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Responder or promoter? Investigating the role of nation-state in globalization: The case of China's strategies in the global wushu movement

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Responder or Promoter? Investigating the Role of Nation-State in Globalization: The Case of China's Strategies in the Global Wushu Movement

Abstract

This study examines how wushu, as a folk sport in China, has been promoted globally by a nation-state. Identifying the Global Wushu Movement (GWM) as an East-to-West diffusion and a political and cultural phenomenon, our analytical framework is based on that of globalization as proposed by Houlihan (1994, 2016) and Held et al. (1999). Our particular focus is on the 'nation-state', notably its role in activating the GWM and whether it is a responder to or a promoter of global sporting culture. Data was collected from both documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews involving a total of twenty key stakeholders. Findings reveal that some of China's strategies prove that it is a responder to the Olympic Movement. Other strategies demonstrate that China, as the promoter of the GWM, has its own agenda to influence the international sporting realm. More specifically, the state is indeed affected by globalization which can also be managed by the state. This is because, to some extent, while China accepted the Olympic value, it has also transformed a part of its own traditional culture (wushu) and exported it via the International Wushu Federation (IWUF) as the façade. Conceptually, the duality of China's strategies in the case of GWM implies the emergence of reverse globalization.

Introduction

Contemporary sport is globalized (Thoma and Chalip, 1996). Our understanding of globalization, as informed by Houlihan (2016: 570) is that it is "a complex and contingent set of processes within which the state plays a key role in shaping their pace,

character, trajectory”. Although sport globalization has been widely discussed in the sociology of sport, some research gaps can still be recognized. **First**, the nation-state should feature more in the analyses of sport and globalization than it currently does (Scherer and Jackson, 2013). By contrast, other studies focus on national identity (Hilvoorde et al., 2010; Lopes, 2000) and the migration of athletes (Chiba et al., 2001; Falcous and Maguire, 2005), highlighting more the impact of globalization on the civil society. Houlihan (1994, 2016) has advocated local response as the analytical framework with which to examine states’ responses to globalization. This proposition is in line with the call of Skocpol (1985, 3–4) to regard states as influential actors, and to “bring the state back in” when engaging in analysis. Indeed, one cannot ignore the role of the nation-state when studying sport globalization. This is especially true for China with its *juguo tizhi*, an elite sport system both founded and organized by the state (Hu and Henry, 2017; Tan, 2015).

Second, the development of international sports governing bodies (ISGBs) is a major topic (Chappelet and Kübler-Mabbott, 2008; Sugden and Tomlinson, 1998) in some works on the globalization of particular sports (Mitchell, 2016). But when it comes to a sports organization trying to globalize its sports, detailed and nuanced deliberations on its internal governance structure are less prominent. What if some new forms of organizing sports internationally are emerging? For example, behind the ISGBs, there might exist another major player that has the real power, thereby leading to a hybrid governance structure. Indeed, when analyzing China’s role in the GWM, Han and colleagues (2020) suggested that China is behind the International Wushu Federation (IWUF), though their fieldwork was limited to the IWUF. In addition, although the strategies of new entrants in the global sporting world should be examined,

the theoretical implications of these strategies (in relation to theories of globalization) are underexplored (see Scott, 2014).

Third, more attention has been paid to the diffusion of sport from the West to the east (Houlihan, 1994, 2016), and much remains to be explored using non-Western perspectives on “global sportization processes” (Maguire, 2015: 521). Previous studies have mainly explored the diffusion of Western culture (Appadurai, 1995; Kaufman and Patterson, 2005), and the response of local communities (Tan and Bairner, 2010). A reverse direction of globalization, from the east to the West, is seldom discussed. In fact, the Chinese leadership is greatly interested in embracing globalization through sports (Tan and Green, 2008; Tan and Houlihan, 2013), although its approach to promote wushu¹ differs from its globalization strategy towards other sports (see Tan and Bairner, 2010; Tan and Green, 2008; Tan and Houlihan, 2013; Theeboom et al., 2017). To understand China’s policy of promoting wushu, this study explores the role of the nation-state in sport globalization. Based on the analytical framework, we aim to examine, in the case of China’s attempts in the GWM, how China alternatively responds to or participates in sport globalization.

China plays a very important role in the IWUF’s development and wushu’s globalization. Yet, China’s strategies remain empirically unexplored and theoretically underdeveloped in relation to globalization theories. This study asks two questions:

a) What strategies have been adopted by China in the GWM?

¹ According to the official website of IWUF, wushu is “referred to as kung-fu” and is “the collective term for the martial art practices which originated and developed in China”. IWUF distinguishes traditional wushu and sport wushu, with the latter being categorized into two categories—*taolu* (routines competition) and *sanda* (free-fighting competition).

b) What functions are these strategies serving? Responding to the values imposed by the Olympic Movement, or promoting its own agenda via the IWUF?

The case of wushu's globalization tells a different, if not unique, story and has its own theoretical and empirical implications. By reviewing globalization literature and conducting fieldwork with key actors involved in the operation of the IWUF, we seek to identify China's strategies in the GWM. We will then discuss how the IWUF case study can add to existing globalization scholarship and inspire recommendations for sports practitioners. In the conclusion, future research directions are proposed.

