

# The Politics of Sports Anti-Doping in China: Crisis, Governance and International Compliance

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*The rise of China has sparked much debate about whether it will be a status quo power or a spoiler. This article examines China's compliance with international rules and norms governing doping in sports. In the 1990s China was at the centre of a series of high-profile doping scandals in the sports world and caused much distress to the international sports regulatory regime. Has the Chinese Government succeeded in cleaning up its international sports or have Chinese athletes become more sophisticated at evading detection? This study concludes that international pressure has prompted the Chinese Government to escalate efforts to curb doping in sports. It offers a unique window on China's governance and its compliance with international rules and norms.*

The rise of China has sparked much debate about whether it will be a status quo power or spoiler in the existing international order.<sup>1</sup> This article examines China's troubled history with doping in

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international sports in order to shed light on China's governance and compliance with international rules and norms.

Why doping in sports? First, although sports competition, unlike national defence and military conflict, is not within the realm of high international politics, it is nonetheless of high stakes for nation-building and national prestige.<sup>2</sup> National sports have long been powerful rallying points for many nations, and China is no exception. For the past century, successive Chinese governments have linked the promotion of modern sport with China's nation-building project.<sup>3</sup>

Second, scholars of international norms have noted that countries are most likely to be sensitive to international norms and pressure when they care about their international image or reputation.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the literature on international integration and national governance has posited a strong relationship between international integration and national governance, especially national corruption.<sup>5</sup> Measured in terms of the degree of integration, few

<sup>1</sup> See for example, Gerald Chan, *China's Compliance in Global Affairs: Trade, Arms Control, Environmental Protection, Human Rights* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2005); Rosemary Foot, "Chinese Strategies in a US-hegemonic Global Order: Accommodating and Hedging", *International Affairs* 82, no. 11 (Jan. 2006): 77–94; Alastair Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?" *International Security* 27, no. 4 (Spring 2003): 5–56; John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> For an indication of the stakes involved, see Susan Brownell, "Challenged America: China and America — Women and Sport, Past, Present and Future", *International Journal of the History of Sport* 22, no. 6 (Nov. 2005): 1173–93. From the perspective of China's leading official in the Olympic movement, see Liang Lijuan, *He Zhenliang and China's Olympic Dream*, translated by Susan Brownell (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Andrew D. Morris, *Marrow of the Nation: A History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republic of China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004); Susan Brownell, *Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People's Republic of China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Risse and Kathryn Sikkink, "The Socialization of International Human Rights Norms into Domestic Practice: Introduction", in *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*, ed. Thomas Risse, Stephen Ropp and Kathryn Sikkink (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), especially pp. 37–8.

<sup>5</sup> Wayne Sandholtz and Mark M. Gray, "International Integration and National Corruption", *International Organization* 57, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 761–800.

areas or sectors can match sports competition, even for large countries such as China and the United States. It is therefore possible to test whether China, a relatively new but aggressive entrant to world sports competition, has behaved in line with the predictions of the existing literature.

Success in sports for China has been intertwined with China's politics. In the Mao era, China was mostly absent from the world of competitive sports due to a western embargo and its decision to adhere to the ideology of "friendship first, competition second" signified by the famous ping-pong diplomacy.<sup>6</sup> This age of innocence ended quickly in the reform era, especially with the inspiring performances of the Chinese women's volleyball team and after Chinese athletes performed well at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics (which were boycotted by the Soviet Union).<sup>7</sup> While the whole country coveted international medals and awards as symbols of national strength and honour, athletes and coaches soon learned that medals brought not only fame but also monetary payoffs, better careers, and more.

By the 1990s China was at the centre of a series of high-profile doping scandals in the sports world that caused much distress to international sports governance. Some of China's most elite athletes were stripped of their medals in major international competitions for using performance-enhancing drugs. Embarrassing doping scandals at the 1994 Asian Games and especially the 1998 World Championships placed the Chinese sports authorities and the national leadership on the defensive and provided ammunition for China's critics. Even more than the widespread counterfeiting in the commercial world, cheating in the sports world gave rise to the view that China would seek to win by whatever means, and at the expense of honest and hardworking athletes.

To salvage its tattered reputation, avoid expulsion from certain sports and regain the confidence of global society, the Chinese sports leadership needed to act, and act quickly, to curb the high incidence of sports doping, especially since China first sought and then won the right to host the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. What has the Chinese Government, particularly its sports administration, done to curb the apparently widespread use of illegal performance-enhancing substances? Has China succeeded in cleaning

<sup>6</sup> Fan Hong and Xiong Xiaozheng, "Communist China: Sport, Politics and Diplomacy", in *Sport in Asian Society*, ed. J.A. Mangan and Fan Hong (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 319–42.

<sup>7</sup> See, especially Jinxia Dong, *Women, Sport, and Society in Modern China* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 103–4.

up its international sports or have Chinese athletes and coaches become more sophisticated at evading detection?

This article introduces evidence that suggests that intense international pressure has prompted the Chinese Government to escalate efforts to curb sports doping. By the 2004 Athens Olympics, China's efforts had apparently worked: unlike the host country Greece and several other major sports powers, not a single Chinese athlete tested positive for doping in Athens. Moreover, the Chinese team won 32 gold medals and placed second in the overall medal rankings for the first time.<sup>8</sup> In just a few years, China seemed to have succeeded in taming the scourge of doping as far as major international competitions are concerned and still increase its prowess as a major sporting power.

China's transformation from a near-pariah in international sports in the late 1990s to a model performer in Athens raises intriguing questions about sports doping and these may shed light on the broader issues of governance and compliance with international rules.

## Sports Competition, Governance and the Incentives for Cheating

The reform era has unleashed sports from the shackles of Maoist puritanism. Sports administrators quickly took advantage of the reformist atmosphere to seek non-governmental funding to make up for limited government budget commitments. In 1984, the State Council announced that corporations and private individuals would be allowed to sponsor sports teams.<sup>9</sup> Today most of China's sports teams, from soccer to volleyball, carry the names of their corporate sponsors. As the Chinese economy has climbed up the ladder of success over the past quarter century, the amount of money bestowed on China's Olympic gold medalists and other sports stars has skyrocketed, with top athletes routinely earning millions in award money and commercial endorsements. As far as sports are concerned, China has rushed headlong into the age of the winner-take-all society.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Sam Wollaston, "Sam Wollaston on China's Sport Schools", *The Guardian*, 11 Sept. 2004 at <<http://www.buzzle.com/editorials/text11-9-2004-61432.asp>> [24 Nov. 2007].

<sup>9</sup> Jinxia Dong, *Women, Sport, and Society in Modern China*, p. 100.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Frank and Philip Cook, *The Winner-Take-All Society: Why the Few at the Top Get So Much More Than the Rest of Us* (New York: The Free Press, 1995).

### *The Pressure to Win*

Athletic success brought fame and fortune not just for the athletes but also financial payoffs and potential upward mobility for officials. Failure or even underperformance, however, can be unforgiving. At the 1988 Seoul Olympics the Chinese delegation won only five gold medals. Soon afterwards, Li Menghua, head of the State Sports Commission, had to resign.

With the Seoul debacle on their minds, China's sports leadership focused its limited resources on earning medals in international competitions, especially the Olympics. In 1991, the national sports administration gave 16 sports "key Olympic sport" status and thus favourable treatment in funding and other support. When the previous evaluation system led provincial sports officials to prioritise performance at the National Games rather than the Olympics, the national sports administration incorporated performance at the Olympics into the sports performance evaluation system and re-scheduled the National Games to fall one year after the Summer Olympics. Beginning in 1997 the National Games have included only the 16 "key Olympic sports" and traditional Chinese martial arts.<sup>11</sup> These adjustments realigned the incentives for provincial sports officials and made them focus on improving performance in Olympics sports. To a significant extent, the Chinese delegation's success at the 1992 Barcelona Games and 1996 Atlanta Games reflected the readjusted institutional incentives for rewarding Olympic performance.<sup>12</sup>

### *Governance Reforms and Sports Competition*

The national obsession with sporting prowess was magnified among the localities. Through much of the 1980s and 1990s, the Chinese Government decentralised economic and institutional reforms. In the process of these broad reforms, the centre decentralised many sports organs and devolved much of the governance of sports to the provinces and municipalities.<sup>13</sup> The decentralisation

<sup>11</sup> Jinxia Dong, *Women, Sport, and Society in Modern China*, pp. 122–3.

