and improving the health of the entire population, and accelerating the construction of a strong sports country by building a higher level public service system for national fitness. The sports industry plays an essential role in meeting the growing needs of the public for a higher quality of life. Based on the implementation of the new development concept, the sports industry will continue to prioritize high-quality development and the attainment of the development objective of the sports industry will become a pillar industry in the economy, as well as the acceleration of measures to stimulate the vitality of sports consumption.

Although it has been suggested that modernization and sustainable development should not be conflated [50], and there are different paths to modernization, the path to sustainable development is the vision shared by all countries. In Chinese sports, the gap between eagerness for modernization and sustainable outcomes has been observed. The Chinese people have had high hopes for decades that Chinese men’s soccer will become a major actor in world soccer. This prompted all Chinese societies to devote vast resources to its development; however, not only did the team fail to meet people’s expectations, the league became financially unsustainable [51], and soccer in China produced a series of high-level corruption concerns that tarnished the reputation of Chinese sports. Looking to the future, the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals [52] provide a comprehensive framework for the balancing of rapid development and sustainability, which should be an important reference for Chinese policymakers [53]. Chinese people learned from the Olympic Movement that a long-term perspective of the past, present, and future is required for sports modernization to result in sustainable development and that this goal is attainable [16]. Only sustainable sports modernization is the future of Chinese sports, and its sports modernization must be sustainable for sports and society to achieve harmonious development.

Figure 1 shows pivotal historical moments on the Chinese path to sports modernization to date. The 20th National Congress of the CPC reaffirmed the mission to “promote the comprehensive development of mass sports and competitive sports, accelerate building a strong sports nation,” which means that the modernization of sports will continue to adhere to the National Fitness Program [54], with integration of sports and education [45] and other development strategies, and the construction of sports as a pillar of a modern country. To build a strong sports country, Chinese sports will continue to promote high-quality development in all areas of sport and present a new pattern of sports development with Chinese characteristics. This will be the long-term direction and process for the modernization of Chinese sports in the years to come.



**Figure 1.** Historical moments on the Chinese path to sports modernization. (A) Mao Zedong’s inscription, “developing sports and enhancing people’s physique,” for the foundation of the State Physical Culture and Sport Commission in Beijing, on 10 June 1952. (B) American and Chinese table tennis players posed for a photo together in Beijing, on April 13, 1971. Photo courtesy of China News Service. (C) Front page of the People’s Daily, 14 July 2001. China celebrated Beijing’s successful 2008 Olympic bid. (D) The National Fitness Day emblem was unveiled for the first time on 5 August 2009. National Fitness Day is celebrated annually on 8 August, and government-led sporting events and fitness programs are held nationwide to promote fitness awareness and healthy living. Article 15 of the revised Law on Physical Culture and Sports came into force on 1 January 2023, declaring “The week of the National Fitness Day on 8 August is the Sports Publicity Week” and enacting Articles 16 to 23 regarding the National Fitness Program.

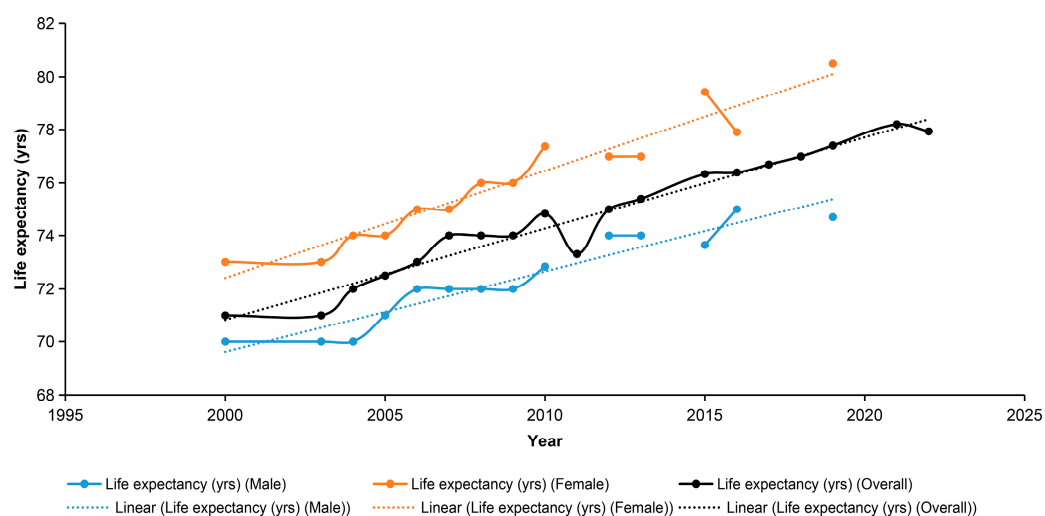
### 3. The Essence of the Chinese Path to Sports Modernization

#### 3.1. People-Centered

The “people-centered” approach is the defining characteristic of the Chinese path to sports modernization and is in line with the pursuit of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” [55]. “People-centered” can be described as: the objective of sports development is to meet the people’s ever-growing needs for a better life, the process of sports development requires the participation of all people, and the benefits of sports development are shared by all people [56]. Adhering to the “people-oriented” approach, the Chinese path to sports modernization is based on the actual needs of the people and the needs of the country’s development, generating extensive interaction with the people and ultimately achieving the goal of sharing the outcomes of reform and development with all Chinese people, which is an innovation and development of the CPC’s mass line [57]. “People-centered” is the guiding philosophy and value pursuit that the CPC has always adhered to, with “developing sports and enhancing people’s physique” as the core implication and the fundamental followings of sports: to fulfill the goals of the people for a better life and to support their well-rounded development in a modern society. On the other hand, “people-centered” meets the objectives of national development. Through the outstanding successes of Chinese athletes in international sports competitions, the self-confidence and pride of the Chinese nation and people can be bolstered, and the country’s comprehensive development needs can be achieved [58].