A glance at the history of modern wushu under globalization

In the mid-1970s when China sought to return to international organizations and establish diplomatic relations with other countries, so-called 'ping-pong diplomacy' policy was adopted (Chen et al., 2012) and wushu was supported with diplomatic missions (Lan, 1996). However, the 1980s marked the beginning of China's international campaign to promote wushu. In 1987, the Asian Wushu Championship was held in Japan where the Wushu Federation of Asia (WFA) was also founded. Its first chairman was the dean of the Chinese Wushu Research Institute, who at the time also served as the chairman of the IWUF Preparatory Committee under the aegis of China's General Administration of Sport (GAS) (WFA, 2015). In 1990, China took advantage of the opportunity of hosting the Beijing Asian Games to successfully make wushu an official event (WFA, 2015). In October 1990, the IWUF was formally established in Beijing, with the World Wushu Championships (WWC) as its main competition (Li, 2011).

Although the hosting of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games was arguably China's major sporting achievement (Lee and Tan, 2011), the country still had a "not-yet-

accomplished ambition” to promote the inclusion of wushu, a symbol of Chinese culture, in the Olympic programme. As early as 1982, China’s National Sports Commission (NSC)² had already proposed the course of action “Let Wushu Go Global” in an attempt to increase wushu’s international presence (Cai, 2014). In the following two decades, wushu became more competitive and more organized—for example, as an official sport in the 1990 Asian Games in Beijing, and with the establishment of the WFA in 1987 and the IWUF in 1990. In terms of international recognition, that of the SportAccord came in 1994 and of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 2002 (Han, 2004). In 2001 when Beijing successfully won the right to host the 2008 Summer Olympics, the hope that wushu could be included in the programme increased (Theeboom et al., 2017).

To date, however, China’s attempts to turn wushu into an official Olympic event have encountered three setbacks. In 2001, with China’s support, the IWUF applied to the IOC immediately after Beijing had won the right to host the 2008 Games (Wang and Wang, 2014). This was rejected mainly because the IOC wanted to reduce the scale of the Games. Furthermore, scoring in wushu was regarded as both subjective and complicated (Guo, 2013). Consequently, the IWUF adopted a more objective scoring system, but, in 2005, its application was again turned down (Zhang et al., 2010). China and the IWUF did not give up but in 2013 their request was once more refused (Yuan, 2013). In order to promote wushu internationally and secure its inclusion in the Olympic programme, the Chinese Wushu Association (CWA) has formulated a ten-year plan (2014–2023) with China’s full financial support. Through collaboration with

² It was then reorganized as GAS in 1998.

*Hanban*³, the CWA managed to use China's Confucius Institutes around the world as an important platform to promote wushu (GAS, 2017).

In addition, according to the IWUF's official website and its most recent publications⁴, it now has 155 national or regional federations as members (39 in Africa, 38 in Asia, 46 in Europe, 9 in Oceania, and 23 in Pan America). A variety of events or championships have been organized by the IWUF on various sizes and in different regions and continents, although the precise number of non-Chinese participants is not available. However, one official statistic about wushu in multi-sport games is meaningful: the wushu competition at the 18th Asian Games had 201 participants from 21 countries and regions.

It is interesting to compare the GWM with the globalization of other two Asian sports, judo and taekwondo—their global dissemination is linked to the national identities of Japan and South Korea respectively (Lachina, 2018; Moenig and Kim, 2020). However, differences can be recognized. First, the cultural soft power of judo and taekwondo was grounded in the West before the intervention of the nation-state. Second, the International Judo Federation and the World Taekwondo Federation were supported by the Japanese and South Korean governments at an early stage in their formation, while later their governance structure became more internationalized. Third, in the cases of judo and taekwondo, a bottom-up momentum brought about by motivated individuals

³ *Hanban* is the colloquial abbreviation of China's "Office of Chinese Language Council International". "Confucius Institute Headquarters" is its official English appellation. It used to be known as the "China National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language".

⁴ <http://www.iwuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/IWUF-30th-Anniversary-Special-Issue1990-2020-CN.pdf>
<http://www.iwuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2019-IWUF-Magazine.pdf>
<http://www.iwuf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/IWUF-Yearbook-2018.pdf>

can be identified. But this is less the case with wushu. Fourth, while judo benefitted from waves of Japanese cultural expansion (Lachina, 2018), taekwondo prospered thanks to South Korea's interaction with the rest of the world for geopolitical reasons (e.g., USA, Vietnam, and West Germany) (Moenig and Kim, 2020). Again, this is not the case for wushu.

In brief, the aforementioned differences partially explain why the GWM has a different developmental path from those of judo and taekwondo—not only in the broader context but also in terms of what stakeholders have done to showcase their sports on the international stage. It is true that the globalization of wushu has the support of China. However, China's role and its strategies need further examination.