<sup>12</sup> For more discussion about the focus on elite sports, see Fan Hong, Ping Wu and Huan Xiong, "Beijing Ambitions: An Analysis of the Chinese Elite Sports System and its Olympic Strategy for the 2008 Olympic Games", *International Journal of the History of Sport* 22, no. 4 (July 2005): 510–29.

<sup>13</sup> For discussion of economic inequality and medal performances among Chinese provinces, see Minghua Jiang and Lixin Colin Xu, "Medals in Transition: Explaining Medal Performance and Inequality of Chinese Provinces", *Journal of Comparative Economics* 33 (2005): 158–72.

of sports governance not only helped stimulate much competition among the localities but also offered fertile ground for corrupt behaviour such as doping and match-fixing.

Reforms of the sports administrative apparatus were part of an overall government rationalisation and streamlining in the 1990s.<sup>14</sup> In 1994, the State Council ordered the downsizing of the State Sports Commission to 13 departments/bureaus, with an officially approved staff size (*bianzhi*) of 381 for the headquarters, and total employment of over 30,000.<sup>15</sup> In 1998, the top of the sporting apparatus was trimmed further when the State Sports Commission was merged with the All-China Sports Federation to become the State General Administration of Sports. While still answering directly to the State Council, the revamped administration was further streamlined into nine bureaus, with the consolidation of four training-competition bureaus and the excision of the planning bureau. Staff size at headquarters was cut by 53 per cent to 180.<sup>16</sup>

The streamlining in Beijing was accompanied by the decentralisation of the sports governance to management centres and local authorities in the 1990s. The State Sports Commission in 1993 began to permit the formation of competitive leagues and clubs; commercialisation soon spread to football (soccer), basketball and a number of other team sports. To raise the stakes for local sports administrations, the State Sports Administration abolished a

<sup>14</sup> Dali L. Yang, *Remaking the Chinese Leviathan: Market Transition and the Politics of Governance in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), especially Chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>15</sup> Zhi Xue, "Wo guo weilai jingji tiyu guanli tizhi gouxian (The Future of Our Country's Structure for Managing Competitive Sports)", *Tiyu (Sports)* (Feb. 2001): 15; State Council Release No. 42, 1994, "Guowuyuan bangongting guanyu yinfa guojia tiyu yundong weiyuanhui zhineng peizhi, neishe jigou he renyuan bianzhi fang'an de tongzhi (State Council Circular on the Distribution of the Notice on the Responsibilities, Internal Structure, and Approved Staff Size of the National Sports Commission)", 16 Mar. 1994. [13 May 2005]. (A large collection of legal documents concerning government bodies at all administrative levels is available at the China Legal Information Centre at <<http://www.law-star.com/>>.)

<sup>16</sup> State Council Release No. 52, 1998, "Guowuyuan bangongting guanyu yinfa guojia tiyu zongju zhineng peizhi neishe jigou he renyuan bianzhi guiding de tongzhi (State Council on the Distribution of the Notice of the Responsibilities, Internal Structure, and Approved Staff Size of the State General Administration of Sports)", 16 June 1998 [13 May 2005].

number of permanent national teams, including the national swimming team, in favour of a system where athletes stayed with their provincial teams. Under this system, the athletes stay local but are called up to the national team for training before international competitions.

Along with autonomy in managing their sports programmes came responsibility: the careers and fortunes of provincial and local sports officials as well as those of the teams, team leaders and coaches would rise and fall with the performance of their athletes, especially at the National Games and City Games. Head coaches, in particular, were charged with primary responsibility for team performance. It was well known in Chinese sports circles that, following poor performances at the National Games, some provincial sports bureau directors lost their jobs even before they had returned home. Since the number of medals for each sport at these games is basically fixed, provincial/municipal teams competing against each other and seeking to best the others are caught in a zero-sum situation: if team A wins more medals, it invariably means that the other teams win fewer. Given the high-powered incentives facing the local teams and the relatively light policing of these domestic competitions for doping and other problems, the domestic competitions have been famous for various forms of corrupt behaviour, including doping, match-fixing, and so on.

Several sports, including weight-lifting, swimming and cycling have been especially prone to doping violations among the provincial teams. The decentralisation of swimming, for example, gave much more discretion to provincial team coaches over athletes' training and offered opportunity for them to adopt tactics to thwart anti-doping inspections, even out-of-competition tests. It was likely that doping in the early 1990s was organised and managed not by individual or groups of athletes, but their coaches and doctors with the tacit approval of team officials. In the case of the 1998 World Swimming Championships in Perth, Australia, four Chinese swimmers tested positive for banned diuretics that are commonly used to mask the use of steroids. All four came from Shanghai, then under coach Zhou Ming, a protégé of the disgraced coach Chen Yunpeng.<sup>17</sup>

As long as Chinese athletes brought home the medals without causing embarrassment to the country, central sports authorities appear to have

<sup>17</sup> Tim Healy and David Hsieh, "Slippery When Wet: New Evidence that Chinese Swimmers Are Systematically Using Drugs", *Asiaweek*, 30 Jan. 1998 at <<http://www.asiaweek.com/asiaweek/98/0130/nat7.html>> [12 May 2005].

condoned such local or team behaviour and considered the rapid performance improvement made possible by the introduction of better training regimes and “sports medicine” an indication of progress in combining science with sports. After all, for some sports officials as well as athletes (and not just in China), the line between doping and sports medicine is very fine. Use of erythropoietin (EPO), for example, appears to have been a well known technique for boosting performance (and not just among Chinese athletes) until it was rigorously tested at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, causing the Chinese delegation to undergo a major purge shortly before departing for Sydney. Even central sports officials are implicated to the extent that they might have been aware of the doping problems but preferred not to raise them, and perhaps even connived in them. In the words of Jinxia Dong, “it was the hypocrisy, deceit and dishonesty of some sports officials that provided a climate in which drug-taking could survive”.<sup>18</sup>

Even when anti-doping efforts were stepped up, as discussed below, several provincial teams were still found to have engaged in collective doping behaviour in recent years in preparation for the National Games. Between November 2003 and September 2004, three members of the Liaoning provincial weightlifting team tested positive for banned substances, and drugs were found on the premises of the team’s training grounds, prompting a round of heavy fines for the athletes, and a one-year competition ban for the entire Liaoning weightlifting team.<sup>19</sup> In October 2004, the Ningxia provincial weightlifting team also saw three positive tests, and was given a one-year competition ban. These high-profile team doping incidents prompted the anti-doping authorities to publish a lengthy commentary about the dangers and illegality of doping.<sup>20</sup> But months later and shortly before the Tenth National Games (2005) were to convene, the Chinese Olympic Committee handed two-year bans to 12 weightlifters of the Hubei provincial women’s weightlifting team and banned their coaches for life. The Hubei provincial weightlifting teams, both men’s and women’s, were disqualified from the Tenth National Games and barred from competition for one year.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Jinxia Dong, *Women, Sport, and Society in Modern China*, p. 149.

<sup>19</sup> <<http://sports.sohu.com/20041012/n222455864.shtml>> [8 June 2005].

<sup>20</sup> Chinese Olympic Committee Anti-doping Commission website at: <<http://www.cocadc.org.cn/chinese/sanji/sj01.php?id=2834>> [23 May 2005].

<sup>21</sup> “China Bans 12 Weightlifters for Doping Offenses”, *Xinhua*, 24 June 2005.

