

The Realistic Appeal and Value Prospect of China's Launch of Sports Public Diplomatic Envoys

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Abstract: In the new era of public diplomacy, the role of sports public diplomats in diplomacy is showing a trend of development. By using the method of literature and logical analysis, this paper analyzes the realistic appeal, social basis and value prospect of China's launch of sports public diplomatic envoys. The research shows that in the new public diplomacy era, China has a realistic appeal to launch sports public diplomatic envoys in terms of easing international political relations, highlighting the power of sports stars, and shaping the national image. Based on the three social foundations of China's sports stars' brilliant achievements in diplomatic history, the multiple values of sports stars with numerous international influences, and the continuous improvement of sports' social responsibility in public diplomacy, It is pointed out that the launch of sports public diplomatic envoys can promote the winning of China's popularity, the establishment of a good image of a great country and the spread of values.

1. Introduction

With the structural adjustment of the international political pattern and the acceleration of the process of global integration, countries all over the world are gradually placed in the same public space where diversity, diversity and diversity coexist. In this space, various contradictions frequently rub together. In order to create a good external development environment, China has actively participated in global governance and created a new situation of major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics [1]. Sports public diplomacy belongs to the category of public diplomacy in the "grand diplomacy" [2]. With the rise of public diplomacy to the development opportunity of China's national strategy [3], it has also entered the era of new public diplomacy. Different from the traditional official diplomatic mechanism, it covers the essence of the combination of elite diplomacy and people's diplomacy. Among them, as an important diplomatic subject in sports public diplomacy, sports elites are natural ambassadors for sports diplomacy [4]. Internationally, sports elites have already appeared in the foreign relations of many countries. For example, the United States upgraded the diplomatic envoy system of sports stars to national strategy ten years ago; France also attaches great importance to the strategic development of sports diplomacy. In 2014, it issued the Action Plan for Sports Diplomacy, established the position of sports diplomatic ambassador [5], and the

Australian government formulated the sports ambassador plan in the Sports Diplomacy Strategy 2015-2018. In recent years, China's sports diplomacy strategy research has focused on the overall diplomatic strategy of a "harmonious world", and the research focus has also shifted to the implementation of the specific measure of "using the influence of sports athletes to act as public diplomatic ambassadors" [6]. In view of the unique role of diplomatic envoys, Zhong Xin [7] (2011), Ni Jingshuai [8] (2013), Chen Shiyang [9] (2016), Yu Dawei [10] (2017), Zhong Bingshu [11] (2018), Huang Zheng [12] (2019), Xiao Huanyu [13] (2019), Ling Ping [14] (2021) and other scholars have made a lot of discussions on the image of "diplomatic envoys" of sports elites from the aspects of story narrative, profile description of personal role and brief summary of the background, However, in general, the research is still in the initial stage, and its limitations are as follows: First, the theoretical connotation of sports public diplomats has not been systematically combed; Second, the practical significance of the establishment of sports public diplomatic envoys was not comprehensively discussed. Starting from the connotation and characteristics of sports public diplomatic envoys, we should deeply explore the unique value of sports public diplomatic envoys, aiming to take history as a mirror, promote the construction of new international relations and the sustainable development of major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics in the new era.

2. Connotation and Characteristics of Sports Public Diplomacy Envoys

2.1. Theoretical Basis of Sports Public Diplomatic Envoys

The maintenance of international relations lies in the transnational interaction between sovereign states (sovereignty) and non-state actors (Non-state Actor). Among them, non-state actors mainly consist of three forms: multinational companies, non-governmental organizations, organizations and individuals. According to the schematic diagram of supranational relations, the international exchange of Chinese and African state actors shows (Figure 1) [15], the communication between governments is extremely limited, while the non-governmental links such as individuals, groups and enterprises are very rich. According to the Federation of International Associations (UIA), the number of various NGOs reached 68,000 in 2016, with an increasing annual growth rate of 1,200 [16]. As a result, in diplomatic relations, intergovernmental international exchanges complement each other, forming a trend of parting ways and driving them away.