In terms of tangible results, comparing the five periods of the National Physical Fitness Monitoring Bulletin from 2000 to 2020 reveals that life expectancy per capita has steadily increased (Figure 2). The 2022 National Fitness Trends Report [59] reveals that 67.5% of Chinese people aged 7 and older engage in physical activity at least once per week, an increase of 18.5% from the 2014 survey. In addition, 68.5% of adults and 44.5% of seniors who actively participate in physical activity have received scientific fitness guidance, an increase of 13.5% and 3.7%, respectively, compared to the 2014 survey. Moreover,

through the “integration of sports and medicine” model [60], fitness and rehabilitation centers are being built across the country [61], providing effective exercise prevention for the health of all individuals. This is further evidence that the Chinese path to sports modernization is always centered on people of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds and is in line with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” [55]. Years of national fitness campaigns and public services have provided the required health foundation for the development of a strong, modern country. The modernization of sports plays a prominent role as an integral component of the Chinese path to modernization and can propel the rapid modernization of public health.



**Figure 2.** Average life expectancy in China, 2000–2022. Data were collected from the China Statistical Yearbook, the National Physical Fitness Monitoring Bulletin, and the World Health Organization.

People also include descendants, and the ancient Chinese philosophy of “harmony between humanity and nature” (“天人合一”) reminds their Chinese descendants today that humanity must coexist with nature; thus, the “people-centered” approach broadly encompasses both future descendants and nature. On its ongoing path to socialism with Chinese characteristics, China, as a responsible global actor, adheres to the concept that “clear waters and green mountains are mountains of gold and silver” [62] and promotes the ecologically based modernization of sports. In building its sports legacy [16], China strictly adheres to and implements the IOC Agenda 2020. The Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics not only promotes the development of a public service system for national fitness but also highlights the results of China’s ecological civilization development since the implementation of its new environmental protection law [63]. In the meantime, the Chinese government promotes the integration of ecological civilization and national fitness, as well as tourism development in ecological environment restoration areas [64], thus promoting the synchronized development of humanity and nature within the Fitness-for-All framework. The Chinese path to sports modernization adheres to the harmonious coexistence of humanity and nature and the construction of an ecological civilization, thereby passing on ample space for sustainable development and a beautiful sports legacy to future generations.

### 3.2. Top-Level Design and Universal Participation

Looking back on the evolution of the Chinese path to sports modernization, successive Chinese leadership always placed a high priority on sports [65]. In his “A Study of Physical Education”, Mao Zedong comprehensively elucidated his view of sports, proposed the mass sports policy of “developing sports and enhancing people’s physique,” the nationwide support system in response to the development of competitive sports, and the education policy of comprehensive development of morality, intelligence, and physical fit-



ness, thereby establishing the direction of the early development of modern Chinese sports. Deng Xiaoping developed the strategy of popularization and enhancement for sports development, emphasized the valuable role of sports, and led China to open the path of socialist sports progress with Chinese characteristics. Jiang Zemin promoted the development and implementation of the “Outline of the National Fitness Program” [38], which elevated national fitness to a higher level. Hu Jintao introduced the “comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable development” scientific development philosophy [66] into sports and oversaw the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics, thereby accelerating China’s progress toward becoming a world sports power [67]. Xi Jinping couples a strong sports country with the Chinese Dream [68], issuing crucial directives on key reform and development concerns in sports. During his reign, he promulgated key papers such as the “Outline for Building a Leading Sports Nation” [47], pushed for the first revision of the Law on Physical Culture and Sports [69], oversaw the preparation for and holding of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, and is leading the modernization of sports to a new level of development. The CPC’s leadership and the government’s consistent policies are the fundamental ideological sources and success guarantees for sports modernization in China.

The Chinese path to sports modernization is government-led and organized, but it also involves the mobilization of societal forces and the participation of citizens in collaborative governance. In this national fitness system, the government is the guarantor of the activities, society is the primary intermediary in promoting the diversity of national fitness activities, and the masses are expected to engage in sports to reap the health benefits. In the practice of running sports by the public, Wenzhou has achieved remarkable results and established the “Wenzhou model” [70], which has stimulated the vitality of communities and individuals in the construction of sports venues and facilities, the hosting of sporting events, the training of competitive sports talents, and the investment in the sports industry.

The new government-led nationwide support system with collaborative governance is neither decentralism nor polycentrism. This characteristic distinguishes the modernization of Chinese sports and constitutes a top-level design, people-centered model of sports governance. This is the institutional cornerstone of the Chinese path to sports modernization.