### *The Athletes' (and Coaches') Calculus*

Unlike in most Western countries, where athletes typically have various life options beyond athletics, competitive Chinese athletes frequently do not have such choices. Parents who want their children to become athletes on national teams often take them to sports schools at a very early age. Admissions to such schools that feed the sports hierarchy are competitive from the very beginning. Once accepted into the system, students must climb the hierarchy from elementary/middle school teams through high school teams, amateur teams, magnet or key amateur sports schools, and professional provincial-level teams.<sup>22</sup> Only the most talented are able to hopscotch through the process and enter training academies, join provincial-level teams and thus stand the chance of being selected to join the national teams.

A tiny number reach the very top of their fields and stand to reap the fame and fortune that come to Olympic medalists. The outlook for most athletes in the system is far from glorious. A budding athlete is likely to spend the bulk of his or her time and energy on training and competition, and thus can hardly enjoy a regular elementary and secondary education let alone succeed in China's highly competitive college entrance exams. Many retired athletes, with few marketable skills, have struggled to make ends meet.<sup>23</sup> Only in recent years have the most successful Chinese athletes, especially Olympic medalists, been awarded entrance to top universities. In athletics, the winner does indeed take all.

Given the large stakes, and how even a small boost in performance can mean the difference between medalling and not medalling or between being the top winner or an also-run, the temptation for athletes and their coaches to cheat can be especially hard to resist. In many ways, such calculations are not unique to Chinese athletes; the list of world-famous athletes later found to have cheated is a long one, including American former track star Marion Jones, winner of five medals in the 2000 Olympics; the Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson, the 1988 Olympic gold medalist in the 100 metres; Justin Gatlin,

<sup>22</sup> “Woguo jingji tiyu fazhan zhong ‘jichu da ze ta jian gao’ lilun de siban (Considerations and Discussions on the Theory of ‘High Top on a Large Base’ for the Development of Chinese Competitive Sports)”, *Tiyu (Sports)*, Dec. 2001, pp. 2–3.

<sup>23</sup> Li Qihong, “Shengcun haide kao ziji (Retired Athletes Must Rely on Themselves to Survive)”, *Lianhe zaobao*, 5 Oct. 2007 at <[http://www.zaobao.com/zg/zg071005\\_509.html](http://www.zaobao.com/zg/zg071005_509.html)> [5 Oct. 2007].

the 2004 Olympic gold medalist in the 100 metres; and Floyd Landis, the 2006 Tour de France winner.<sup>24</sup> The challenge for regulators is to increase the probability of catching the cheaters and raise the costs of doping in terms of bans and fines against offenders in order to deter athletes and coaches from engaging in doping behaviour.<sup>25</sup>

### *The Nascent Anti-doping Infrastructure*

Yet anti-doping work was virtually nonexistent in China for much of the 1980s. There was an anything-goes atmosphere at that time. As China embarked on its reform and modernisation programme, it was considered desirable to marry modern science, as embodied in training regimes and performance-enhancing drugs, with sports to boost athletic performance.

It was not until around 1987 that the State Sports Commission began formally to take up doping as a major issue in the context of growing domestic and international concern about doping in Olympic sports.<sup>26</sup> In 1989, the Commission issued its first anti-doping regulation: “Provisional Regulations on Doping Control in National Sports Events.”<sup>27</sup> The following year, in connection with the 1990 Asian Games in Beijing, the State Sports Commission followed up with its “Notice on Severely Prohibiting Illegal Substances” which emphasised a tripartite anti-doping policy of “strict prohibition, strict examination, and

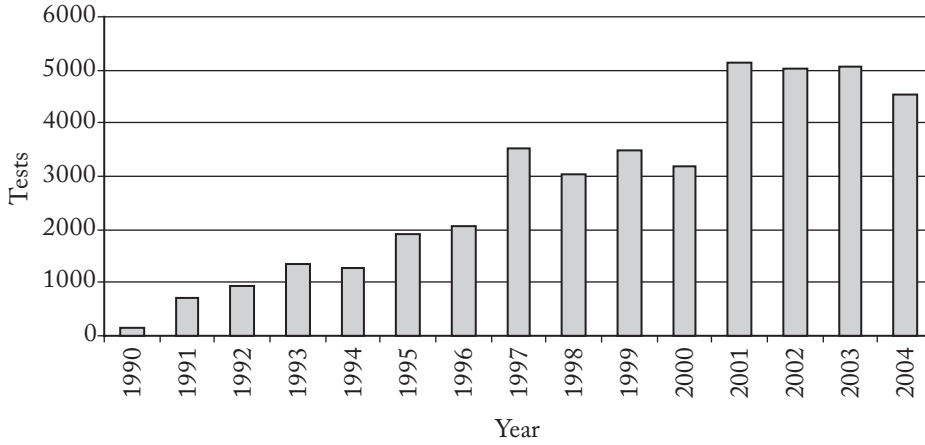
<sup>24</sup> Duff Wilson and Michael Schmidt, “Olympic Champion Acknowledges Use of Steroids”, *New York Times*, 5 Oct. 2007 at <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/05/sports/othersports/05balco.html>>.

<sup>25</sup> Allen Sanderson suggests that the various anti-doping regulations and ever lengthening list of banned substances are simply arbitrary lines for judging an ever-changing notion of standards, consistency and equality in sports competition. See Allen Sanderson, “The Many Dimensions of Competitive Balance”, *Journal of Sports Economics* 3, no. 2 (May 2002): 224. For more complex and mathematically-driven formulas for calculating the incentives for corruption and doping in sports, see Wolfgang Maennig, “On the Economics of Doping and Corruption in International Sports”, *Journal of Sports Economics* 3, no. 1 (Feb. 2002): 61–89; and Alex Berentsen, “The Economics of Doping”, *European Journal of Political Economy* 18 (2002): 109–27.

<sup>26</sup> For reports on doping and other forms of cheating in Chinese sports in the 1980s, see Zhao Yu, *Qiangguo meng: Zhongguo tiyu de neimu* (The Dream of a Strong Country: Inside Chinese Sports) (Beijing: Zuoqia chubanshe, 1988). Zhao has written a series of chronicles of Chinese sports, including a dissection of the Chinese team’s underperformance at the Seoul Olympics and a volume on the “Ma Family Army”.

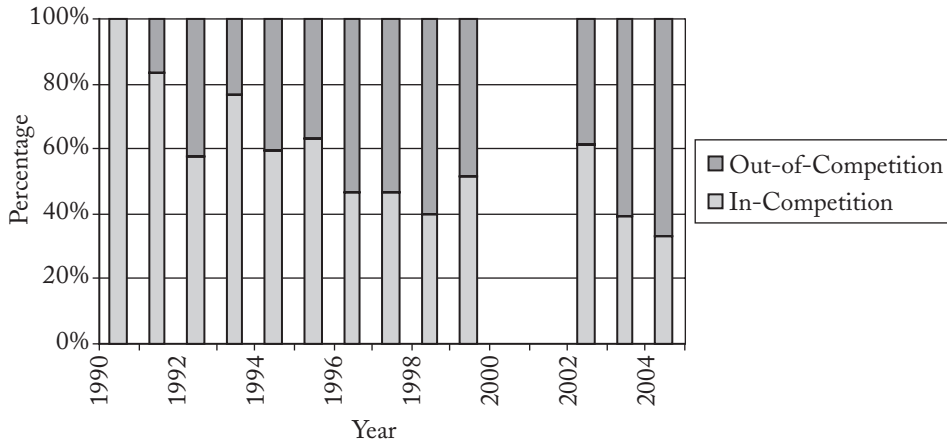
<sup>27</sup> <<http://www.sport.gov.cn/fagui/fg062.htm>> [12 May 2005].

Figure 1. Total Number of Doping Tests in China, 1990-2004



Source: Chinese Olympic Committee Anti-Doping Commission.