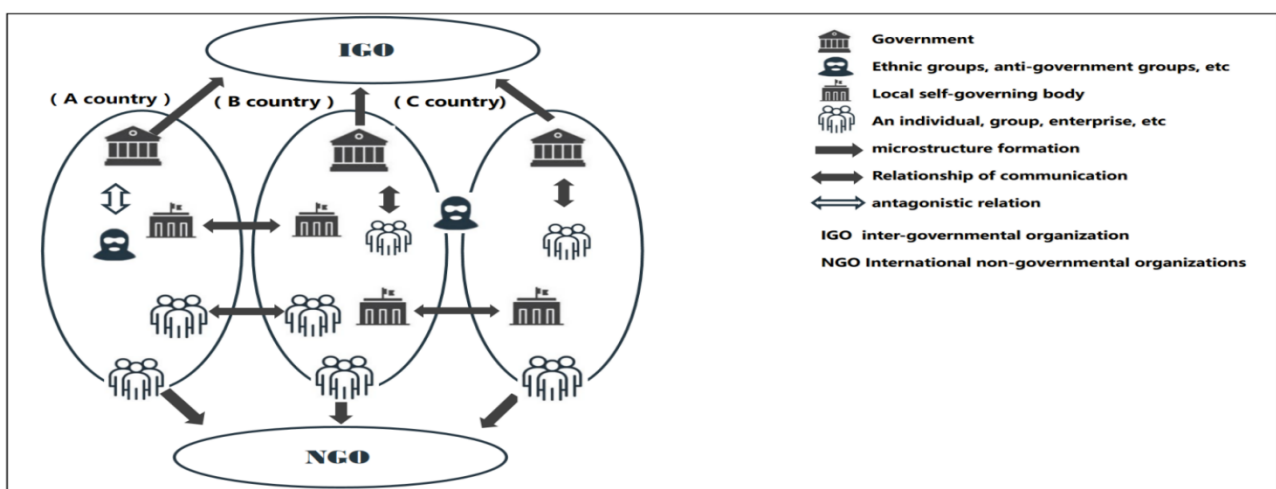


Figure 1: Schematic diagram of the international relations exchanges between non-state actors

The study of international relations emphasizes the coordination and unity of "hard politics" and "soft politics", paying attention to the harmonious exchanges between countries, but also to the

maintenance of official relations, especially the unique role of "individual actors" in international relations. Public diplomacy is one of the most important political exchanges of international relations, and it attaches great importance to the value of people. Zhao Qizheng believes that the social elite plays a mainstay role in the public diplomatic actors, which are jointly composed of the government, the social elite and the general public. The elite effect theory in the field of communication and political science also clarifies the importance of the public opinion elite and the policy elite [17]. Therefore, both the promotion of self-value of individuals and elites in international relations, and the interpretation of elite effect theory by communication and political theory provide strong theoretical support for the launch of sports public diplomacy envoys.

2.2. Connotation of Sports Public Diplomacy Envoys

Globalization has led to the blur of national borders, and it has become the general trend to vigorously promote public diplomacy under the increasingly close transnational economy and social ties. After the "September 11" incident, Rice appointed the sports star "ice butterfly" Guan Yingshan as the first sports public diplomatic envoy, which became the starting point and symbol of the emergence of the sports public diplomatic envoy position.

