



Sabine Riedel

## PR China's Claim to Power on Taiwan

Beijing not only Threatens the Republic of China (Taiwan) with Mao's "Cultural Revolution"<sup>1</sup>

"The Ministry of Truth – Minitrue, in Newspeak [Newspeak was the official language of Oceania [...]] was an enormous pyramidal structure of glittering white concrete, soaring up, terrace after terrace, 300 metres into the air. From where Winston stood it was just possible to read, picked out on its white face in elegant lettering, the three slogans of the Party:

WAR IS PEACE – FREEDOM IS SLAVERY – IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH:

[...] The Ministry of Truth [...] concerned itself with news, entertainment, education, and the fine arts." (George Orwell 1949, p. 6).

George Orwell's science fiction "1984" is no longer fiction today. Well-sounding goals have long been incorporated into political agendas that strive for the exact opposite. The tensions between the People's Republic and Taiwan (Republic of China) are a good example of this. Orwell's literary subject is based on the linguistic Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, according to which language influences thinking. This can be used to deconstruct power techniques used by dictatorships and their ruling elites. In the case of the People's Republic, language politics play a key role. It regulates public use of language and is intolerant of regional and minority languages. Through language planning, Beijing stages its "peaceful reunification" while at the same time threatening Taiwan with war if it resists. This corresponds to the slogan "War is peace". Equally ambiguous is the phrase "freedom is slavery", according to which Taiwan must have fallen into economic dependency because of its desire for freedom. Again, the opposite is the case: Beijing's economic reforms in the 1990s were an attempt to copy the successful model of the tiger state and "class enemy". Finally, the People's Republic has adopted Orwell's slogan "ignorance is strength": Its UN membership (1971) is based on a deception of the world community about the victims of Mao's Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and the expected consequences of the digital revolution.

The following article analyses the background of the tensions between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan) from the perspective of political culture research. While Taiwan is fighting for its international rehabilitation and recognition, Beijing is concerned with cultural hegemony over the Chinese-speaking community worldwide. Thereby, the People's Republic conceals its political agenda with the vocabulary of the United Nations (UN). The deeper interests remain hidden from the inexperienced observer, although they are openly stated elsewhere. For example, on the occasion of the 50th

anniversary of his country's UN membership, Foreign Minister Wang Yi defended the "common values of humanity" such as peace and democracy, but declared in the same speech that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) would remain true to its goals ([fmprc.gov.cn](http://fmprc.gov.cn), 25.6.2021, Figure 1). According to the party statute, this includes "The Four Cardinal Principles – adhering to the socialist road, adhering to the people's democratic dictatorship, adhering to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, and adhering to the leadership of the Communist Party of China" (The Basic Line, KPCh).

<sup>1</sup> This article is a translation: Sabine Riedel, *VR Chinas Machtanspruch auf Taiwan. Peking bedroht nicht nur die Republik China (Taiwan) mit Maos „Kulturrevolution“*, in: (FPK, Vol. 5, No. 10 (2021 Dec 3), 21 p.

In this way, the CCP not only rejects the model of a pluralist society for itself. According to the declared goal of a "reunification of the motherland" (CPC Program, 24.10.2017) Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are also to be converted to Chinese-

Figure 1

### Keynote Address by State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, 25.6.2021

Colleagues, Friends,

Welcome to the Lanting Forum to join us in commemorating the 50th anniversary of the restoration of China's lawful seat in the United Nations. [...]

The People's Republic of China, since its founding, was kept out of the UN for 22 years. [...]

On 25 October 1971, the UN General Assembly at its 26th Session adopted Resolution 2758 with an overwhelming majority. It decides to restore all its rights to the People's Republic of China and to recognize the representatives of its Government as the only legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations. [...]

Chairman Mao Zedong once said, it was our fellow developing countries that "carried" the People's Republic of China into the United Nations. The word "carry" aptly captures the profound friendship between China and other developing countries. [...]