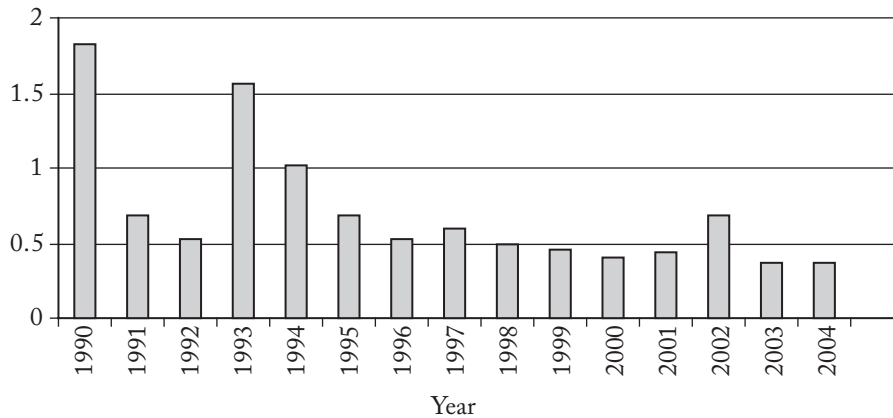
Figure 2. Percentage Breakdown of Doping Tests, 1990-2004



Source: Chinese Olympic Committee Anti-Doping Commission.

strict punishment”, or the *sanyan* (*yanling jinzhi, yange jiancha, yanli chufa*), which quickly became the shorthand used to describe the official anti-doping policy.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> <<http://www.cocadc.org.cn/chinese/sanji/sj01.php?id=2193>> [12 May 2005].

**Figure 3.** *Percentage of Positive Doping Tests*

Source: Chinese Olympic Committee Anti-Doping Commission.

In line with the issuance of anti-doping regulations, China began to build drug-testing facilities that met the standards set forth by the International Olympic Committee. These facilities initially conducted only a small number of tests. In 1990, for example, only 165 tests were performed and three of these (1.8 per cent) were positive.<sup>29</sup> In light of the large number of Chinese athletes, it is evident that the drug-testing laboratory was then not adequately funded and staffed to effectively carry out anti-doping work nationwide. In some sense, the small number of tests, mostly conducted at the national level, served to highlight the low probability of being caught. Thus the 1993 spike in the number and percentage of positive tests (see Figure 3) came in the year after the Anti-Doping Commission was established and the number of tests rose from 938 in 1992 to 1,347 in 1993. Meanwhile, the percentage of positive tests suggests that doping had become entrenched in Chinese sports at that time.

### **National Reputation at Risk: The Doping Crisis**

With all the pressures to win and the light policing of doping in sports, it is hardly surprising that some Chinese athletes use performance-enhancing substances to quickly improve their performance. In doing so, they attract

<sup>29</sup> <<http://www.cocadc.org.cn/english/sanji/sj01.php?id=33>> [27 Dec. 2004]. Annual overall doping statistics are available on the Chinese Olympic Committee Anti-Doping Commission website at <<http://www.cocadc.org.cn/english>>.

admiration as well as suspicion. At a time of growing international attention to doping, it would not take long before some of these athletes would get caught. In the Chinese case, however, the numbers were large and China's own reputation and prestige were soon at stake.

This was the case in swimming, in which China's women swimmers rose spectacularly onto the world stage and became a dominant force in the early 1990s. They won much glory for China at the 1992 Summer Olympics at Barcelona and then dominated the VII World Aquatic Championships in Rome in September 1994, winning 12 of 16 gold medals. Then, right before the Asian Games in Hiroshima in October 1994, the Chinese swimmers were given surprise drug tests by the Fédération Internationale de Natation (FINA), the world's swimming governing body. In all, 11 Chinese athletes, including 7 swimmers (3 of whom were world champions), tested positive for a banned anabolic steroid known as dihydrotestosterone (DHT). They were stripped of their medals and banned from competition for two years. At that time, Chinese swimmers then accounted for 13 of 22 positive drug tests since the 1972 Olympics.<sup>30</sup>

Doping reared its ugly head again in 1998 when four Chinese swimmers were caught using steroids and other drugs to mask banned substances at the world championships in Perth, Australia. All four were suspended from international competitions for two years. On top of the four swimmers, another female swimmer, Yuan Yuan, was caught entering Australia with enough human growth hormone for the entire swimming team, and was handed a four-year ban from international competition.<sup>31</sup> Her coach, Zhou Zhewen, received an unprecedented fifteen-year ban from international competition. This time the Chinese swimming team ended up winning only three gold medals, one silver and two bronzes, a far cry from their performance in Rome in 1994.

The unprecedented number of positive tests at the 1994 Asian Games confirmed growing international suspicion about widespread drug use by Chinese athletes, especially swimmers, and cast a dark shadow over the Chinese swimming team's meteoric rise. Because the athletes needed assistance to gain access to substances such as DHT, it was clear that the athletes testing

<sup>30</sup> Jere Longman, "Drug Sleuths' Surprise Produces a Breakthrough", *New York Times*, 18 Dec. 1994; Philip Hersh, "Debate Rages over Chinese Swimmers, 8 Reportedly Test Positive for Drugs at Asian Games", *Chicago Tribune*, 29 Nov. 1994, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> "FINA Press Release-07/24/1998-FINA Doping Panel" at <[http://www.fina.org/press\\_072498\\_doping\\_china.html](http://www.fina.org/press_072498_doping_china.html)> [12 May 2005].

positive did not simply take these substances on their own but had help from their coaches and trainers.<sup>32</sup> To many, such collusion was no surprise because the Chinese swimming team had in the 1980s received assistance from East Germany, which had engaged in a state doping programme.<sup>33</sup>

The question is how systematic doping had become in China. Jinxia Dong, a former athlete and the author of *Women, Sport, and Society in Modern China*, wrote: "It has become dreadfully clear in the last few years that East German coaches used drugs to improve the performance of their athletes in many sports as a matter of course, and it is only reasonable to assume that they took these practices with them to China."<sup>34</sup> For Dong, Chinese coaches and athletes were quick learners and many, amid intense pressure to win, had eagerly embraced performance-enhancing drugs by the 1990s. Another recent study also concluded that China did not have a systematic state-run doping programme.<sup>35</sup>

Confronted with the doping scandals at the 1994 Asian Games, Chinese foreign ministry and sports officials put on a brave face and sought to allay suspicions of a national or state-sponsored doping programme. They insisted that the doping cases were the results of "misguided individuals" and even accused Japanese testers at the games of deliberately embarrassing the Chinese team so the Japanese team could rank ahead of China in the medal count.<sup>36</sup>

Yet something had to be done to repair China's battered reputation amid growing international criticism and head off the growing chorus for sanctions against China. Many foreign coaches and athletes, especially those from the major aquatic powers, were angry at the Chinese swimmers using banned performance-enhancing substances and robbing them of their medal chances and much more. In February 1995, the major aquatic powers, including

<sup>32</sup> In certain cases, the athletes were probably unaware that they had been given the banned substances.

<sup>33</sup> Healy and Hsieh, "Slippery When Wet". On Doping in East Germany, see Werner Franke and Brigitte Berendonk, "Hormonal Doping and Androgenization of Athletes: A Secret Program of the German Democratic Republic Government", *Clinical Chemistry* 43 (1997): 1262–79.

<sup>34</sup> Jinxia Dong, *Women, Sport, and Society in Modern China*, pp. 116–47.

<sup>35</sup> Fan Hong, "Doping and Anti-doping in Sport in China: An Analysis of Recent and Present Attitudes and Actions", *Sport in Society* 9, no. 2 (2006): 314–33.

<sup>36</sup> Steve Mufson, "China's Leap Backward; Swimmers' Positive Drug Tests Cast Pall", *Washington Post*, 6 Dec. 1994, p. B 01.