### 3.3. Diverse Governance in Global Sports

By adhering to the principle of achieving shared growth through dialogue and collaboration, global sports governance will be administered in a transparent manner that promotes fairness for all participants. From its first participation in the Olympic Games in 1984 to hosting the Asian Games for the first time in 1990, to hosting the Summer Olympics for the first time in 2008, to hosting the Youth Olympic Games for the first time in 2012, and to hosting the Winter Olympics in 2022, with Beijing becoming the only “City of Two Olympics,” it is clear that as the modernization of Chinese sports advances, China will continue to contribute to world sports civilizations.

The reform of Chinese soccer not only promotes market-oriented professionalism but also demonstrates China’s resolve to combat corruption in sports [71], thereby making China a part of the global forces working toward the rule-of-law-based modernization of sports civilizations. Participation by 91 countries and regions in the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics is a milestone in China’s new era of modernization. Ten Latin American and Caribbean countries sent delegations to the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, which demonstrates that China, through its efforts, continues to promote the Olympic Movement in small countries and subtropical regions and encourages the openness and inclusiveness of the sports landscape with a Chinese vision. Promoting the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative economic zone through foreign sports aid sheds light on how sports diplomacy empowers socioeconomic transition in developing countries [72]. China seeks its own sports modernization while promoting the common development of sports in other countries, providing a blueprint for the integration and development of different sports civilizations around the world. Diverse governance in global sports is a key objective for

China's integration into international sports as well as one of the essences of the Chinese path to sports modernization.

#### **4. Fitness-for-All and World: A Chinese Approach to Common Prosperity**

##### *4.1. Pioneering a Large Population with Inadequate Sports Resources*

Sports modernization has never before been attempted in a developing country as populous as China. There is no precedent to follow but what China creates for itself, highlighting the significance of China's experience in building an inclusive system. Under the leadership of the CPC, the Chinese path to sports modernization transcends the traditional sports development model and keeps the path of health first [53], making the development of mass sports a crucial component of the objective of establishing a strong sports nation. To enhance health through physical activity, the Chinese government developed a comprehensive fitness program [54] for all life stages, including childhood, adolescence, middle age, and old age, as well as for women, farmers, workers, and the disabled. In particular, China has strengthened the construction of public sports spaces to serve special groups, such as children and youth, and people with disabilities, as a result of the Olympic Movement during the hosting of the Youth Olympic Games and Paralympic Games [73], and the legacy of the Olympic venues has provided modern facilities for people to engage in physical activity [16]. Meanwhile, all levels of government direct the implementation of diverse forms of sports activities with the characteristics of different regions in the east, middle, and west [74], thereby realizing the vigorous development of sports in a populous country with the National Fitness Program that benefits all people. By 2020, 37.2% of the Chinese population regularly engage in physical activity [75], representing a significant achievement in the development of national health policy.

The second significance of the Chinese path to sports modernization is the leapfrogging of the sports industry in developing countries with inadequate sports resources and the promotion of sustainable economic development through the sports industry. Sports resources consist of all conditions and factors used or available for people to engage in sports production or sports-related activities, and their allocation and efficiency would substantially influence the development of the sports industry [76]. Industrialized countries have sufficient socioeconomic resources for the modernization of sports, and the leisure sports industry has become an integral part of the national economies of the USA, the United Kingdom, and Australia where market-driven capitals are sufficient [77]. China, on the other hand, creates a distinctive path for the development of its sports industry by deepening the reform of the system affecting the development of its sports industry, maximizing the market's decisive role in resource allocation, and continuously promoting the participation of societal forces in organizing grassroots-level sports [78], with the government taking the lead and diverse social and market players participating. In 2020, the total scale of China's sports industry reached CNY 2737.2 billion, with an added value of CNY 1073.5 billion [79], achieving the goal of rapid modernization of the sports industry in a developing country with inadequate sports resources.

China, a developing country with a large population and inadequate sports resources, has evolved into a novel approach to modernization that leverages sports to promote sustainable socioeconomic transitions. This is a crucial aspect of China's path to sports modernization.

##### *4.2. Synergizing Sectors and Resources*

The Chinese path to sports modernization emphasizes the coordinated and unified role of sports departments at all levels and is a comprehensive model that uses sports as a springboard to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals [80] via a synergistic method of working across sectors and fields. First and foremost, the national fitness campaign will continue to promote the application of AR, VR, and 5G technology in the construction and management of smart fitness infrastructures, the construction of a modern national fitness public service system, and the modernization of national public services so that people can live a healthier lifestyle in a livable environment. Second, competitive

sports will accelerate the application of high-tech science and technology services for sports training and competition, deepen the reform of the institutional mechanism of sports management, promote the modernization of the sports governance system and governance capacity, and ultimately reach the goal of modernizing China's institutional system and capacity for governance. Third, by constructing a modern sports industry, the sports industry will boost the modernization of China's economic development and global competitiveness by advancing the integration of artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, big data, and wearable smart devices into sports and the real economy. Fourth, by promoting the spirits of the Chinese women's volleyball team [55,81], it continues to demonstrate the essential role of Chinese women in the national modernization process and will encourage all Chinese people to enjoy equal working conditions, anticipate a prosperous life with confidence, and promote social harmony. Fifth, the amendment of the Law on Physical Culture and Sports [69], greater efforts to develop sports culture, and expansion of sports exchanges with Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan would provide substantial support for the modernization of the rule of law, the regional economy [82], and the "one country, two systems" policy.