Modern wushu under globalization: an emerging academic concern

Current scholarship concerning wushu's globalization highlights the development, evolution, and change of the sport itself (Lu, 2008; Su, 2016), the social mechanisms within the Western context needed to accelerate its diffusion (Pérez-Gutiérrez et al., 2015), the functioning of its international governing body (Brownell, 2012; Han et al., 2020; Theeboom et al., 2017), and its effects in light of the China's growing political agenda (Chen, 2017). More specifically, some scholars attribute the modernization of wushu to East-West cultural interaction (Brownell, 2008; Lu, 2008) while others see this as a mechanism for China to transmit its traditions or values around the world (Chen, 2017). Some examine how wushu fits into the socio-historical space of a Western context that has undergone major societal changes in religious and spiritual life (Pérez-Gutiérrez et al., 2015).

Two different directions can be identified in studies concerned with the globalization of wushu. Studies conducted purely by Chinese scholars highlight the value of wushu

as an element in China's cultural or soft power strategy (Dai, 2004), and in China's political-economic growth under the Belt and Road Initiative (Chen, 2017). Issues include how wushu has been used by the state to realize its political agenda in different eras, and the internal power hierarchy of actors involved in reconstructing wushu in the years after the Cultural Revolution (Su, 2016). However, Chinese scholars who have prospered since the Belt and Road Initiative began in 2013 have taken a different position from that of their predecessors. The post-2013 constellation highlights the instrumental rationality and benefits for China to be involved in the GWM, whereas pre-2013 works tended to raise awareness of cultural loss and other negative impacts that the GWM might have (see Dai, 2004; Zheng, 2011).

Compared with this, studies that are not solely the work of Chinese scholars⁵ tend to consider wushu's East-to-West transmission from a set of diverse perspectives. Some see it as a consequence of societal change in the West itself (Pérez-Gutiérrez et al., 2015). Others examine the phenomenon either through a political lens, notably China's intention or unwillingness to make wushu and IWUF truly international (Brownell, 2012; Theeboom et al., 2017), or in relation to management and specifically the IWUF's management failings (Han et al., 2020). Although Brownell (2008, 2012) was amongst the pioneers in this field, an emerging academic interest in this topic outside China⁶ can be discerned (Theeboom et al., 2017). More precisely, the globalization of wushu in Brownell's works is part of her grand narrative—the Olympics and China.

⁵ To the best of our knowledge, important works are done by Theeboom and colleagues (Theeboom et al., 2017, as well as Han et al., 2020). Both papers have engaged his Chinese colleagues. Yet, since the core concerns and perspectives are quite different from works done purely by Chinese scholars, we see a need to have further distinctions.

⁶ Not written in simplified Chinese but in English, and not published in journals of universities in China but in peer reviewed SSCI academic journals.

However, it is Theeboom and colleagues (Han et al., 2020; Theeboom et al., 2017) who have brought international attention to this aspect of wushu.

Methodologically, a majority of the studies published by Chinese scholars in Chinese university journals tend to consist of review papers, with substantial empirical materials largely missing. However, this omission has been addressed in other works conducted by Theeboom and colleagues. By analyzing documents and medal points won at the World Wushu Championship, Theeboom and colleagues (2017) concluded that China wanted to globalize wushu and promote its inclusion in the Olympic programme mainly to add more medals to its Olympic achievements. Having interviewed IWUF members, Han and colleagues (2020) argued that the IWUF's globalization policy suffers from certain management failings. However, their approach focuses more on outsiders' perspectives rather than those of insiders. Voices of key insiders, namely those who really govern the IWUF, are missing from their approach. This is because China is the key actor and the true decision maker and mobilizes resources in support of the IWUF (Brownell, 2012; Han et al., 2020; Theeboom et al., 2017). In their latest paper, Han and colleagues (2020, p.12) even described the IWUF as being widely criticized due to the "dominant position of China" therein—"Chinese Wushu Association is behind everything" (citing an interview with an IWUF member).

Therefore, the focus should be on the Chinese government, but little is known about China's strategies in the GWM. Indeed, Han and colleagues (2020) even suggested that, in such a unique case as that of the IWUF which China finances and over which China governs, a focus on the nation-state as the key actor is needed. Following Skocpol (1985, p.3–4), therefore, we see the necessity 'to bring the state back in' for a study that examines wushu in the context of globalization. Su (2016) was correct to have investigated what is done by agents who have the real power to reconstruct wushu

domestically within China. Our study evaluates China's strategies to promote "its own sports" (wushu), with an analytical framework derived from globalization theories.

Theories of globalization as the analytical framework

To understand better China's efforts in the GWM, the analytical framework of this study is based on theoretical models of globalization summarized by Held et al. (1999) and by Houlihan (1994, 2016) (see Table 1). With a focus on the nation-state, we explore its role in pushing wushu's global diffusion and analyze whether China is responding to or transforming the global sport culture.