President Xi Jinping, with his vision for greater progress of humanity, has proposed building a community with a shared future for mankind. This major initiative rises above differences in social system and development stage, and rejects the zero-sum mentality and geopolitical calculations. It sets the common goal for different countries, different nations and different civilizations. The initiative is the banner of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics in the new era. China will continue to take an active part in the reform and improvement of the global governance system under this banner. [...]

We are ready to work with all countries to defend the common values of humanity, namely peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom, continue to advance the building of a new type of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness and justice and win-win cooperation, and jointly build a community with a shared future for mankind. [...]

In just a few days, China will celebrate the centenary of the Communist Party of China (CPC). In the past century, the CPC has made outstanding accomplishments in fighting for national independence and liberation, prosperity of the country and well-being of the people. It is committed to the eternal great cause of the Chinese nation and is right in its prime at its centenary. We will continue to remain true to the CPC's original aspiration, keep in mind its founding mission, and work for happiness of the people, rejuvenation of the nation and harmony of the world! [...]

Quelle: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, A New Journey Ahead after Fifty Extraordinary Years, [fmprc.gov.cn](http://fmprc.gov.cn), 25.6.2021 [Highlighting blue: S.R.].

style socialism. As former colonial territories, Hong Kong and Macau are now part of the People's Republic with treaty-protected autonomy rights until 2047 and 2049 respectively, whereas Taiwan is an independent state. It sees itself as the successor to the Republic of China, proclaimed in 1947, whose government withdrew to the island in the South Pacific during the civil war, which was then administered by the USA. The People's Republic has been demanding its return since its constitution on 1 October 1949, so that its legal status as an independent state is doubted in many places.

In terms of international law, however, it remains relevant that the Taiwanese have exercised sovereignty over their state territory for over 70 years. In the beginning they even represented China in the UN Security Council until the General Assembly resolution of 25 October 1971 cleared the way for the People's Republic to join the UN (cf. Figure 1), after which many states turned their backs on Taiwan. Despite this, the mere threat of force or an invasion and occupation of the island, as repeatedly announced by the People's Republic ([rnd.de](http://rnd.de), 3.8.2021), is a violation of the UN's peace mandate.

After this outline of the problem, it will be explained which method is used to analyse the conflict. As already indicated in the title of this article, a cultural-political approach is chosen, namely the linguistic Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, according to which language influences thinking. The British author George Orwell already described in his science fiction "1984" from 1949 how a totalitarian regime makes use of this knowledge: With a specially created "newspeak", it restricts people in their free thought and will. It makes them merge into a mass that is directed and manipulated by linguistic politics. The slogans of the fictitious party in Orwell's novel "1984" are the starting point: WAR IS PEACE – FREEDOM IS SLAVERY – IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH (Orwell 1949). The question will be discussed whether China lives up to its own claim to promote peace worldwide, to fight slavery and to draw its strength from cultural innovations. Or do these concepts not turn out to be phrases of an Orwellian „newspeak“? Claim and reality are contrasted with the intention of looking behind the scenes of the political propaganda of a world power.

### 1. ORWELL'S „NEWSPEAK“ serving the language planners of the PR of China

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis was formulated a few years after the publication of Orwell's science fiction "1984". In the early 1950s it was published

by the American linguist Harry Hoijer, drawing on the work of his academic teacher Benjamin Lee Whorf and his mentor Edward Sapir. His research on the culture of the North American Indians led him to the hypothesis that human language has a strong influence on thinking. After initially great interest, experts soon turned their backs on it, so that it was forgotten. It no longer fit into the socio-political context of the 1970s. They did not want to promote a worldview that was misused by some scientists to evaluate cultural differences morally or socially. But the linguist and anthropologist Harry Hoijer was not concerned with discriminating against the indigenous peoples of North America, but with preserving their language cultures (Fromkin 1977).

Recent research builds on his findings and places them in a context that sees language diversity as a source of innovative thinking: "Each [language] contains a way of perceiving the world, of understanding it and meaning it to fill – an invaluable guidebook developed and refined by our ancestors." (Boroditsky 2012). As a result, the differentiation of languages and, above all, the increase in their vocabulary is perceived as cultural wealth in which the progress of knowledge becomes materially visible. This is where the questions of sociolinguists come in, namely how linguistic neologisms arise, through which social mechanisms they are spread and whether political institutions have an influence on them.