Australia, Canada and the United States, worked together to ban China from the Pan Pacific Championships to be held in August 1995 in Atlanta.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, FINA as well as the international Olympic movement was also under tremendous pressure to protect the reputation of international sports and the interests of rule-abiding athletes. Indeed, international anger against doping by Chinese athletes gave major impetus to the global drive against doping. Amid the uproar, the Olympic Movement Anti-doping Code was adopted and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) was established in 1999.

Over time, the cost of doping in sports to China's international prestige became larger and larger. For Chinese national leaders aspiring to recast China's role as a responsible global power, the large number of Chinese athletes being caught at international events became a major liability. Added to a long list of complaints about Chinese behaviour ranging from arms proliferation to intellectual piracy, rampant doping in high-visibility international sports, especially the Olympics, seriously hurt China's image without producing any tangible benefit. Without taking serious efforts to tackle the doping crisis, China risked being ostracised in the international sports community, let alone become the host for the Olympics. China would lose both "face" and glory if its leaders failed to act decisively to deal with the doping crisis afflicting its athletes, especially women swimmers.

### **Chinese Responses to the Doping Crisis**

Following the debacle at the 1994 Asian Games and the further humiliation at the 1998 World Championships, Chinese sports authorities, often acting in cooperation with or in response to international sport organisations, have undertaken a range of measures to prevent a recurrence of such national embarrassments. These measures included the strengthening of anti-doping laws and regulations, funding for enhanced testing facilities and capabilities, intensified testing and punishment, as well as reforms in sports governance.

#### ***Punishment***

Right after the 1994 Asian Games, Chinese sports authorities acted quickly. Besides following FINA rules to impose competition suspensions on athletes

<sup>37</sup> Jere Longman, "U.S. Ban of Chinese Swimmers Criticized", *New York Times*, 15 Feb. 1995.

who had tested positive for banned substances, they promptly retired Chen Yunpeng, the swimming team's coach credited for bringing the Chinese team onto the international stage.<sup>38</sup> Five more swimming coaches were banned from competitions.<sup>39</sup> By 1998, the system of punishment for offending athletes and coaches had become standard. As soon as news of the Yuan Yuan and Zhou Zhewen cases broke, the Chinese Swimming Association prohibited them from participating in the World Championships.

After the 1998 World Championships, China's sports leadership showed their determination to avoid any further embarrassment by adopting a take-no-prisoners approach. Under new rules, swimmers who tested positive for steroids would be banned from competition for life, including first-time offenders. This was a tougher stance than that of FINA, which imposed a four-year suspension for a first offence and lifetime suspension for a second violation.<sup>40</sup> Coaches, doctors and trainers were to take part in anti-doping courses and the anti-doping commission would hand out anti-doping pamphlets to athletes before all events.

With ever more rigorous international testing, the Chinese sports authorities were keen to make use of the latest technologies to prevent Chinese athletes from being caught for testing positive abroad. Much emphasis was given to catching doping athletes at home. The 2000 Olympics in Sydney, for example, would be the first Olympics to test blood samples for EPO. In the run-up to the Sydney Olympics, China abruptly dropped 40 athletes and officials from its delegation, including 14 track and field athletes, four swimmers, two canoeists and seven rowers who failed last-minute blood tests.<sup>41</sup> The purge of so many athletes, especially those who had failed blood tests, constituted *prima facie* evidence of substantial EPO use among Chinese athletes. Nonetheless, because of the purge, no Chinese athlete tested positive at the 2000 Olympics.

### *Enhanced Testing Capabilities*

As Figure 1 of the total number of tests conducted indicates, China steadily raised the number of doping tests throughout the 1990s. Moreover, Figure 2

<sup>38</sup> Tim Healy and David Hsieh, "Slippery When Wet".

<sup>39</sup> "China Bans Nine Coaches over Drugs", *The Independent* (UK), 1 Apr. 1995, p. 47.

<sup>40</sup> "Steroid Use Will Bring Lifetime Ban", *AP* via *New York Times*, 26 Mar. 1998; Associated Press, 14 May 1998.

<sup>41</sup> <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,3858,4060177-105268,00.html>> [21 May 2005].

giving the breakdown of doping tests points to a significant increase in the percentage of tests conducted out-of-competition. These efforts to conduct more tests and spread them throughout the year have had a measurable deterrence effect. Notably, the percentage of tests turning up positive has generally been on the decline since the early 1990s.

Yet the repeated doping scandals up to the year 2000 suggest that the increased testing efforts had had a limited effect on reducing the incidence of doping during that time span. In the early 1990s this was probably because the testing capability was still modest and most tests were conducted in-competition. Indeed, the limited testing capability probably had the perverse effect of encouraging athletes and coaches in certain sports, such as swimming, to work around the national doping testing schedules to avoid detection during sporting events. Later, it appeared that the cheating athletes and coaches were seeking to beat the system by staying one step ahead, going from DHT in 1994 to EPO in 2000.

Because Chinese athletes were being caught en masse in international sports events, however, the Chinese anti-doping establishment was able to secure more government funding and conduct more tests, and more testing out-of-competition. In out-of-competition testing, anti-doping personnel visit athletes at their homes or training academies and conduct tests, often unannounced. Because testers must travel out to the provinces to find these athletes, the cost of each out-of-competition test is much higher than testing during competition.<sup>42</sup>

By the year 2000, the Chinese Anti-doping Commission had enjoyed a marked improvement in resources as well as the highest political support for its work. The number of tests conducted each year increased to more than 3,000 over the 1997 to 2000 period while the percentage of these tests conducted out of competition reached between 50 and 60 per cent. The escalation of doping test efforts in the latter half of the 1990s helped to bring down the percentage of positive tests to below 0.5 per cent.

In the face of the intensified anti-doping testing regime, some athletes and quite likely some teams apparently turned their attention to more sophisticated

<sup>42</sup> While the anti-doping commission does not release budget figures or the costs of testing procedures, a World Anti-Doping Agency report (2001) suggests that the average cost of a urine and blood test ranged from US\$225 to \$450. Wolfgang Maennig, "On the Economics of Doping and Corruption in International Sports", *Journal of Sports Economics* 3, no. 1 (Feb. 2002): 65.

blood-based boosts that were not detectable with conventional urine tests. When the Sydney Olympics announced that systematic blood tests would be conducted, however, the Chinese sports establishment reacted quickly to avoid new embarrassments. After conducting blood tests on its own, the Chinese sports leadership withdrew 40 members from its delegation right before the Chinese delegation headed for Sydney.

In the early 2000s, the Chinese anti-doping facilities further increased the number of doping tests to around 5,000 each year. The escalating efforts to enhance detection coupled with life-time bans for even first-time offenders finally brought the scourge of doping under control, at least for China's Olympic delegation. At the 2004 Olympics in Athens, the Chinese delegation was again clean; this time no purge was needed before the delegation headed for Athens.

### *Strengthening Anti-Doping Institutions and Programmes*

The escalation of doping tests has rested on an evolving regulatory framework that responds to and reflects the rules and norms of international sports. The PRC Sports Law, enacted in 1995 by the National People's Congress, made general statements against illegal substances and cheating and set the framework for implementing regulations.<sup>43</sup> Soon the web of anti-doping regulations began to address more specific, sophisticated and technical issues in anti-doping work, such as out-of-competition testing, punitive measures, management of testing personnel, EPO use, etc.<sup>44</sup> Under this framework, over 30 anti-doping laws, directives and regulations have been issued to regulate drug testing and promote fair play.<sup>45</sup>

Developments since the Sydney Olympics are especially noteworthy. In an effort to rebuild international confidence in China's sports and Chinese anti-doping initiatives, the Chinese anti-doping authorities increased cooperation with the WADA and other national anti-doping bodies. In 2003, China became one of the first signatories to WADA's Copenhagen Declaration, a non-binding

<sup>43</sup> "Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu fa" (Sports Law of the People's Republic of China), 29 Aug. 1995 at <<http://www.cocadc.org.cn/chinese/sanji/sj01.php?id=2114>> [12 May 2005].