Table 1 about here

There were two reasons why we adopted the frameworks of Held et al. (1999) and Houlihan (1994, 2016). **First**, our study focuses on the nation-state's role in globalization. Other scholars doing research on globalization have paid less attention to this issue. According to Houlihan (1994, 2016), there are three patterns of local response: passive, participative and conflictual. This distinction provides guidance for investigating the complexity, trajectory and momentum of China's strategies in the GWM. **Second**, our theoretical concerns and research questions are concerned with the extent to which the nation-state can in return shape globalization, as opposed to simply responding to globalization. Three main schools of globalization theory are summarized by Held et al. (1999): hyperglobalism, transformationalism, and scepticism. This tripartite schema serves as a preliminary basis for understanding the general contours of scholarly debates, rather than as a rigid template into which all scholarship must be neatly located. What is at stake in the debates amongst these three

positions is not simply what globalization means, but whether, and in what sense, it is present at all (Holton, 2005: 5).

The transformationalists' line of argument is critical of certain aspects of both the hyperglobalist and sceptical approaches. Put simply, their position is twofold. On the one hand, transformationalists agree with the hyperglobalists' contention that the world is undergoing a fundamental transformation, but they disagree with the hyperglobalists' claim of 'the end-state' (see Ohmae, 2008) as they insist on highlighting the important role of the state during the globalizing process (Marsh et al. 2006: 175). On the other hand, transformationalists argue that the sceptics' thinking is too 'sceptical'. The power of national governments is not necessarily diminished due to globalization but is instead reconstituted and restructured in response to the growing complexity of governance in a more interconnected world (Held et al., 1999: 9).

The view taken by the transformationalists, such as Held et al. (1999) and Held and McGrew (2007), is that, given challenges created by globalization, nation-states cannot contain within their structures all the significant elements of global life. This is in line with 'participative responses' observed by Houlihan (1994, 2016), as a way through which the nation-state shapes its engagement with the international sporting world. In other words, the frameworks of Held et al. (1999) and Houlihan (1994, 2016) are important analytical tools for this study. Their observations (notably concerning the transformationalists and 'participative responses') enable us to understand the extent to which a nation-state participates in globalization while also transforming its own assets such as its institutions and culture.

While the framework summarized by Held et al. (1999) and Houlihan (1994, 2016) helped our preliminary analysis, China's strategies in the GWM cannot be sufficiently explained solely on the basis of their works. This is because: a) in their analysis, there

is a clear divide between nation-states and international organizations (both inter-governmental and non-governmental). But in our example, the IWUF as an ISGB is, in reality, under the leadership of China; b) they deal mainly with the responses of non-Western societies to globalization dominated by the West, ignoring the possibilities that the nation-state has the capacity to reshape globalization in return. In the GWM, it would appear that some new forms of transformation are no longer containable within or fully controlled by old-fashioned organizational settings. An alternative explanation is needed to better understand this emerging phenomenon.

Method

To answer our research questions, the methods used for this study included documentary qualitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews. The former mainly relate to official and semi-official documents released by the Chinese government, while the latter included twenty interviewees involved in the GWM. These are officials, scholars and experts from the following organizations: GAS, the Wushu Administrative Center of GAS (WAC⁷), Capital University of Physical Education and Sports (CUPES), which collaborates with *Hanban* and the Confucius Institutes to promote wushu training globally, Tsinghua University, Beijing Sport University (BSU), Shaolin Tagou Wushu School, and the IWUF. A thematic analysis (Patton, 2002) was applied, and all interview data were validated through triangulation to establish reliability. This included comparison with data from other sources such as

⁷ WAC was created in 1994, but its leadership and general functions were **the same** as those of the CWA. The title WAC was used to connect with international organizations while the title CWA was used to interact with the domestic political system. Readers shall be informed that this is a typical arrangement with Chinese characteristics.

public archives, certain organizations' internal documents, and observations by leading officials.

It was not that easy to gain access to interviewees given the political sensitivity of this topic. Moreover, even with accesses, interviewees may have refrained from sharing all of their insights. This meant that, even with the same interviewees, we needed to repeat questions several times (but in different ways) so that multi-faceted information could be more successfully gleaned. Constant networking, snowballing, and trust building mattered in order to guarantee responses of the highest quality. This also explains why a span of several years was covered in our fieldwork. Thanks to the help of various gatekeepers, referrals to other key sports personnel were made possible. In total, field visits in Beijing were conducted four times, with twenty participants being interviewed, all of them directly or indirectly involved with the GWM. Further information about the interviewees appears in Table 2.

Table 2 about here

China's strategies in the GWM

Seven strategies have been developed by China in the GWM. The first three relate mainly to China's responses to the IOC, while the other four are primarily intended for China to be able to promote and realize its own agenda.