Sports embody the profound spiritual power of a country and national identity [83], and they can unite the entire population toward the second Century Goal. The modernization of Chinese sports will play a crucial role at the theoretical and practical levels, make a landmark contribution to the overall progress in material, political, cultural-ethical, social, and ecological terms, and uphold and advance socialism with Chinese characteristics.

#### *4.3. Advocating the Diversity of World Sports Civilizations*

Each civilization is rooted in its cultural milieu. The world abruptly realized, upon entering the 2020s, that global governance deficits remain significant [84], and that many global problems such as climate change necessitate action from diverse players. This is also true for sports governance. Without a deeper understanding of the differences between our culture and others, it would be impossible to create interaction, dialogue, and harmony across world sports civilizations [85].

The Chinese path to sports modernization is a new model formed by embracing the great Chinese culture based on its development demands and future vision, and its advantages can be shared by the international sports community to complement each other and openly achieve shared growth. China adheres to the concept of "a global community of shared future" [86] and builds a modernized path to peaceful development and win-win sports through sports [87], which fully embodies the Chinese thought of harmony and is conducive to the diversity of world sports civilizations. The reform and opening-up encouraged China to learn from other great cultures, and China never hoards its hard-won expertise. While gaining its development, China has actively participated in global sports governance and provided sports aid and cultural exchange to developing countries in a variety of ways [88], thereby narrowing the gap between the levels of competitive sports and fostering an inclusive form of sports modernization and civilization. Figure 3 portrays how China cooperated with Qatar, an energy-rich Gulf nation, to pursue an ecological path during its sports modernization and support the sustainability of China's Belt and Road Initiative [89]. The Chinese path to sports modernization embraces China's contemporary outlook on human civilization, and the successful hosting of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics during a global health crisis demonstrates that diverse governance could "revitalize the global partnership" [55] and lead to shared stability for all human progress, which is significant for the future of Chinese civilization as well as world civilizations.



**Figure 3.** China's green technological diffusion at the Qatar World Cup 2022. (A) An agricultural field in Qatar. The World Cup pitch in Qatar utilized Ningxia University's patented irrigation technology. Chinese agricultural technology is helping Qatar to plant vegetables in the desert. Photo courtesy of CGTN. (B) Al Kharsaah solar power plant. The Chinese-built 800-megawatt power station is the third-largest single photovoltaic power project in the world. The natural gas-rich Gulf nation of Qatar is committed to hosting a low-carbon World Cup and climate action initiatives. Photo courtesy of CGTN. (C) Lusail Stadium features on Qatar's QR 10 banknote. Not only is the Chinese-built venue a legacy in Qatar's history and a landmark in China's Belt and Road Initiative, but it is also a symbol of a responsible regional leader pursuing globalization and modernization. Photo courtesy of Qatar Central Bank.

#### 4.4. Revealing the Synchronous Modernization of Sports and Humanity

Modern sports are the manifestation of human nature in social modernity [90]. Throughout the evolution of the history of sports in the world, the development process of sports has consisted of a deeper awareness of the complex connections and interactions between sports and humanity. Ancient sports were often accompanied by religious rites [91]. The purpose of sports was to perpetuate and develop human life, to make a relationship with God through sports to understand the world and the existence of mankind, and to establish a connection between sports and humanity's natural life. With the development of industrialized society, the repressed, tense, and impulsive emotions of modern civilization must be unleashed. There is a need for a reasonable reason to release impulses, and with this comes the modernization of sports, which evolves it into a legal and reasonable platform for impulses within rules and regulations. Modern sports advance the humanistic ideals of promoting common human development, while globalization increases the demands for the well-rounded development of people and social progress in all spheres.

China, as a part of the global community, missed the early stages of industrialization, but maintained pace with the modern era in its arduous struggle for existence, highlighting the irreversibility of globalization and modernization. Due in part to China's low level of industrialization and the absence of a commensurate industrial social framework, the social underpinning for the modernization of Chinese sports was exceptionally difficult. Additionally, harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature is at the core of traditional Chinese sports and culture, while Western sports are centered on competitiveness [92]. China, based on its national conditions and under the leadership of the CPC, has explored a socialist sports path with Chinese characteristics, and it has progressively become a world sports power. This is a history of modernization from agricultural civiliza-



tion to industrial civilization, as well as the evolution of Chinese sports into a higher-order cultural sports civilization. The Chinese path to sports modernization follows the trend of economic globalization as well as the direction of human social progress rooted in Chinese culture, demonstrating that, from a Chinese perspective, sports modernization evolves in tandem with human modernization.

## 5. Conclusions

Karl Marx pointed out that “the country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its future,” offering valuable guidance for the industrialization and modernization of undeveloped countries. The modernization of Chinese sports is the path of sports modernization pioneered by a super-scale population under the guidance of the concept of building socialism with Chinese characteristics, and it is also a valuable human wealth created in the process of late-developing countries catching up to modernization. We must also acknowledge that the modernization of Chinese sports is a means of creating a development path with Chinese characteristics by introducing and learning from the experiences and practices of sports modernization in industrialized countries. Therefore, it is never meant to chart a division between the West and the East, but rather to demonstrate that modernization and civilization are pluralistic developments and that modernization and civilization in different cultures learn from one another. The Chinese philosophy that “the popularity of national fitness and the degree of participation in international sports cooperation are also important signs of a country’s modernization” [93] could serve as a higher-order development concept for legislators from other developing countries who are tasked with creating policies to promote public health and a modernized state. Going forward, the Chinese path to sports modernization will develop on a holistic level, with a higher quality and more sustainable vision, not only devoting sports values to the building of a modern socialist country in China but also contributing a Chinese blueprint to the multilayered development of world sports civilizations and “a global community of shared future”.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, J.L., B.W., Y.Y., T.B. and P.L.; writing—original draft preparation, J.L., B.W., Y.Y., T.B. and P.L.; writing—review and editing, Y.Z.; funding acquisition, T.B. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research was funded by the National Social Science Fund of China, grant number 1BTY886, the Sports Social Science Research Base (Hunan Normal University) of the General Administration of Sport of China, and the Hunan Sports Public Service Research Center.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