In his science fiction "1984", George Orwell not only describes how a totalitarian government system monitors and controls the development of language. The actual effect of manipulation is achieved by limiting thinking through language. Language planners can make use of various techniques, such as the use of acronyms. Short words are particularly well suited to disguising and changing word semantics. In Orwell's "newspeak", the Ministries of Education, News, Leisure and Culture are united to form the "Minitru", the Ministry of Defence is called "Minipax" and the Ministry of Justice "Miniluv" (Orwell 1949: 7). The language planning starts where there is a real need for regulation, as here in the state administration. But instead of creating clarity and transparency in the language of the authorities, authoritarian regimes apparently play with terminological ambiguities. The reduction of the vocabulary provokes misunderstandings and a lack of transparency and thus also simplifies the control mechanisms.

In China, language planning began after the fall of the Empire in 1912. The new Republic of China commissioned a committee to create a

high-level standard of Chinese that would lay the foundation for a modern education system. In 1920, the commission published a first dictionary, which the Republic of China officially introduced in 1932 under the name *Guóyǔ* ("national language"). High Chinese is also known as *Huáyǔ* ("language of the Chinese"). In Western countries, on the other hand, the name Mandarin has become established, referring to the more than 2000-year-old language tradition (Coblin 2000, Mandarin means chancery language, language of Chinese officials).

The term *Pǔtōnghuà* for Chinese ("common language") used in the People's Republic of China goes back to the beginnings of the communist regime after the Second World War. The CCP discussed language reforms as part of creating a new socialist culture. Party leader Mao Tse-tung believed that illiteracy could best be overcome by introducing a Latin alphabet (Wan 2014: 76). In the end, China did not follow the path of Vietnam, Korea and Mongolia, which had abandoned the traditional Chinese writing system for their new official languages. The attempts at romanisation were reflected in 1958 in a standardised transcription for the Chinese standard language, which was first recognised internationally as Pinyin in 1982 as an ISO standard.

The regularisation of transcription in Latin letters was in effect a standardisation of the phonetic system of the Chinese high-level language. Until then, the phonetic differences of the numerous dialects were hardly significant, because the traditional writing system is based on the combination of letter images (pictograms). Historical dictionaries document that around 87,000 such characters have been created to date. (en-academic.com). Shortly after the founding of the People's Republic, its language planners saw this complex writing system as one of the reasons for the high rate of illiteracy. They therefore believed that the best way to fight this is by reducing this immense number of characters to a few thousand and simplifying their graphic representation. The Chinese Ministry of Education first published a "General Table of Standard Chinese Characters" in 1956 and 1964 with about 2,200 characters, which is still being updated today (Zhao/Baldauf 2008; Yuming 2014: 20).