<sup>44</sup> <<http://www.cocadc.org.cn/english/sanji/sj01.php?id=54>> [11 May 2005].

<sup>45</sup> Xufeng Yang and Min Yu, "Trends of International Anti-Doping Legislation and Anti-Doping Legislation in China", *Journal of Beijing Sport University* 27, no. 2 (Feb. 2004): 452-54.

agreement on compliance with WADA standards and regulations.<sup>46</sup> The Chinese Government quickly followed up by issuing a set of Anti-Doping Regulations, which formally came into effect on 1 March 2004, in time to augment the authority and policing powers of the Chinese anti-doping authorities ahead of the 2004 Summer Olympics. The Regulations include specific provisions for punitive measures against team officials, personnel and government officials who interfere with anti-doping work. Punishments range from two to four years' suspension from sports work to a lifetime ban for egregious violations as well as criminal liability.

These legal documents have helped to empower the Chinese Anti-doping Commission (and the Doping Control Centre), which came into being in 1992 under the auspices of the National Sports Commission and the Chinese Olympic Committee, to successfully increase the number of doping tests conducted each year. In certain sports, especially swimming, international organisations such as FINA and WADA have played a major role in testing and spurring domestic facilities to increase their testing capability. For the Tenth National Games held in fall 2005, for example, 1,600 urine tests were carried out, 20 per cent more than at the 9th Games in 2001.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, 26 athletes were caught for testing positive for out-of-competition doping tests and banned from participation in the Games (compared with 17 for all of 2004).<sup>48</sup> Armed with the Anti-Doping Regulations, the Chinese Anti-Doping Commission and the China Doping Control Centre have hired more personnel and upgraded facilities in preparation for the 2008 Olympics.<sup>49</sup> It plans to conduct 4,500 doping tests during the 2008 Olympics, compared with 3,667 at the 2004 Athens Games and 2,758 at the 2000 Sydney Games. WADA officials will serve as independent observers.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> <<http://www.cocadc.org.cn/chinese/sanji/sj01.php?id=3054>> [12 May 2005].

<sup>47</sup> Those caught included athletes who submitted positive urine tests as well as those who skipped regular out-of-competition testing. Two skips is counted as a positive test, punishable by a competition ban lasting at least two years. "China Reports Catching 26 Athletes for Doping Offences This Year Amid Tougher Enforcement", *Associated Press*, 12 Sept. 2005.

<sup>48</sup> "Chinese Athletes Banned From Competition", *Associated Press*, 30 Sept. 2005; "China Reports Catching 26 Athletes for Doping Offences This Year Amid Tougher Enforcement", *Associated Press*, 12 Sept. 2005.

<sup>49</sup> <<http://www.cocadc.org.cn/chinese/sanji/sj01.php?id=3467>> [12 May 2005].

<sup>50</sup> "China Plans to Increase Drug Tests for 2008 Olympics" at <<http://www.cocadc.org.cn/english/sanji/sj01.php?id=190>> [10 Aug. 2007]; "Hope Against Dope", *The*

### *Reforms in Sports Governance*

Having discussed the initiatives for building and strengthening anti-doping institutions, facilities and enforcement, the efforts to tighten supervision of team management at the national level should also be mentioned. These efforts paralleled institutional readjustments in various other government administrations to augment hierarchical control.<sup>51</sup>

As noted earlier, the decentralising reforms in the governance structure of sports administration stimulated domestic competition but also made the world of domestic sports in China more unruly. The national sports leadership gradually became keenly aware of the problems plaguing China's domestic competition and has in time adopted measures to prevent spillage of the domestic problems beyond China's borders. After the Ninth National Games (2001), for example, the Chinese Swimming Team chose not to invite several swimmers that had shined brightly at these Games to join the national team, apparently knowing that these athletes would not pass doping tests for international competition.<sup>52</sup> Needless to say, all athletes invited to join the national team are rigorously tested before they are allowed to participate in international competitions.

To mitigate the adverse effects of decentralisation, the national leadership has adjusted the structure of sports governance in favour of more central direction and accountability. In swimming, the National Swimming Association was renamed the China Swimming Association. Among the reforms introduced were increased central supervision of provincial teams, athletes and coaches, the representation of provincial swimming board directors on the national-level board and the establishment of a National Swimming Control Centre governed by the Competitive Sports Bureau of the State General Administration of

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*Economist*, 31 Dec. 2007 at <[http://www.economist.com/daily/chartgallery/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=10276612](http://www.economist.com/daily/chartgallery/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10276612)> [1 Jan. 2008].

<sup>51</sup> Andrew Mertha, "China's 'Soft' Centralization: Shifting *Tiao/Kuai* Authority Relations", *China Quarterly*, no. 184 (Dec. 2005): 791–810; Dali L. Yang, *Remaking the Chinese Leviathan*, Ch. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Guan Jun, "Shiyunhui you guiyang, zhongguo tiyu zhengbei quanyun zhiji suolei? (The Tenth National Games Suffers from Noble Disease; Is Chinese Sports Burdened by the Ills Afflicting the National Games?)", *Nanfang zhoumo* (Southern Weekend), 27 Oct. 2005; David Eimer, "China's Olympic Rehearsal Hit by Drugs and Scandal", *The Independent*, 25 Oct. 2005.

Sports.<sup>53</sup> The reforms also demanded greater accountability from provincial sports officials under a zero tolerance policy.

### *Case Study: The National Swimming Team 1992–2004*

Swimming was one of the key areas targeted by the Chinese sports establishment for Olympic medals beginning in the early 1980s. By the early 1990s, Chinese swimming, especially women's swimming, had achieved a meteoric rise. The suddenness and scale of China's rise as a major swimming power quickly raised suspicions of systematic doping, as had occurred in East Germany. As a result, Chinese swimmers have become major targets of doping tests both domestically and by FINA. As of 2004, more than one sixth of all doping tests in China were on swimmers. Since the mid-1990s, between 60 and 71 per cent of the doping tests on Chinese swimmers has been conducted out-of-competition.

**Table 1.** *Data for Chinese National Swimming Team, 1995–2004*

Year	Chinese Swimming Team Data 1995–2004			
	In-Competition Tests	Out-of-Competition Tests	FINA In-Competition Tests	FINA Out-of-Competition Tests
1995	184 (60.3%)	121 (39.7%)		
1996	140 (47.8%)	153 (52.2%)		
1997	191 (29.5%)	457 (70.5%)		
1998	162 (28.6%)	405 (71.4%)		
1999	240 (34.3%)	457 (63.7%)	30	53
2000	n.a.	n.a.	39	50
2001	200 (35.2%)	368 (64.8%)	27	27
2002	n.a.	n.a.	20	46
2003	323 (39.5%)	494 (60.5%)	10	53
2004	n.a.	n.a.	23	47

Sources: "Doping Tests in Swimming during 1995–1999," COCADC, <<http://www.cocadc.org.cn/english/sanji/sj01.php?id=25>> [12 May 2005]; FINA Doping Control Programme at <[http://www.fina.org/DopingControl\\_front.html](http://www.fina.org/DopingControl_front.html)> [12 May 2005]; "Zhongguo Aowei hui guanfang wang zhan — Zhongguo li nian suo huo shijie guanjun" ["Chinese Olympic Committee — International Championships Garnered by China"], <[http://www.olympic.cn/athletes/title\\_winners/list.html](http://www.olympic.cn/athletes/title_winners/list.html)> [28 May 2005].