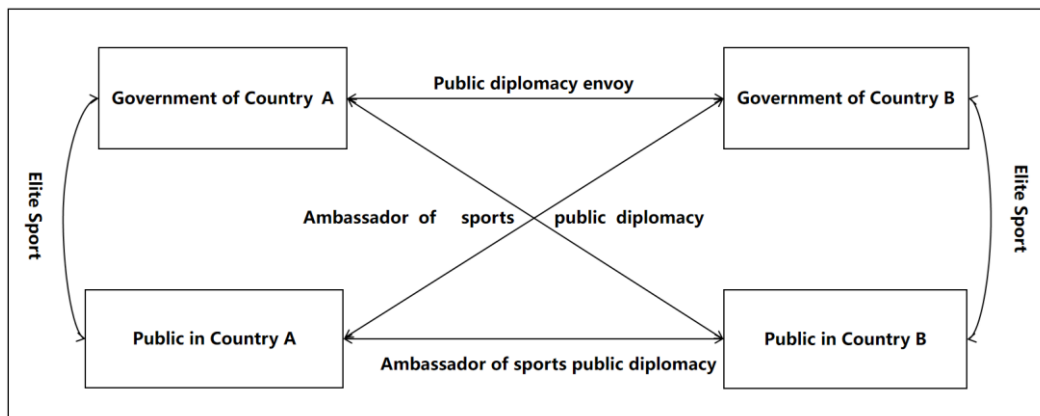


Figure 2: Schematic diagram of the relations between sports diplomatic envoys in public diplomacy

By Figure 2, the government, the public, the public constitute a diplomatic ring, in this ring the government act as behavior, sports elite as the object, the government to the public recognized sports elite as the object, launched the government and foreign public communication sports public diplomatic envoys, achieve the combination of official and unofficial diplomatic promotion. The launch of public diplomacy envoys is the starting point and destination of the birth of sports public diplomacy envoys. Sports public diplomacy envoys are not only the extension and expansion of public diplomacy in the sports field, but also the presentation and practice [8] of sports envoys in public diplomacy. After the above relationship is clarified, then: the envoy of sports public diplomacy refers to the government selecting the sports elite representatives with the main responsibility of handling public foreign affairs in order to ensure the smooth progress of public diplomacy, among which the second to none is the sports stars in China. Its main role lies in being to send positive signals in sports diplomacy by virtue of its unique characteristics of popularity, affinity and flexibility, and to inject a booster into the development of China's diplomatic work.

3. China has Launched the Realistic Demands of Sports Public Diplomacy Envoys

3.1. The Conflict between Complicated International Issues and the Unification of Diplomatic Subjects

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the COVID-19 epidemic has converged with a century-old change. Global issues such as ecological and environmental security, economic and trade war, international terrorism, public health risks, and national separatism have constantly emerged. Games between major powers have deepened, and cooperation and mutual trust have dropped to a freezing point of [5]. How to avoid falling into the trap of the so-called conflict and confrontation, carry out practical and effective communication, eliminate misunderstandings and contradictions, and enhance political mutual trust should have become the primary task of the current international exchanges. Throughout the practice of China's sports diplomacy and cultural promotion, the "official" diplomatic mode always occupies the main channel. In the [18] information age, there are constant conflicts between countries, military competition, and power struggle, and domestic and international problems are developing. A single government force can no longer meet the needs of solving many complex international problems. Therefore, unofficial diplomacy has become a powerful supplement. The two-way diplomatic model combining official and unofficial dialogue is conducive to interaction with the general public, narrowing the public distance between the two countries, and showing China's good image as a major country with its cordial and friendly diplomatic appearance. American sports public diplomatic envoy Rodman with the basketball team "open the door of north Korea" is a typical representative: in 2013, when the US relations in abnormal tension, Rodman in tweets directly request the release of imprisoned American Bae, to this sensitive topic, the north did not show abnormal reaction and behavior. Rodman made good use of the "sports language" to communicate with Kim Jong UN, so that the originally serious and tense diplomatic activities could be carried out smoothly in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere, and achieved the effect that professional diplomats could not achieve in the diplomatic activities. Sports can ease the conflict, establish a common meeting point for the two sides of the opposition [19], narrow the distance with the people of all countries at the fastest speed with the unique sports art appeal, and can play the role of "finishing point" in the development of the whole public diplomacy. Therefore, in the new era, China should face the world more open and inclusive, and launch sports public diplomatic envoys with Chinese characteristics to strengthen the communication and trust between countries with different regional cultures and religious customs, so as to show China's image and establish friendship.