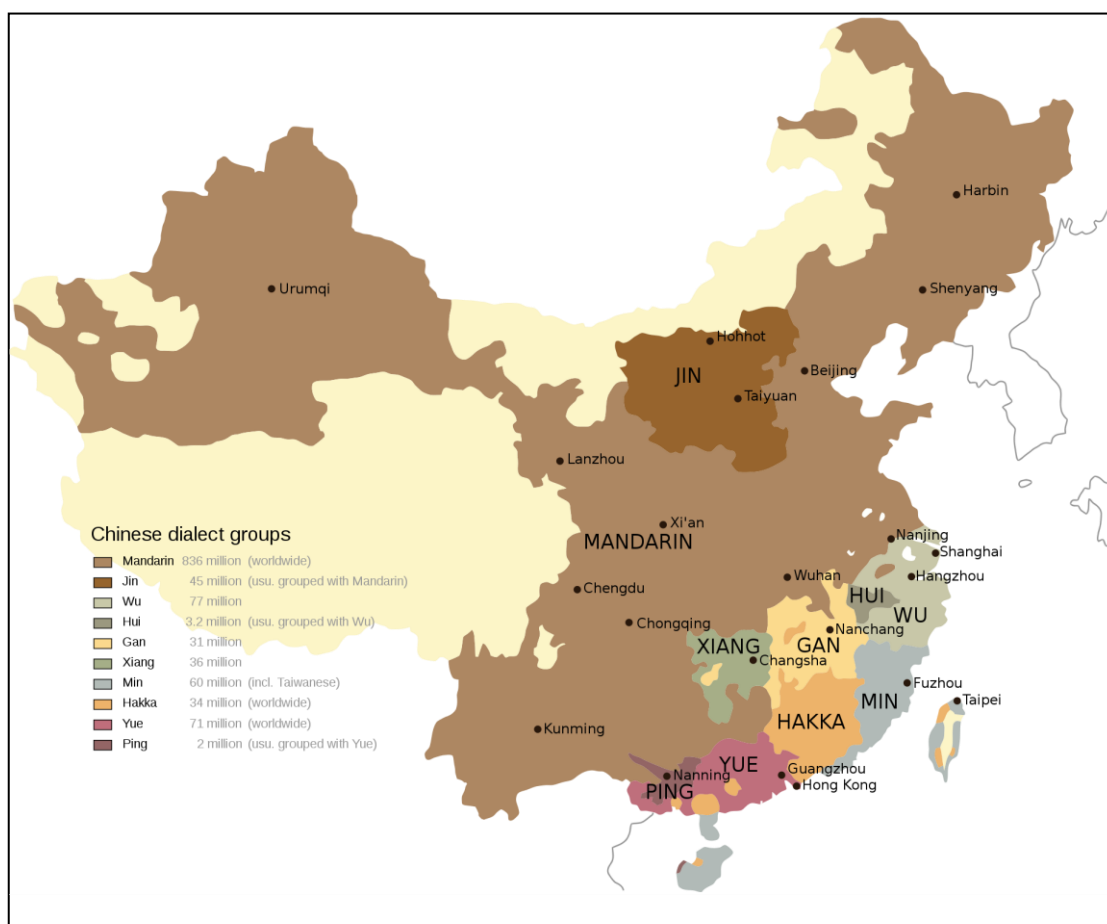
In 2009, the Language Commission gave a detailed opinion on its work and answered questions about the selection criteria of the official standard font and the reasons why it now contains 8,300 characters again. These are divided into three groups: a first list contains 3,500 of the most frequently used characters in daily communication,

a second list of 3,000 less popular characters and a third list of 1,500 terms from special subject areas ([Language commission 2009](#)). As the Commission emphasises, this table was drawn up over a period of 8 years and discussed at approximately 80 scientific conferences. Nevertheless, it documents how state authorities regulate the use of language through the selection and limitation of characters and make language planners a control authority to which all areas of society are subordinate.

The language planning of the People's Republic not only regulates the lives of the 1.4 billion mainland Chinese. Above all, it has an international dimension, as the conflict over Taiwan's in-

ternational legal status shows. For this island with about 24 million inhabitants still rejects the language policy of the communist regime. With their flight to Formosa, Taiwan's geographical name, the Kuomintang (National People's Party of China) had imported the language standard that decisively bears their signature. They saw themselves as the heirs of the first modernisation efforts in China. Moreover, under Chiang Kai-shek's leadership, "National China" could claim to be recognised by the UN and its Security Council as representing all Chinese. Consequently, the national language (Guóyǔ) is not only the official language on Taiwan, it also functioned as a working language of the UN in the period 1949 to 1971.

**Figure 2:**  
**Chinese Language and Dialect Groups**



Source: Chinese dialect groups, Wyunhe, File: Map of sinitic dialect - English version, [wikipedia, 9.5.2011](#).

Note: This map is methodically problematic. It does not depict the multilingualism of high-level language (Mandarin) and dialects but constructs a contrast. Moreover, Cantonese and Taiwanese also exist in standard forms, a differentiation between the two variants of Mandarin in the People's Republic and on Taiwan is completely missing.