Advocating the inclusion of wushu in the Olympic programme

China has made several efforts to achieve this goal.

a) Lobbying IOC's leading officials

To impress the IOC's leading officials, wushu performances were organized on various accessible formal occasions (P, 0120/2017). A wushu tournament was also organized to coincide with the Beijing Olympic Games, and Jacques Rogge even presented medals to the winners (Theeboom et al., 2017; Zhang, 2008). A WAC official reported: "we must let the IOC and its decision makers know that our government supports wushu, and that we mean it seriously with the backing of the whole country." (I, 0111/2017).

b) Lobbying the Olympic Games Organizing Committee (OGOC)

The OGOC, under Thomas Bach's "Olympic Agenda 2020", has increased its influence on the Games' programme. An example is that the 2020 Tokyo OGOC's proposal to add five sports as official events was approved by the IOC. China thus began targeting the OGOCs of 2024 Paris and 2028 Los Angeles. A WAC senior official claimed, "we've gradually shifted our target to the OGOCs from Tokyo 2020" (H, 0110/2020). A policy of the WAC also declares its goal to realize wushu's inclusion in the Olympic programme by 2036 (WAC, 2020).

c) Imitating gymnastics to standardize routines

Routines (*taolu*), instead of free combat (*sanda*), were chosen for the wushu event to be included in the Olympic programme. The reason, according to a WAC official relaying the statement of Zaiqing Yu (then IWUF President), was to avoid overlapping with other Olympic combat sports (D, 0106/2017). This statement was confirmed by an IWUF senior official (K, 0110/2019). In order to differentiate wushu from other Olympic combat sports, the CWA and the IWUF decided to focus on routines in their campaigns with the IOC. Furthermore, to decrease the subjectivity of the scoring system for routines, the system used in gymnastics was adopted. A WAC official emphasized that "competitive wushu must be played in the way of gymnastics, a

movement that has a corresponding index and scoring system” (I, 0111/2017). He also mentioned that “our aim is to make wushu understandable for the global audiences” (I, 0111/2017).

Promoting wushu in other international multi-sports events

China cooperates with the IWUF to promote wushu in international games. There have been achievements such as the inclusion of wushu in the 2017 Universiade in Taiwan, the 2018 Africa Youth Games in Algeria, and the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games in Senegal (K, 0112/2020). In addition, the Belt and Road Initiative launched in 2013 created another channel for China to strengthen its international exchanges and cooperation related to wushu. Relevant measures included mobilizing overseas Chinese and students, maximizing the function of China’s foreign agencies (e.g., embassies, consulates, Chinese culture centres, China’s state-funded enterprises etc.), and holding the “International Wushu Seminar for Diplomats in China” (WAC, 2017, 2020). As far as China is concerned, its national diplomatic strategy behind all these efforts is self-evident. As articulated by Guorong Chen, former WAC Deputy Director, “to firmly establish the guiding ideology that the international interaction brought about by wushu serves the national diplomatic strategy, and increases wushu’s international influence” (Chen, 2017).

Transforming wushu as a competitive sport along with its standardization

Similar to other Olympic sports, wushu has moved towards a competition focus and standardization. A WAC official pointed out that since China is not able to change the IOC’s established system, changing wushu to meet the IOC’s requirements is the only option. An emphasis on competition and the standardization of wushu are thus what is

supposed to take place (P, 0120/2017). Thus, an IWUF official mentioned, “in the past, some did argue that wushu was more like a performance than a competition. But now it has gradually matured, and its scoring is like that of gymnastics and figure skating. Everything is moving closer to the Olympics” (K, 0113/2017). In terms of wushu’s standardization, a WAC official claimed that promoting competitive wushu to the world “is similar to what McDonald’s and KFC are doing” – to follow standards and to realize promotion on a global scale (P, 0113/ 2020).

Launching the IWUF and streamlining its business development

a) Launching the IWUF

In October 1990, the IWUF was formally established in Beijing, with China’s strong support (Li, 2011). According to the IWUF Executive Vice President, this was an important step towards wushu’s globalization. However, he also emphasized that “even though the headquarters were moved to Lausanne, much work is still conducted in Beijing where most of the resources and information are available” (K, 0113/2017). His statement is line with that of the Deputy Director of the WAC, although somewhat idealistic—“at the beginning, it’s an international organization fostered by us. Now that it has become more mature, we *shall* let it go and *it’s supposed to be* a real international one...It’s not dependent on the CWA, but certainly we support it” (H, 0109/2017)⁸.

b) Financial support for the IWUF’s business development

According to an IWUF official, China began funding the IWUF via China’s NOC from 2014, with an average amount of funds being between one and two million USD each year (K, 0112/2020). The CWA assisted with the establishment of national wushu

⁸ We use some *italics* to highlight the context of this citation. Interviewee H, as a technocrat in an official position, pointed out what “ought to be” for the governance of an international organization in general. Compared to that, the “to be” (the reality) is that the IWUF is still under China’s strong influence.

associations in countries in Africa, Central and South America, and Eastern Europe. The CWA then helped these national associations to join the IWUF (D, 0106/2017). Following the Belt and Road Initiative, the WAC aims to increase wushu's influence in the name of international aid (WAC, 2016). In addition to China's support, "the IWUF also has financial support from sponsors that are Chinese companies specializing in the production of wushu carpets and platforms" (K, 0110/2019).