3.2. The Conflict between the Internationalization and Power and the Decentralization of Sports Stars

In the new era, China has been committed to establishing its image as a responsible major country in the international community. China is willing to shoulder the mission as a world power and strive to realize the great vision of a community with a shared future for mankind. In the field of sports, China has actively shaped a good national image through various ways, such as Olympic diplomacy, summit sports diplomacy and foreign sports assistance. The launch of sports public diplomatic envoys, promoting the long sports competitive stage elite have appeared in the diplomatic platform in the world, as a name card to show the national image, always objective, image, fully show the spirit of the Chinese people: Chinese women's football, Wu Dajing, Su Bingtian super long athletes on the field, showing the Chinese spirit, never say die, win glory for the country; Olympics Su Yiming, Gu Ailing, Ren Ziwei and other athletes in ice and snow, showing the dare to struggle, beyond self, indomitable Chinese spirit.....As sports stars with strong appeal and influence, every step of their effort to change the national image attracts much attention, but in the long run, it has had little effect

and cannot match that of official diplomacy. In many western countries, athletes will express their appeal through arena or league or voice for society, such as in August 2020, the professional basketball league through strike to protest the police violence against African Americans, to show the public and its position on the matter, and behind the move is the sports elite through its natural influence and representative to express the significance of the public appeal. The implementation of sports public diplomatic envoys makes this significance be limited amplification. As a position of both official and unofficial nature, it has the role of guiding public opinion and expressing the voice of the people. Therefore, we should learn from the successful experience of the United States to set up standardized and institutionalized professional positions, and solve the state of sports elite serving the country from the policy direction.

3.3. The Expectation of the Rise of Great Powers Clashes with the Malicious Slander of the National Image

The current and future period will be a period of accelerated reconstruction of great changes. Communiqué pointed out that the fifth plenary session of the 19th "difference" period is Chinese sports for 2035 sports power solid foundation, column beam important critical period, sports diplomacy as one of the important link, should continue to uphold the "affinity sincere benefit rong" peripheral diplomacy philosophy, strategic planning and advance work as a whole, to promote the development of power diplomacy and sports power with Chinese characteristics. However, during the COVID-19 outbreak, Western anti-China forces have continuously used relevant digital platforms and social media to attack and smear China, seeking opportunities to encourage countries to boycott the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics. These irrational and emotional and inappropriate remarks rely on Internet resources to constantly transform China outside China into an evil image of "coercion, defeat and darkness". Jervis, a famous political scientist, pointed out that no strength can recover the damage caused by the ugliness of rumors to a certain country [20], so it is particularly important to seek an inclusive and open public opinion environment. With sports as the media of diplomatic behavior can strengthen national identity, effectively shape the national image [21], and with star sports public diplomatic envoys as a national image shaping carrier, it is a unique movement skills can move sports lovers heartstrings, under the influence of priority effect, aperture effect, foreign people will also be sports public diplomatic envoys such as patriotic dedication, integrity and friendly national image extends to the image of the whole country. During the visit, Guan Yingshan shared her life experience of how to go from a grassroots player to the international stage. By introducing what she saw, heard and felt about the United States, she indirectly promoted the values of "everyone is free and equal opportunity", and exported the image of the United States. The envoys of sports public diplomacy, such as individual stories, can personalize and image the country in the communication with the foreign public. The emotions conveyed by words and deeds can more easily be convinced and recognized by the public, allowing the real, comprehensive and three-dimensional China into the international perspective.