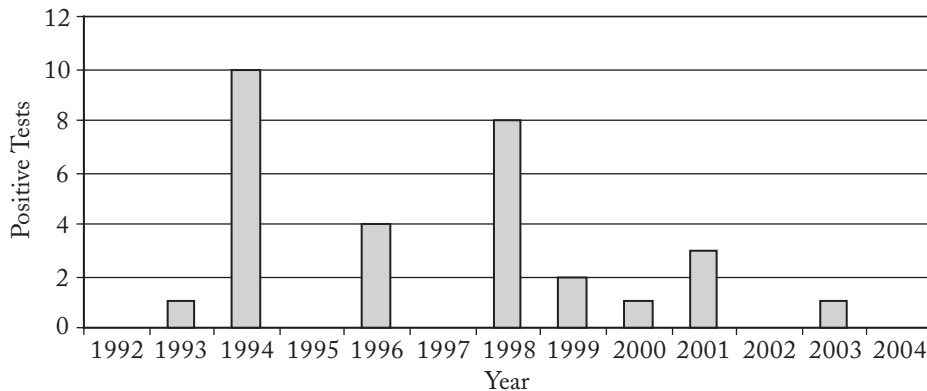
<sup>53</sup> *People's Daily* (English version), 5 Dec. 2003; <<http://www.cocadc.org.cn/chinese/sanji/sj01.php?id=2979>> [9 June 2005]; <<http://swimming.sport.org.cn//xh/gnjg/2004-04-09/gnjg556i591i8534.html>> [9 June 2005].

The organisation of swimming is more federalised than other sports but the emphasis on central direction coupled with a heavy emphasis on testing have helped to ensure that Chinese swimmers participate in international competition, having already been tested. With increased domestic and international testing on Chinese swimmers, tougher penalties against athletes and their coaches, the number of the Chinese national swimming team members testing positive has stayed low after the major spikes in 1994 and 1998. The results speak for themselves. Between 2001 and 2004, Chinese swimmers tested positive only four times from 2001 to 2004, with none in 2002 and 2004.

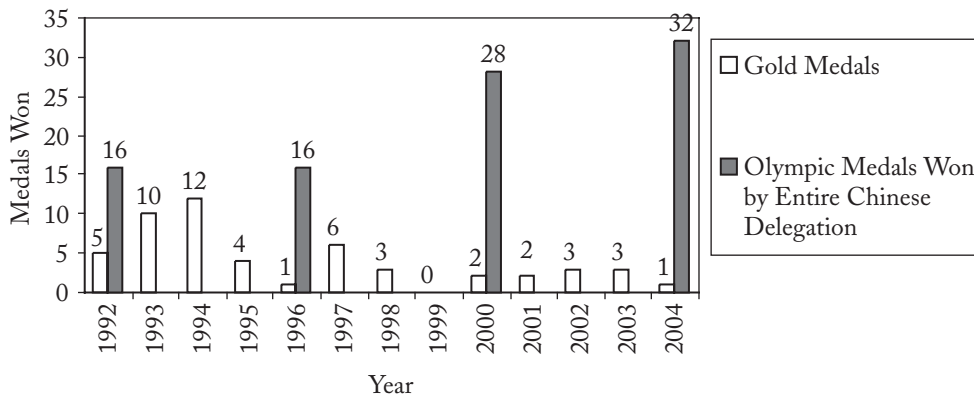
Does the decline in the number of Chinese swimmers testing positive for doping indicate that China has tamed the scourge of doping in swimming? Not exactly. For it is also possible that Chinese athletes had become more sophisticated at evading detection. As mentioned earlier, the substances for which Chinese swimmers tested positive changed from DHT in 1994, to EPO in 2000. Indeed, Chinese participants at a seminar where an earlier draft of this article was presented were quick to raise this possibility.

It is only when the data on doping tests and the number of medals won is combined that we can be sure of our inference. In terms of the number of medals won, the time-series data point to a simple story. In the early 1990s, the Chinese swimming team was winning a large and indeed dominant number of gold medals in international competition, presumably with the

**Figure 4.** *Chinese National Swimming Team Positive Doping Tests, 1992–2004*



Sources: Chinese Olympic Committee Anti-Doping Commission, FINA.

**Figure 5.** *Gold Medals won by Chinese National Swimming Team in International Competitions*

*Note:* 1994 statistics do not count the gold medals won at the Asian Games in Hiroshima and later stripped from the swimming team.

*Sources:* Chinese Olympic Committee website, State General Administration of Sports, FINA.

aid of “sports medicine”. As both the number of doping tests and penalties for doping escalated, the number of gold medals won by Chinese swimmers plummeted. At the 2004 Athens Olympics, the entire Chinese swimming team garnered only one gold medal.

We can safely assume that Chinese swimmers have not become less talented over time. Indeed, as China’s economic strengths have risen, Chinese swimmers have enjoyed better material support and training conditions and are thus expected to perform better than before. In view of these two facts, the only inference we can make about China’s declining medal count in international swimming competitions is that the tough international and domestic anti-doping regime has resulted in the exclusion of swimmers who did well by relying on banned performance-enhancing drugs.

To be sure, one might easily wonder whether Chinese coaches and athletes have truly cleaned up or have become more sophisticated at evading detection in international competition. In the final analysis, the possibility that some Chinese athletes are still using performance-enhancing substances and are not detected cannot be ruled out. Some have publicly speculated that some Chinese are still working hard to beat the current system. For example, John Leonard, head of the American Swimming Coaches Association, and others suspect that China has a secret programme to genetically enhance the

performance of talented children — about 50 swimmers — before unleashing them for the Beijing Olympics.<sup>54</sup> One Chinese coach has adamantly denied such rumours.<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, the widespread use of banned substances among young athlete-students in China and the penchant of the Chinese media to refer to “secret weapons” suggest other possibilities.<sup>56</sup> In sports doping, as in various forms of corruption, there is a constant cat-and-mouse game between cheaters and regulators.

Nonetheless, the precipitous fall in the number of swimming medals won by the Chinese swimming delegation in international competitions suggests that, even if there were such athletes, their presence is not enough to substantially alter the performance of the Chinese swimming delegation. It thus appears that the tough international and domestic doping tests and penalties have helped restore the integrity of China’s swimming performance in *international* competition.

## Discussion and Implications

The literature on international norms and domestic governance posits that a country which is deeply integrated into the international system and cares about its international reputation is more likely to alter its behaviour to comply with international norms than one that is less deeply integrated and/or

<sup>54</sup> Craig Lord, “Swimming: China’s Missing Children”, *Sunday Times*, 8 May 2005 at <<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/sport/article519973.ece>> [9 May 2005]. See also, “Australian Coach Suspects China Has Secret Olympics Swim Team”, *Agence France Presse*, 17 Mar. 2007.

<sup>55</sup> Nicole Jeffery, “Chinese Insist This Really Is Their Best”, *The Australian*, 26 Mar. 2007, at <<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,21444590-2722,00.html>> [26 Mar. 2007].

<sup>56</sup> “Doping Rampant Among Chinese Athlete-students”, *Xinhua*, 16 July, 2005 at <[http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200507/17/eng20050717\\_196544.html](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200507/17/eng20050717_196544.html)> [13 July 2007]; “Doping Control to be Introduced to National Junior Sport Events”, *Xinbuanet*, 13 July 2007 at <<http://www.cocadc.org.cn/english/sanji/sj01.php?id=187>> [13 July 2007]; “Youchu shijie dier hao chengji, 13 sui xiaoya cheng 08 jinpai mimi wuqi (13-year-old Girl Swims Second Best in the World and Becomes Secret Weapon for 08 Gold Medal)”, *Shenzhen tequ bao*, 18 May 2007 at <<http://2008.sohu.com/20070518/n250089925.shtml>> [18 May 2007]; “Athletes, Staff at Chinese Sports School Caught Doping”, *Associated Press*, 23 Aug. 2006, at <[http://www.usatoday.com/sports/olympics/summer/track/2006-08-23-china-school-doping\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/sports/olympics/summer/track/2006-08-23-china-school-doping_x.htm)> [23 Aug. 2006].

callous about what others think of it.<sup>57</sup> When a country's behaviour diverges from that prescribed by international rules, other countries are more likely to successfully exert pressure and it is also more likely to feel the pressure because of the integration.