c) The selection of China's senior sports officials to govern the IWUF

Since its foundation, all IWUF presidents have been Chinese. From 2003, Zaiqing Yu has been the IWUF president. In 2019, Zhongwen Gou, GAS's director, was elected as the IWUF president. A WAC official reported, "before 2010, the IWUF's Secretariat was equivalent to the CWA's Foreign Affairs Department. It's like two brands but with the same staff. It's been always like that." (D, 0112/2020). However, in order to strengthen the connection with the IOC and other ISGBs, and to reduce the stereotype that the IWUF is dominated by China, the IWUF moved its headquarters to Lausanne in 2012. Yet, all these arrangements would have been impossible without funding from China (E, 0106/2017).

d) Leading the revision of competition rules and the selection of referees

At present, Qiuping Zhang, the former WAC Director, serves as the IWUF's Secretary-General; Zhanqi Yang, WAC's Deputy Director, serves as the chairman of the IWUF's Technical Committee. A WAC official noted that many WAC leaders hold important positions in the IWUF, especially as Secretary-General and Chairman of the Technical Committee. He explained "we've many technical specialists and teachers, and sports schools in China also provide a steady and sufficient pool of talent. Therefore, many technique-related outlooks are formulated by the CWA, and then followed by the IWUF." (D, 0106/2017).

Professionalization and commercialization of wushu

In China's "Five-Year Plan for the Development of Wushu (2016–2020)", special emphasis is placed on a) strengthening policy guidance to promote its marketization and professionalization, b) establishing a platform for professional *sanda* events, c) exploring mechanisms for the professionalization of routines, accelerating professionalized development, and branding professionalized events, d) developing wushu's market, and e) using *sanda* as a breakthrough point to commercialize wushu events (WAC, 2016). Qiuping Zhang, former WAC Director and also the IWUF's Secretary-General, pointed out two main purposes of the plan: a) to activate an impetus for new ideas and approaches by taking the wushu industry as a new platform to transform wushu's new development, and b) to develop commercialized competitions for its combat events, to build professional teams, and to continuously raise the level of its professional development (Zhang, 2017). In fact, the policy directing wushu towards professionalization and commercialization has been fully established by the policy document of the "Development Plan of the Wushu Industry (2019–2025)", jointly formulated by 14 central government agencies (GAS, 2019).

Wushu as an official sport at China's National Youth Games and National Games

With the exception of wushu, China's National Games are basically in line with the Olympic programme. However, wushu is designated as an official event in the National Games, with seven gold medals to be won for *taolu* and five gold medals for *sanda*. In addition, wushu is also an official event in China's Youth Games, with ten gold medals overall for *taolu* and *sanda*. A WAC official highlighted that China attaches great importance to wushu and provides special financial support. He continued, "although

wushu is not currently an Olympic event, it is indeed a tradition in China. To put it bluntly, no leader dares ignore it” (J, 0111/2017). A GAS official claimed that “wushu is the only non-Olympic event in our National Games and Youth Games with 12 and 10 gold medals respectively. To date, each GAS director has paid great attention to wushu, especially in terms of policy and funding” (R, 0112/2020).

Promoting wushu in schools and developing the ‘hometowns of wushu’

To establish a relatively stable pool of coaches and athletes, China promotes wushu in schools and runs campaigns to select hometowns of wushu. In “Regulations on national hometowns of wushu (for trial)” formulated by the WAC in 2012, it was clearly stipulated that local governments selected as national hometowns of wushu must actively implement the “six entries” for wushu (into schools, military camps, enterprises, institutions, towns, and communities). Moreover, funding for wushu should be included in local financial budgets (a minimum of a half million Chinese yuan, around eighty thousand USD per year, to ensure participation in national competitions and relevant campaigns). Local governments are expected to host national competitions, with venues that can accommodate at least four sets of routine competitions, 1,000 spectators, supporting training facilities, indoor training functions, and corresponding equipment (WAC, 2012). At present, the WAC is further strengthening its supervision and technical support (WAC, 2020).

Discussion

This paper examines the multi-stakeholder and hybrid governance structure of the GWM. The global expansion of wushu’s sporting practice is directly tied to the nation-state of China and its interests. Our study asks: what strategies have been adopted by

China in the GWM, and what functions do these strategies serve. A reflection on current scholarship demonstrates that some issues deserve further discussion based on our findings, notably the role of the nation-state in globalization. Based on the globalization theory summarized by Held et al. (1999) and the three patterns concerning local responses toward globalization introduced by Houlihan (1994, 2016), we explore China's responses to globalization. China's strategies, in the course of the GWM, reveals that China is not only the recipient of or responder to globalization. Instead, it is also a promoter of globalization in its international campaigns within the Olympic Movement. The case of the GWM represents a new model for promoting sport internationally in the contemporary sporting world. It exemplifies a hybrid structure in which a nation-state as the key actor intentionally creates an ISGB as a façade for the pursuit of its own agenda. 'Reverse globalization' can be used to describe this emerging phenomenon.

The duality of the nation-state's role in globalization

Our findings reveal that China, on the one hand, has responded to the IOC's value and requirements, but on the other hand it has also operationalized its own vision and version of globalization when promoting wushu's global development by using the IWUF as a façade. Regarding this duality, three issues deserve further discussion.