4. The Social Foundation of China's Launching of Sports Public Diplomacy Envoys

4.1. Brilliant Achievements of China's Sports Stars in the Diplomatic History

Whether a country can survive on the world stage depends on its diplomatic strength. As a common way of cultural exchange among people all over the world, sports has shown its strong affinity and political function. In its history, although China did not really introduce the position of sports public diplomatic envoy, its prototype has always existed, among which Zhuang Zedong played the most famous role in public diplomacy. Zhuang Zedong, in April 1971, and his teammates went to Japan to

participate in the 31st World Table Tennis Championships. During this period, American athlete Cohen mistakenly took the bus carrying Chinese athletes, and when other teammates deliberately avoided Cohen with "don't make trouble", Zhuang took contact with him. This has laid a good public opinion foundation for the birth of "ping-pong diplomacy '1.0' ". Zhuang Zedong's "politically minded" contact with Cohen has directly promoted the sports diplomacy between China and the United States, which is actually a contributor to the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States."1.0" is an "ice-breaking" move, loosening the US's foreign policy of containment, isolation and isolation of China. On November 21, 2021, Chinese and American athletes hosted the Houston World Table Tennis Championships at the International Table Tennis Federation dinner commemorating the 50th anniversary of "Table Tennis Diplomacy". This is the inheritance of "Table Tennis Diplomacy 1.0" and marks the "birth" of "Table Tennis Diplomacy 2.0". The success of China-US ping-pong diplomacy is of typical and exemplary significance. Its success provides sufficient "historical legitimacy" for China and the US to create a new model of major-country relationship in the new era and promote the formation of a bilateral dialogue mechanism. Tracing back to history, China's sports stars have played a leading role, and the role of sports stars is more prominent. In the 2021 Tokyo Olympic Games, Chinese Olympic athletes not only shoulder the responsibility of "playing the level and the competition", the whole Chinese delegation fights the epidemic and realizes "zero infection", which reflects the determination and efforts of Chinese society to fight the epidemic. It is an important mission of China's sports diplomacy in the new era to tell the story of China well with the help of sports public diplomacy envoys, constantly eliminate the slander and smear of China by western countries, and let the world understand and recognize China's social governance model and national development model.

4.2. Multiple Values of Many International Influential Sports Stars

Since entering the 21st century, China's outstanding athletes have gradually entered the public view, in the international arena and daily training life under the field have received attention, they show their excellent competitive ability, challenge the limit of sports, but also deduce the role of "sports ambassador", "diplomatic expert". For example, after Liu Xiang won the Athens Olympic Games in 2004, he ran around the five-star red flag symbolizing enthusiasm and unrestrained, and countless Chinese people burst into tears. At that time, he represented not only his personal exquisite skills, but also showed the diligent and changing image of China. During the 2013 Australian Open, Li Na was injured twice but still participated in the competition. Her strong and serious attitude is not only the highlight of her personality charm, but also conveyed the spirit of the Chinese people who never give up. Since Yao Ming was selected to the NBA, it has promoted the communication between China and the United States with its own unique charm. Former US President George W. Bush once said of Yao Ming, "I want to thank YAO for his contribution to the city of Houston" [13]. In 2021 Tokyo Olympics, Chinese athletes vividly interpret the "peace, friendship, unity" of the Olympic spirit and "win honor for our country, unity, unyielding" Chinese spirit, show the world the contemporary Chinese, especially the young generation not young, calm, the new image of the open atmosphere, enhance the cohesion, centripetal force, self-confidence of the Chinese nation. In addition, in June 2020, men's singles champion Liu Guoliang was elected president of the Council of the World League of Table Tennis; in June 2021, Zhou Jihong and Zheng Liangcheng were elected vice presidents of FINA and the executive committee of the International Skating Federation, which means that China's voice in the international sports world is further enhanced. According to incomplete statistics, nearly 20 people in China's sports circles have held important positions in major international sports organizations, which have become the source of the vigorous development of sports diplomacy in the new era. In short, China's sports elite, with its extensive influence and

communication power, has not only promoted the spread of Chinese culture, but also set up a new image of China, adding color to the development of China's diplomatic cause.