Few sectors are as globalised and integrated as Olympic sports. While the rules and norms for individual sports are constantly subject to negotiation, once they are in the books, the athletes, coaches and national delegations have no choice but to play by the book or risk disqualification and expulsion. The case of anti-doping falls under the same rubric.

By the mid-1990s, China had become the fastest rising sports power with Olympian ambitions and yet many of the Chinese athletes, especially in certain sports such as swimming, were apparently "rogue" players who, for several years, brought home gold by "marrying science with sports". After substantial numbers of Chinese athletes tested positive at the 1994 Asian Games, however, the cost of continuing such rogue behaviour to China's reputation rose dramatically. Because the international Olympic movement tightened its rules and enforcement on doping, there was little benefit for the Chinese delegation in continuing along the present path. When some Chinese coaches/athletes sought to beat the system by switching to the use of EPO, they brought further humiliation to their homeland. This route came to a quick end when the Sydney Olympics introduced systematic tests for EPO.

Ultimately China's national leaders, with their Olympian aspirations, could not afford to risk further international embarrassment and, in the case of the swimming team, even expulsion. To avoid being ostracised and to salvage China's reputation, China's leaders have mobilised and reformed the national sports apparatus and built the facilities needed to give anti-doping top priority. China has also cooperated closely with FINA and WADA and allowed WADA to conduct extensive and out-of-competition tests on Chinese swimmers, with hardly any controversy over whether such tests constitute an infringement of national sovereignty.

It is instructive to contrast Chinese behaviour of the early 1990s with that of the early 2000s. In the 1990s, China's sporting behaviour, especially in swimming, distressed the international sports regulatory regime and was

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<sup>57</sup> Risse and Sikink, "The Socialization of International Human Rights"; Sandholtz and Gray, "International Integration and National Corruption".

eventually a major cause for the establishment of WADA. The Chinese media was told to hush up when Chinese athletes failed doping tests.

By the turn of the century China had become a model sports power, carefully screening its own athletes for banned performance-enhancing substances before allowing them to compete internationally. The Chinese media now competes to report on doping cases, such as that of star distance runner Sun Yingjie, thus helping to convey the authorities' zero-tolerance attitude toward doping.<sup>58</sup> It was thus striking to see Dick Pound, the head of the World Anti-Doping Agency, in Beijing praising China for its assistance in US raids on illegal labs and giving ringing endorsements of China's new anti-doping measures in preparation for the 2008 Olympics. According to Pound, "China is in the vanguard of this (fight against doping)."<sup>59</sup>

A similar transformation has occurred in China's aviation industry. In the 1990s, China had one of the worst passenger aviation safety records, with a string of air disasters that tarnished China's international image and could have prompted the Americans to restrict Chinese flights to the US. In 2002, the Chinese leadership replaced the top aviation regulator with Yang Yuanyuan to make safety first. Under Yang, the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) was eager for foreign assistance. It rewrote China's aviation regulations with help from Boeing and the US Federal Aviation Administration. It insisted on rigorous safety compliance by companies and pilots. It was also willing to allow the International Air Transport Association (IATA) specialists to audit Chinese airlines and release their findings. These measures have helped the Chinese aviation industry become a "global leader in air safety" with "the best safety performance in the world" between 2004 and 2007.<sup>60</sup>

Yet in most other policy areas, such as protection of intellectual property rights or environmental protection, international pressure has so far been less

<sup>58</sup> At the National Games held in 2005, Sun was stripped of her silver medal in the women's 10,000 metres for failing a doping test. "Marathon Winner Sun Yingjie Fails Doping Test", *Xinhua*, 21 Oct. 2005 at <[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-10/21/content\\_3661403.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-10/21/content_3661403.htm)> [22 Oct. 2005].

<sup>59</sup> "Doping: World Anti-doping Chief Praises Beijing Olympics Preparations, Help in U.S. Steroid Raids", *Associated Press*, 27 Sept., 2007 at <<http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/09/27/sports/27dope2.php>> [27 Sept. 2007].

<sup>60</sup> Andy Pasztor, "How China Turned Around a Dismal Air-Safety Record", *Wall Street Journal*, 10 Oct. 2007, p. A1.

focused than in the case of sports doping, and the adoption of international rules and norms more selective. Instead, compromise and negotiation have tended to carry the day and policy implementation has tended to be weakened by regulatory fragmentation and local protectionism.<sup>61</sup> Yet the international environment for domestic regulation can change dramatically. In 2007, for example, there was rising international concern about the quality of Chinese exports, and large quantities of Chinese food and other products were being recalled or rejected. In response, Chinese regulators began to pay attention and take more aggressive action to ensure the quality of Chinese exports. The Chinese experiences with sport doping in international competition and with aviation safety suggest that the aggressive action in ensuring export product quality has some effect. Yet the interests involved in exports are more diverse and fragmented. It remains to be seen whether the central regulators can develop an effective export quality regime that can be sustained over the long term.

In this context, the evolution of anti-doping in China is not only fascinating in its own right but has implications for designing reforms in other areas. Due to the myriad domestic interests that impinge on national policymaking and implementation, it may be useful for reformers to tie up Ulysses in order that it would not be drawn to the sirens of parochial interests. To some extent, China's commitments to the terms of its entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have allowed Chinese policymakers to push through reforms that would have taken far longer to implement had China remained outside the WTO. China's ongoing initiatives to allow foreign financial institutions to take up stakes in major state banks are another effort to lock in and ratchet up ongoing reforms. Even in anti-corruption, it appears that some Chinese leaders hope that the signing of the United Nations Convention against Corruption would help China gain some traction in bringing fugitives back to China and thus lend some support to domestic anti-corruption initiatives.

## Conclusions

After China was welcomed back into the community of international sports, particularly the Olympic movement, its rapid ascent in sports marred by the large number of Chinese athletes testing positive for banned performance-

<sup>61</sup> Waikeung Tam and Dali Yang, "Food Safety and the Development of Regulatory Institutions in China", *Asian Perspective* 29, no. 4 (2005): 5–36.

enhancing substances has challenged the capacity of the international anti-doping regime. In about a decade's time, both the international anti-doping regime (as a key element of the international Olympic movement) and Chinese sports governance have had to adapt to each other and each has been transformed in the process.

Internationally, while Chinese sporting behaviour was not the sole factor, the aggressive behaviour of Chinese athletes in certain areas, especially swimming, was an obvious factor prompting efforts to strengthen the international anti-doping regime, the establishment of WADA and, more concretely, greater investments in more sophisticated doping test techniques and capabilities.

Within China, the authorities initially took a defensive approach towards doping and tended to dismiss positive cases as cheating by isolated individuals. In the aftermath of a string of major and highly embarrassing doping scandals in the 1990s, however, and with growing international pressure on China, the Chinese sports authorities recognised the need to comply with international rules on doping, and importantly for salvaging China's reputation, to prevent doping Chinese athletes from participating in international competition in the first place. Consequently, the Chinese sports authorities have taken a multi-pronged approach to combat doping in sports, adopting laws and regulations, establishing the China Anti-Doping Commission, reconfiguring the oversight of local teams and conducting frequent doping tests, often in collaboration with WADA.

With the adoption of all these measures, it appears China has made real progress in combating doping in international sports competition. Whereas droves of Chinese athletes tested positive for illegal substances in the 1990s, China's large delegation to the 2004 Athens Olympics had no positive tests. The tough stance has reduced China's chances for winning medals in certain events, especially swimming, but has allowed China to build a reputation as an international leader in anti-doping.

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The authors wish to thank the anonymous reviewers, John J. MacAloon and Yue Qiao as well as seminar participants at the East Asian Institute, the Workshop on East Asia at the University of Chicago and the Institute of Social Development and Public Policy at Beijing Normal University for helpful comments.