1. Gilman, N. Modernization Theory Never Dies. *Hist. Polit. Econ.* **2018**, *50*, 133–151. [CrossRef]
2. Huntington, S.P. *Political Order in Changing Societies*; Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, USA, 1968.
3. Inglehart, R.; Welzel, C. How Development Leads to Democracy: What We Know About Modernization. *Foreign Aff.* **2009**, *88*, 33–48.
4. Argyrou, V. *Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle*; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 1996.
5. People’s Daily Online. Full Text: Speech by Xi Jinping at a Ceremony Marking the Centenary of the CPC. Available online: <http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0701/c90000-9867483.html> (accessed on 1 July 2021).
6. Xi, J. Full Text: Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Available online: [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx\\_662805/202210/t20221025\\_10791908.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202210/t20221025_10791908.html) (accessed on 16 October 2022).
7. Chantelat, P. An overview of some recent perspectives on the socio-economics of sport. *Int. Rev. Sport Sociol.* **1999**, *34*, 59–68. [CrossRef]

8. Dunning, E. Sport in Space and Time: “Civilizing Processes”, Trajectories of State-Formation and the Development of Modern Sport. *Int. Rev. Sport Sociol.* **1994**, *29*, 331–345. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
9. Brownell, S. *The 1904 Anthropology Days and Olympic Games: Sport, Race, and American Imperialism*; University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, NE, USA, 2008.
10. Besnier, N.; Brownell, S.; Carter, T.F. *The Anthropology of Sport: Bodies, Borders, Biopolitics*; University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, USA, 2018.
11. Mazi Mbah, C.; Ojukwu, U. Modernization theories and the study of development today: A critical analysis. *Int. J. Acad. Multidiscip. Res.* **2019**, *3*, 17–21.
12. Bastos Lima, M.G. Corporate Power in the Bioeconomy Transition: The Policies and Politics of Conservative Ecological Modernization in Brazil. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 6952. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
13. Breton, E. Modernization and Household Composition in India, 1983–2009. *Popul. Dev. Rev.* **2019**, *45*, 739–766. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
14. Gregg, E.A.; Gregg, V.H. Women in Sport: Historical Perspectives. *Clin. Sports Med.* **2017**, *36*, 603–610. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
15. Meier, H.E.; García, B. Beyond sports autonomy: A case for collaborative sport governance approaches. *Int. J. Sport Policy Politics* **2021**, *13*, 501–516. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
16. Wang, W.; Liu, Z.; Bu, T.; Jiao, F. Sustainable land use and green ecology: A case from the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics venue legacy. *Front. Environ. Sci.* **2023**, *10*, 2475. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
17. Lee, I.M.; Shiroma, E.J.; Lobelo, F.; Puska, P.; Blair, S.N.; Katzmarzyk, P.T. Effect of physical inactivity on major non-communicable diseases worldwide: An analysis of burden of disease and life expectancy. *Lancet* **2012**, *380*, 219–229. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
18. Gao, M. Deep and Solid Root, A Road to Long Life: The Revelation of Chinese Ancient Sports View. *J. Tianjin Univ. Sport* **2007**, *22*, 1–5. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
19. Grasdalsmoen, M.; Eriksen, H.R.; Lønning, K.J.; Sivertsen, B. Physical exercise and body-mass index in young adults: A national survey of Norwegian university students. *BMC Public Health* **2019**, *19*, 1354. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
20. Brandkvist, M.; Bjørngaard, J.H.; Ødegård, R.A.; Åsvold, B.O.; Sund, E.R.; Vie, G.Å. Quantifying the impact of genes on body mass index during the obesity epidemic: Longitudinal findings from the HUNT Study. *BMJ* **2019**, *366*, l4067. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