4.3. Improving the Social Responsibility of Sports in Public Diplomacy

From the "sick man of East Asia" to winning gold and silver, from removing the root causes of the disease to national fitness, and from declining to prosperity, sports has been deeply integrated with political, economic, cultural and other fields, forming a multi-track diplomacy. Politically, with the help of sports to convey the Chinese government's foreign propositions and foreign policies, from "Ping-Pong Diplomacy 1.0" launched in 1971 to "Ping-Pong Diplomacy 2.0" launched in 2021, China-US relations are developing, and are being gradually promoted into a new voyage. Economically, sports lead the economic quality development and establish the good image of Chinese brand, such as the "gymnastics prince" Li Ning founded a professional sports brand company and successfully entered the overseas market; Sun Yang topped the list of 2018 with Huawei glory [22], sports elites bring more economic benefits and spread Chinese sports culture and spirit; culture, sports has become the bridge of the traditional national culture. The 541 Confucius Institutes and 1,170 Confucius Institutes have been located in 162 countries (regions). In sports and culture exchanges, such as the Confucius Institute in Bergen, Norway, and under the guidance of martial arts talents of Beijing Sport University, it has formed a new situation of martial arts in Confucius Institutes [23]. As a powerful means of cultural export, the professional integration of diplomacy and sports diplomacy will surely burst out a more powerful communication force together with Confucius Institutes, and realize the [18] of Chinese characteristics, Chinese style and Chinese style in China's foreign sports exchanges. In July 2021, the Olympic motto, which has lasted for 108 years, was updated for the first time, adding the word "more united". It can be seen that sports is always an important carrier to gather the strength of different countries and abandon ideological differences. The launch of sports public diplomacy envoys can enable them to fulfill their mission in the practice of sports diplomacy, flexibly carry out sports exchanges, and promote the diversification of the subjects of sports diplomacy participants.

5. The Foresight of the Value of Sports Public Diplomacy Envoys Launched in China

5.1. Win the Hearts of the People and Tell the Chinese Story Well

In the new era of public diplomacy, China's foreign development has matched the pulse of The era of building a new type of international relations, and China's diplomacy has ushered in a whole new look. In particular, the innovation of new media technology has built a new communication platform for the development of media diplomacy, network diplomacy and urban diplomacy. China's all-round, multi-level and three-dimensional diplomatic pattern has formed a [24] country friendship, people dating [25]. For a long time, sports diplomacy, with its natural cross-cultural and pro-people nature, promotes mutual understanding through sports and promotes matchmaking [26] through diplomacy, and has become a cultural hub of mutual benefit and win-win cooperation among all countries under the complex pattern. Under the vigorous development of sports public diplomacy, folk sports diplomacy, as an important branch, has also become a new way to spread Chinese stories with the advantage of "down to earth". Chinese netizens began to use new media and social software, such as Weibo, TikTok, Tencent, etc., to make voice for China's excellent national traditional ethnic sports culture. However, under the background of the prevalence of contemporary Internet and diversified values, due to the lack of knowledge in the diplomatic field and the lack of diplomatic ability, the distributed remarks are easy to cause the understanding deviation between the citizens of different countries, and can not achieve a good publicity effect. The introduction of sports public diplomacy

envoys can play a leading role for Chinese public with its wide reputation and reputation; have more freedom of expression, through equal and friendly communication with other public, they can obtain the most accurate information, timely correct the misunderstanding of other public and promote the same popularity.