First, one critique of globalization focuses on the harm it causes to traditional values and cultural identity (Stiglitz, 2002), and China undoubtedly faces this challenge in the GWM. This coincides with the argument of transformationalists, as observed by Held et al. (1999). In the case of wushu's globalization, it also seems appropriate to apply Houlihan's (1994, 2016) idea of participative responses as local culture can influence global culture after having absorbed it. For these authors, this is the way in which

nation-states participate in globalization. However, in their analysis, they only deal with the diffusion of Western culture and the local responses or transformations to that diffused Western culture. In other words, what is responded to and transformed has originated in the West. This marks a very important difference between our study and theirs: after absorbing the Western sport value, China has sought to diffuse its own tradition: wushu⁹.

Unlike passive recipients of Western culture, China wants to export its own culture. China approached the IOC and accepted the IOC's values and rules. In return, China created the IWUF and changed the rules and techniques of its own traditional sport in exchange for wushu's greater international exposure. The fact that wushu has been included in the programme of the Youth Olympic Games marks a further realization of China's grand project—to promote wushu as transformed by China itself, in China's own way and with Chinese voices being heard in the global sporting world. The creation of the IWUF marked the first step in China's agenda setting in the reverse globalization. China has transferred public funds to promote wushu internationally and to modernize wushu through increasing the elements of competition and standardization in the hope that wushu can become an important element of global sporting culture. China's strategies in the GWM are more in line with those of the transformationalists as observed by Held et al. (1999). However, for the moment, China has little desire to compromise the leadership of the IWUF. In other words, while trying to reshape its traditions in order to meet international criteria, China holds on to power within the IWUF. China's new ways of thinking about and reacting to the new world order, therefore, echoes Gill's (2003) conclusion that nation-states can exert their power and resist to globalization. In Held and McGrew's (2007, p. 171) terms, what is

⁹ Yet, detraditionalizing it to some degree is a tradeoff for its possible entry into the Olympics.

done by China demonstrates the possibilities of the “progressive transformation” of new structures under globalization.

Second, the focal actor is a hybrid of a nation-state (China) and an ISGB (the IWUF), that face their major counterparts, the IOC and its Olympic Movement. Reverse globalization is thus activated by this hybrid structure, but it is also shaped and constrained by the existing limitations set by the IOC that are well-known (Brownell, 2008, 2012). In other words, this hybrid does not necessarily possess the ultimate power to decide. This is especially true when China wants to play games in the international Olympic sporting world, the rules of which are set by other outranking players such as the IOC. If we consider China to be an institutional entrepreneur, then its leverage via the IWUF represents a good deal because China tries to play the games according to the rules within the Olympic family. In the hybrid composed of China as a nation-state and the IWUF as an international body, we see that the domestic resources at China’s disposal are mobilized while an international agenda is realized via the IWUF. That means, following the IOC, mobilizing its own resources and changing its own culture are the approaches taken by China to export wushu which is transformed to satisfy the IOC’s ruling ideology (Brohm, 1978: 77). While wushu’s inclusion in the Olympic programme has not yet been completely realized, promoting wushu in other international multi-sports events is a good option for China.

Compared to judo and taekwondo whose globalization can be partially attributed to cultural or geopolitics reasons, the soft power of wushu is less grounded in the West. Moreover, the GWM is engaged in more of a top-down process with the intervention of China as a nation-state which, for the time being, shows less willingness to relinquish its power over the IWUF. Fundamental to the support of China and the IWUF (mainly for China’s own nation-state interests), the conditions for the GWM’s development path

differ from those of judo and taekwondo. As China plays an important role in the GWM, further examination of its strategies has been the main task of this study.

Third, compared to other studies that focus on the impact of sport globalization on civil society, in this study we bring the nation-state back in. By investigating the theoretical implications behind China's engagement in the GWM, we can reflect on the extent to which Ohmae's (2008) assumptions can be revised by asking whether the nation-state is always receiving passively impacts that result from globalization or is even coming to an end under globalization. Reviewing the GWM, one can conclude that China is responding to and participating in globalization, especially through the Olympic Movement, in a relatively active manner. This is consistent with the argument of Held et al. (1999) about the remaking of globalization whereby local culture (agency) can push and have an impact on global culture (structure). In other words, globalization is affecting states and is also managed by states (Woods, 2014). In relation to globalization theories, China's response should be classified as one of participation, rather than conflict. Its strategies in the GWM are "participative" according to the classification of Houlihan (1994, 2016). This is because when China accepted the Western values incarnated in the IOC's requirements, it also transformed its own traditional culture (wushu) and exported via the IWUF. Conceptually, this implies the emergence of reverse globalization as local cultures (agencies in action) exert an influence on global culture (structure).

Empirical implications

This study has practical implications for both nation-states and the leaders of sports governing bodies. Taking the nation state as the actor, the study has empirical value for other nation-states which may want to promote their own traditional sports

internationally or even within the Olympic Movement. China is still on its way to making wushu an Olympic event, and that is where the empirical implications of this case can shed light. A trade-off is expected, especially in terms of the extent to which the nation-state itself is willing to and can manage to compromise the traditional values and philosophy behind the sport to be promoted globally. Another issue is the degree to which the nation-state can or is willing to concede or share its power within the sport's international governing body. Reflecting upon China's experience of promoting wushu, the effectiveness of discourse construction and approaches applied by nation-states should be carefully examined.