21. Guthold, R.; Stevens, G.A.; Riley, L.M.; Bull, F.C. Worldwide trends in insufficient physical activity from 2001 to 2016: A pooled analysis of 358 population-based surveys with 1.9 million participants. *Lancet Glob. Health* **2018**, *6*, e1077–e1086. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
22. The State Council of the People’s Republic of China. The Central Committee of the CPC and the State Council Print and Issue the Outline of the “Healthy China 2030” Plan. Available online: [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2016-10/25/content\\_5124174.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2016-10/25/content_5124174.htm) (accessed on 25 October 2016).
23. Liu, K.-C. Introduction The Beginnings of China’s Modernization. *Chin. Stud. Hist.* **1990**, *24*, 7–23. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
24. Kuang, S. Eastward Transmission of Western Learning and the Evolution of Modern Sports in Shanghai, 1843–1949. *Int. J. Hist. Sport* **2016**, *33*, 1606–1625. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
25. Ma, L.; Pan, D. The Introduction of Western Sports during the Opening of Macau and Its Developmental Implications. *Int. J. Hist. Sport* **2021**, *38*, 1809–1831. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
26. Büttner, C. Chinese dreams of national strength and global belonging: “Iron and Blood” and the forces of evolution, 1895–1918. In *Colonialism, China and the Chinese: Amidst Empires*; Monteath, P., Fitzpatrick, M., Eds.; Routledge: London, UK, 2019; pp. 15–31.
27. Hong, F.; Hua, T. Sport in China: Conflict between Tradition and Modernity, 1840s to 1930s. *Int. J. Hist. Sport* **2002**, *19*, 189–212. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
28. Qi, S. Dewey Meets Confucius. In *Narrative Inquiry into Reciprocal Learning between Canada-China Sister Schools: A Chinese Perspective*; Bu, Y., Ed.; Springer International Publishing: Cham, Switzerland, 2021; pp. 53–85.
29. Chen, Q.; Liu, X. Cultural Study on the Sports Spirit of the Communist Party of China in the Soviet Area. *Front. Econ. Manag.* **2022**, *3*, 207–216. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
30. Xu, G. Sports in China’s Internationalization and National Representation: China’s Participation in 1932, 1936 and 1948 Olympic Games. *Chin. Hist. Rev.* **2008**, *15*, 1–24. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
31. Fan, H.; Lu, Z. Representing the New China and the Sovietisation of Chinese sport (1949–1962). *Int. J. Hist. Sport* **2012**, *29*, 1–29. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
32. Zhang, X.; Saunders, J. An Historical Review of Mass Sports Policy Development in China, 1949–2009. *Int. J. Hist. Sport* **2019**, *36*, 1390–1413. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
33. Lu, Z. Sport and Politics: The Cultural Revolution in the Chinese Sports Ministry, 1966–1976. *Int. J. Hist. Sport* **2016**, *33*, 569–585. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
34. Zhang, Q. Sports Diplomacy: The Chinese Experience and Perspective. *Hague J. Dipl.* **2013**, *8*, 211–233. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
35. Dai, J.-d.; Ling, P. On period division of the sports history of new China—Also a discussion with Mr. WU Zai-tian and others. *J. Phys. Educ.* **2009**, *16*, 6–11.
36. Hu, X.; Henry, I. Reform and maintenance of Juguo Tizhi: Governmental management discourse of Chinese elite sport. *Eur. Sport Manag. Q.* **2017**, *17*, 531–553. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
37. Liang, S.; Hong, F. Historical Review of State Policy for Physical Education in the People’s Republic of China. *Int. J. Hist. Sport* **2012**, *29*, 583–600. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
38. Zheng, J.; Chen, S.; Tan, T.-C.; Lau, P.W.C. Sport policy in China (Mainland). *Int. J. Sport Policy Politics* **2018**, *10*, 469–491. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