5.2. Establish a Good Image as a Major Country and Spread China's Voice

The world today is undergoing "profound changes unseen in a century". In the face of a serious imbalance in the international order, severe challenges to the global security situation and many deficiencies in the global security governance system, China has examined the "situation" and found "crisis" and "opportunities", and is willing to work with people of all countries to share the fruits of victory and meet various challenges. However, under the public opinion offensive of "Xisheng, I am weak", "China's voice" was not widely spread. Under the media discourse dominated by western countries for a long time, the "yellow disaster", numerous "China threat" and various "human rights regression" have made China's image in the international community optimistic. In terms of foreign relations, from the "zero" breakthrough to the title of "Double Olympic City", from "ping-pong diplomacy" to international people-to-people exchanges, from the building of a national spirit to a shared future for mankind, China constantly uses sports to build a community with a good image of China. As the leading role in sports, sports stars 'words and deeds are all a projection [27] of the world's public, and naturally they also shoulder the important responsibility of national image publicity. In the arena, the superb sports skills, unity, friendship and self-improvement of Chinese athletes have been spread to the world through the mass media, which not only enhances the popularity of Chinese sports, but also shapes China's international image [12]. Yao Ming, who was selected in the NBA and CBA as the top scorer, Fu Yuanhui, a "prehistoric girl", and Qin Kai, who knelt on one knee and proposed on the spot, have brought the agile and active Chinese people to the world, changing the stereotype of foreigners' serious and lack of personality of Chinese athletes. With their extensive influence and communication power, they have become the shining "name card" of China's diplomacy at different stages. The launch of the sports public diplomatic envoy can fully tap the potential of sports stars as "cultural emissaries" and "diplomatic experts", and, as a bright and energetic sports person, let more foreign public know and deeply understand China, and spread the voice of China.

5.3. Promote the Dissemination of Values and Explain the Chinese Solutions

The Chinese government has outlined the "China plan" of "building a community with a shared future for mankind" for the development of human society. This concept draws on the core concept of "harmony" and "great harmony" in the traditional culture of the Chinese nation, and is a new diplomatic and political concept of helping each other in times of trouble. But all along, cultural differences, ideological confrontation and fear over China's rise have made it more difficult for Western countries to recognize the idea. Sports as a world popular social and cultural phenomenon, rarely limited by traditional ideas, more likely to eliminate language barriers and cultural differences in diplomatic [28], and as an elite in the field of sports, its inherent unique charm is able to cross borders, close the distance between China and foreign public [29], can effectively promote "build" human destiny community " the spread of the idea. Cultural mutual learning builds conceptual consensus and leads cooperation and development. Sports star in our country as "wearing sports diplomat" is the leading sports public diplomatic envoys, has a high degree of "media exposure", with its large-scale sports events good discipline and civilized etiquette, sports film aesthetic experience and high influence of the global famous brand endorsement, show the world the Chinese children struggle, warm and friendly, unity of the traditional virtue, interpret the national spirit of the Chinese

nation believes in peace, diligence, optimism, upward, progressive, confident, modest Chinese style. Creating sports stars into public diplomatic envoys can communicate with the "equal, friendly and harmonious" of the public around the world by virtue of the particularity of sports. Their own excellent cultural characteristics will continuously boost the cognition, understanding, acceptance and integration of Chinese excellent traditional culture and values. Under the diplomatic culture of "universal harmony" and the "diplomatic philosophy of a" harmonious world ", all countries share weal and woe and the people of all ethnic groups work together, which will surely create a new situation in which diverse civilizations are compatible and mutual learning.

6. Conclusion

As a "diplomat dressed in sports clothes", the sports public diplomacy envoy plays an indispensable role in spreading culture and values and building a good public opinion environment. China has not yet launched the sports public diplomatic envoy, but in the face of the new forms and new requirements of the development of public diplomacy, the implementation of the sports public diplomatic envoys is at the right time. At present, china-us relations once again presents a very serious situation, the last century sensation global ping-pong diplomacy is widely celebrated, now, in the 21st century of the two countries can also because of the power of sports, because sports public diplomacy envoys leading and leading role, contribute to the friendly exchanges between the two countries, is worth our further discussion and thinking.

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