Sports managers, notably leaders of international and national sports federations and associations, can also be inspired by this study in two ways. **First**, if financial support from the nation-state or government is inevitably important for their business, establishing a degree of financial independence should be a priority. Not only is this connected to the internal political economy of the organization itself, but the plan deserves advanced deployment. Lessons from the IWUF reveal that a step-by-step financial independence plan was missing at an early stage of its foundation, thus leading to its status quo.

Second, sports leaders can also learn from our case study that the sports arena has its own way of claiming autonomy. Under sport globalization, a trade-off is expected for sports leaders if they are to promote their sports at the international, continental, and even national levels. When criticizing globalization, Stiglitz (2002) admits the importance of international organizations while also arguing that conflicts of interest and ideology in this sector explain governance failure. This is akin to challenges encountered by China when trying to transplant wushu into Western culture. Following the critiques of Hirst and colleagues (2009) that globalization is a set of discourses or

rhetoric, we may further reflect on China's globalizing of wushu from the perspective of global sports governance. Similar to what China has done in other international arenas, it exerts its influence in international sports which are often claimed, not least by the IOC, to be autonomous from politics and commerce. This perhaps proves that the international sports governance system manages to defend its own autonomy to a considerable degree. Given such an asset, sports leaders must keep this in mind when fulfilling their functions.

Conclusion

Clearly associated with China's nation-state interests on the global stage, the GWM offers an opportunity to rethink and reflect on several issues and concepts concerning globalization. While China's efforts to promote wushu are progressing, studies of wushu under the conditions of globalization are still at an early stage. However, it is conceivable that, at some point in the future, China may consider inviting the Western countries to join its grand project to increase support for wushu. But this is not the case for now. The factors that could allow this to happen would be a) China's willingness to empower the IWUF as an international sport governing body as Japan and South Korea have done in the cases of judo and taekwondo respectively; b) China will manage to find *others* (presumably influential Western elites) who are willing to engage in the co-production of reverse globalization with China. However, at present China is unwilling to lose its hold over the IWUF.

As the major actor in this process of reverse globalization, China's efforts in the GWM constitute an ongoing process. Future studies can focus whether and, if so, how China has succeeded in maintaining a balance between globalized wushu and its traditional practice. Future research may also explore why China wanted to promote

the GWM, and why the IOC, famously proud of its insistence on zero tolerance of nation-states' political intervention, allowed what China has done behind the façade of the IWUF. Moreover, it is also valuable to reflect, from a different perspective, on the so-called Europe-dominated IOC internal governance structure. Finally, the fieldwork for this study was conducted from 2017 to 2020, during the chaotic interaction between China and the rest of the world, including the USA-China trade war and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Future studies are encouraged to follow even more recent trends in international relations and sports governance.

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Table 1 Global-local interaction (the theoretical foundation of this study)

Held et al. (1999) Three tendencies to conceptualize globalization

	Hyperglobalists	Transformationalists	Sceptics
Driving Forces	Capitalism and technology	Combined forces of modernity	States and markets
Power of national governments	Declining or eroding	Reconstituted or restructured	Reinforced or enhanced for the developed countries
Main arguments	The end of nation-state to be replaced by transnational corporations and international organizations.	To keep their competitiveness, states change their political and economic structure under globalization.	Globalization depends on state acquiescence and support.

Houlihan (1994, 2016) Responses to globalization (other than global reach)

The state's actions	Passive	Participative	Conflictual
	Ignoring	Protecting/promoting specific sports	Boycotts

Table 2 The interviewees

Interviewees	Functions & Affiliations	Interview date (MMDD/YYYY)
A	Expert studying the development of wushu, Tsinghua University	0104/2017
B	Director, CUPES	0104/2017 0121/2019
C	Director, Wushu School, BSU	0105/2017
D	Official in Foreign Affairs, WAC	0106/2017 0112/2020
E	Official in <i>Sanda</i> , WAC	0106/2017 0108/2020
F	Official in HR, GAS	0107/2017
G	Director, Wushu School, CUPES	0109/2017
H	High official, WAC	0109/2017 0110/2020
I	Official in Marketing, WAC	0111/2017

J	Official in Youth Affairs, WAC	0111/2017
K	High Official, IWUF	0113/2017
		0110/2019
		0112/2020
L	Official in HR, GAS	0116/2017
M	Official in Anti-Doping, GAS	0116/2017
N	Official in Economics, GAS	0117/2017
O	Official in Social Activity, WAC	0118/2017
		0114/2020
P	Official in <i>Taolu</i> , WAC	0120/2017
		0113/2020
Q	Official in General Affairs, WAC	0120/2017
R	Official in Competition, GAS	0120/2017
		0112/2020
S	Official in Competition, GAS	0125/2018
T	Director, Shaolin Tagou Wushu School, Dengfeng City, Henan Province.	0720/2018