39. General Administration of Sport of China. Plan for Development of the Sports Industry During the 12th Five-Year Plan. Available online: <https://www.sport.gov.cn/n315/n330/c564322/content.html> (accessed on 1 April 2011).
40. The State Council of the People's Republic of China. Several Opinions of the State Council on Accelerating the Development of the Sports Industry and Promoting Sports Consumption. Available online: [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2014-10/20/content\\_9152.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2014-10/20/content_9152.htm) (accessed on 20 October 2014).
41. The State Council of the People's Republic of China. Circular of the State Council on Printing and Issuing the National Fitness Program (2011–2015). Available online: [http://www.gov.cn/zwggk/2011-02/24/content\\_1809557.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zwggk/2011-02/24/content_1809557.htm) (accessed on 24 February 2011).
42. Zhong, B. New National System: The Guarantee of Building a Sports Power. *J. Shanghai Univ. Sport* **2021**, *45*, 1–7. [CrossRef]
43. The State Council of the People's Republic of China. Circular of the State Council on Printing and Issuing the National Fitness Program (2016–2020). Available online: [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2016-06/23/content\\_5084564.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2016-06/23/content_5084564.htm) (accessed on 23 June 2016).
44. General Office of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party; General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. The General Office of the Central Committee of the CPC and the General Office of the State Council Print and Issue the Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving School Physical Education in the New Era. Available online: [http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_xxgk/moe\\_1777/moe\\_1778/202010/t20201015\\_494794.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xxgk/moe_1777/moe_1778/202010/t20201015_494794.html) (accessed on 15 October 2020).
45. General Administration of Sport of China; Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. Notice of the Ministry of Education of the General Administration of Sports on Printing and Distributing Opinions on Deepening the Integration of Sports and Education to Promote the Healthy Development of Adolescents. Available online: [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2020-09/21/content\\_5545112.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2020-09/21/content_5545112.htm) (accessed on 31 August 2020).
46. Bu, T.; Li, Q.; Zou, X. Research on Green Technology Innovation and Ecological Civilization Legacy of Beijing Winter Olympic Games. *Sci. Manag. Res.* **2022**, *40*, 9–17. [CrossRef]
47. The State Council of the People's Republic of China. Outline for Building a Leading Sports Nation. Available online: [http://english.www.gov.cn/policies/latestreleases/201909/02/content\\_WS5d6d1a96c6d0c6695ff7faa3.html](http://english.www.gov.cn/policies/latestreleases/201909/02/content_WS5d6d1a96c6d0c6695ff7faa3.html) (accessed on 2 September 2019).
48. General Administration of Sport of China. “14th Five-Year” Sports Development Plan. Available online: [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2021-10/26/content\\_5644891.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2021-10/26/content_5644891.htm) (accessed on 8 October 2021).
49. General Office of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party; General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. The General Office of the Central Committee of the CPC and the General Office of the State Council Print and Issue the Opinions on Building a Higher Level of Public Service System for National Fitness. Available online: [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2022-03/23/content\\_5680908.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2022-03/23/content_5680908.htm) (accessed on 23 March 2022).
50. Langhelle, O. Why ecological modernization and sustainable development should not be conflated. *J. Environ. Policy Plan.* **2000**, *2*, 303–322. [CrossRef]
51. Liu, Z.; Agudamu, A.; Bu, T.; Hu, K.; Matic, R.M.; Corilic, D.; Casaru, C.; Zhang, Y. Association between Evergrande FC's club debt and Chinese Super League's profitability from 2014 to 2019. *Front. Sports Act. Living* **2023**. [CrossRef]
52. Colglazier, W. Sustainable development agenda: 2030. *Science* **2015**, *349*, 1048–1050. [CrossRef]
53. Dai, J.; Menhas, R. Sustainable development goals, sports and physical activity: The localization of health-related sustainable development goals through sports in China: A narrative review. *Risk Manag. Healthc. Policy* **2020**, *13*, 1419–1430. [CrossRef]
54. The State Council of the People's Republic of China. Circular of the State Council on Printing and Issuing the National Fitness Program (2021–2025). Available online: [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2021-08/03/content\\_5629218.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2021-08/03/content_5629218.htm) (accessed on 3 August 2021).
55. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives. Available online: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444> (accessed on 13 March 2017).
56. Zhang, Y.; Li, Y.; Du, K.; Hu, D.; Zheng, G.; Wang, Z.; Liu, J. The Practical Logic of People-centered Sports Subjectivity. *Chin. Sports Sci.* **2021**, *41*, 30–38. [CrossRef]
57. Jian, X. Grassroots Party Organizations Practice the Mass Line in the New Era: Predicament and Outlet. *Int. J. Educ. Hum. Soc. Sci.* **2022**, *3*, 8–14. [CrossRef]
58. Jiang, Q. Celebrity Athletes, Soft Power and National Identity: Hong Kong Newspaper Coverage of the Olympic Champions of Beijing 2008 and London 2012. *Mass Commun. Soc.* **2013**, *16*, 888–909. [CrossRef]
59. People's Daily Online. 2022 National Fitness Trends Report. Available online: <http://health.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0802/c14739-32491985.html> (accessed on 2 August 2022).
60. General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Promoting National Fitness and Sport Consumption and Facilitating High-quality Development of Sport Industry. Available online: [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2019-09/17/content\\_5430555.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2019-09/17/content_5430555.htm) (accessed on 17 September 2019).
61. Zhang, T.; Ning, Z.; Dong, L.; Gao, S. The implementation of “integration of sports and medicine” in China: Its limitation and recommendations for model improvement. *Front. Public Health* **2022**, *10*, 1062972. [CrossRef]
62. Zhang, B.; Cao, C.; Gu, J.; Liu, T. A New Environmental Protection Law, Many Old Problems? Challenges to Environmental Governance in China. *J. Environ. Law* **2016**, *28*, 325–335. [CrossRef]
63. Jia, K.; Chen, S. Could campaign-style enforcement improve environmental performance? Evidence from China's central environmental protection inspection. *J. Environ. Manage.* **2019**, *245*, 282–290. [CrossRef]

64. General Administration of Sport of China. Outdoor Sports Industry Development Plan (2022–2025). Available online: [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2022-11/07/content\\_5725152.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2022-11/07/content_5725152.htm) (accessed on 25 October 2022).
65. Weidong, C.; Yin, L.; Yanbing, X.; Daojun, H.; Liu, Q.; Yao, S.; He, M.; Wang, H.; Mi, Y.; Wang, Y.; et al. Academic Conversations on “Chinese Socialist Sports Development Path on the Centenary of the Communist Party of China”. *J. Shanghai Univ. Sport* **2021**, *45*, 1. [[CrossRef](#)]
66. Hu, A.; Yan, Y.; Tang, X.; Liu, S. People-Centered Comprehensive Modernization. In *2050 China: Becoming a Great Modern Socialist Country*; Springer: Singapore, 2021; pp. 21–29.
67. Tan, T.-C. The Transformation of China’s National Fitness Policy: From a Major Sports Country to a World Sports Power. *Int. J. Hist. Sport* **2015**, *32*, 1071–1084. [[CrossRef](#)]
68. Chu, M.P. Xi Jinping at Sochi: Leveraging the 2014 Winter Olympics for the China Dream. *Asia Pacific J. Sport Soc. Sci.* **2015**, *4*, 124–133. [[CrossRef](#)]
69. Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress. Law of the People’s Republic of China on Physical Culture and Sports. Available online: <https://www.sport.gov.cn/n10503/c24405484/content.html> (accessed on 25 June 2022).
70. Zhang, X.; Zhang, B.; Meng, L. Practical Experience and Enlightenment of Social Power Running Sports: Taking Wenzhou Model as an Example. *Sports Cult. Guide* **2022**, *4*, 47–52. [[CrossRef](#)]
71. Wang, R.; Ren, Z. Global Vision and Local Action: Football, Corruption and the Governance of Football in China. *Asian J. Sport Hist. Cult.* **2022**, 1–33. [[CrossRef](#)]
72. Xue, C.Q.L.; Ding, G.; Chang, W.; Wan, Y. Architecture of “Stadium diplomacy”—China-aid sport buildings in Africa. *Habitat Int.* **2019**, *90*, 101985. [[CrossRef](#)]
73. Li, J.; Sun, B. Comparison between the Youth Olympic Games and Olympic Games in Legacy. *J. Sports Res.* **2017**, *31*, 47–52. [[CrossRef](#)]
74. Wang, W.; Theodoraki, E. Mass sport policy development in the Olympic City: The case of Qingdao—host to the 2008 sailing regatta. *Perspect. Public Health* **2007**, *127*, 125–132. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
75. General Administration of Sport of China. Sports Statistics. Available online: <https://www.sport.gov.cn/n315/n329/index.html> (accessed on 10 May 2021).
76. Tan, T.-C.; Green, M. Analysing China’s Drive for Olympic Success in 2008. *Int. J. Hist. Sport* **2008**, *25*, 314–338. [[CrossRef](#)]
77. Yang, L.; Zhou, Y. Reference and Revelation of Leisure Sports Industry Development in Foreign Developed Countries for China. *Theory Reform* **2017**. [[CrossRef](#)]
78. CGTN. Yao Ming Lavishly Praises Grassroots Basketball Games in Chinese Village. Available online: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xwVe0j\\_4y0&ab\\_channel=CGTN](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xwVe0j_4y0&ab_channel=CGTN) (accessed on 14 August 2022).
79. National Bureau of Statistics of China. National Sports Industry Total Scale and Value Added Data Announcement in 2020. Available online: [http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/zxfb/202112/t20211230\\_1825760.html](http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/zxfb/202112/t20211230_1825760.html) (accessed on 30 December 2021).
80. Salvo, D.; Garcia, L.; Reis, R.S.; Stankov, I.; Goel, R.; Schipperijn, J.; Hallal, P.C.; Ding, D.; Pratt, M. Physical Activity Promotion and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Building Synergies to Maximize Impact. *J. Phys. Act. Health* **2021**, *18*, 1163–1180. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
81. Dong, J. A reflection on ‘factors determining the recent success of Chinese women in international sport’. *Int. J. Hist. Sport* **1998**, *15*, 206–210. [[CrossRef](#)]
82. Yuan, J.; Zhou, Y.; Liu, Y. Convergence Evaluation of Sports and Tourism Industries in Urban Agglomeration of Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area and Its Spatial-Temporal Evolution. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 10350. [[CrossRef](#)]
83. Xu, X. Modernizing China in the Olympic Spotlight: China’s National Identity and the 2008 Beijing Olympiad. *Sociol. Rev.* **2006**, *54*, 90–107. [[CrossRef](#)]
84. Zürn, M. Contested Global Governance. *Glob. Policy* **2018**, *9*, 138–145. [[CrossRef](#)]
85. Xu, J.; Cao, Y.; Qiao, Q.; Qian, Y. Sports in the Transnational Public Sphere: Findings from the Case of Daryl Morey’s Hong Kong Tweet. *Int. J. Hist. Sport* **2020**, *37*, 1139–1158. [[CrossRef](#)]
86. Khan, U.; Wang, H.; Ali, I. A Sustainable Community of Shared Future for Mankind: Origin, Evolution and Philosophical Foundation. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 9352. [[CrossRef](#)]
87. Chu, M.P. From Integration with China to Engagement with the World: International Mega-Sports Events in Post-Handover Macau. *Int. J. Hist. Sport* **2016**, *33*, 1254–1267. [[CrossRef](#)]
88. Kobierecki, M.M. Sports Exchange as a Tool of Shaping State’s Image: The Case of China. *Pol. Polit. Sci. Stud.* **2018**, *59*, 109–120. [[CrossRef](#)]
89. Chaziza, M. China–Qatar Strategic Partnership and the Realization of One Belt, One Road Initiative. *China Rep.* **2020**, *56*, 78–102. [[CrossRef](#)]
90. Guttmann, A. *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports*; Columbia University Press: New York, NY, USA, 1978.
91. Murray, S.C. The Role of Religion in Greek Sport. In *A Companion to Sport and Spectacle in Greek and Roman Antiquity*; John Wiley & Sons, Inc.: West Sussex, UK, 2013; pp. 309–319.



92. Xiong, X.; Lin, D. Theory of Vitality and Metabolism—A Comparative Research on Health Concept of Ancient Chinese and Greeks. *J. Beijing Sport Univ.* **2007**, *30*, 1297–1302. [[CrossRef](#)]
93. International Olympic Committee. President Bach Meets Chinese State Leader President Xi—After Seeing Progress Made at Beijing 2022 Venues. Available online: <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/president-bach-meets-chinese-state-leader-president-xi-after-seeing-progress-made-at-beijing-2022-venues> (accessed on 31 January 2019).

**Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.