As a result of this development, there are now two varieties of Mandarin: the standard of the People's Republic under the name Pǔtōnghuà ("common language") and Guóyǔ, today also called Taiwanese Mandarin. The differences between the two variants have only emerged as a result of Beijing's language policy, the ideological origins of which can be found in the Chinese Cultural Revolution. From a political point of view, it can be said that the conflict of interests between China and Taiwan is reflected in cultural policy, with the People's Republic clearly playing the role of the provocative conflict party. Taiwan has always been reactive towards the language planners of the communist regime. It adheres to the pronunciation rules of High Chinese or Mandarin, as they were standardised in the course of the 20th century on the basis of the Beijing dialect.

Taipei, on the other hand, preserves the rich treasure of Chinese characters that are more than 2000 years old and is therefore sceptical or even negative about the abbreviated characters introduced in the People's Republic (see [Kurzzeichen 20.10.2021](#)). The Taiwanese National Academy for Educational Research offers a digital dictionary that has collected up to 100,000 Chinese characters ([moe.edu.tw, 2017](#)). Nevertheless, students as well as interested foreigners are not exposed to the diversity and complexity of Mandarin. Rather, the Institute offers various learning aids, such as a "Small Chinese Dictionary" with about 4,000 characters or the "Chinese Dictionary" for modern use, which reproduces 45,000 words lexically and graphically ([naer.edu.tw](#)). Taipei's language planners not only pass on the old written culture, but also open up to a modern pedagogy that manages without state bans, paternalism and control of everyday language use.

The democratisation of the Republic of China only began with the abolition of martial law in 1987, as a result of which the sole rule of the Kuomintang came to an end and gave way to a multi-party system. This waned the influence of Chinese nationalism, revealing Taiwan's cultural and linguistic diversity. The immigration of mainland Chinese after World War II brought various dialects to Formosa, including Min, Hakka and Cantonese (see Figure 2). The population accepted the introduced High Chinese standard mainly for political and ideological reasons. Today, almost all Taiwanese speak it, but in private they have retained their dialects. Taiwanese, which belongs to the Min dialects and is often referred to as Hokkien Taiwanese or (by its speakers) as Taigi, is said to be used by 82 percent ([Sonnad 2018](#)). Sociolinguists therefore speak of a lived multilingual-

ism that sought official recognition as early as the mid-1980s ([Hsiau 1997](#)).

With the end of the Cold War and system competition, Taiwan's liberalisation course received new impetus, as a result of which Taiwanese was officially recognised and included in the curriculum of public schools as a facultative language. A majority of the population rejects more far-reaching demands for the replacement of Mandarin by Taiwanese, because they fear a new version of nationalism, this time on the ideological basis of Taiwanese culture. A clear indication of this is the language law of 21.6.2017, according to which 16 additional regional languages were recognised. ([Languages Act 2017](#)). It shows that Taiwan today is committed to its cultural diversity. In this context, the demands for Taiwanese independence are less based on a change of national identity in the cultural-linguistic context. Rather, it is about the sovereignty of Taiwan as a nation in the sense of the political community that has grown together and its cultural pluralism.

How well-founded Taipei's concern is about losing this cultural openness and tolerance after reunification with the People's Republic can be studied using the examples of Macao and Hong Kong. After the former colonial rule or transitional administration of the Portuguese and British came to an end first in 1997 and then in 1999 and the two territories were returned to China, Beijing increasingly restricted their political and cultural freedoms. This also applies to the status of Cantonese, which is much more than a Chinese dialect (as shown in Figure 2). Under the colonial administration, a separate standard has developed since the 17th century onwards, which preserves the classical Chinese literature and the rich repertoire of characters as well as the Taiwanese Mandarin ([Bielicki 2019](#) and [Leung / Wong 1996](#) on Hong Kong and [Cheong 2021](#) on Macau).

The democracy movement in Hong Kong, like the Taiwanese, is therefore calling for more openness towards the cultural heritage and regional traditions ([Coca 2018](#)). Their criticism is directed less against Mandarin per se, but against the language restrictions of the People's Republic. This is why the democratic culture of the Republic of China serves as a model for Macau and Hong Kong. Because Taiwan crosses the People's Republic's claims to global hegemony, which it has successively built up since its UN membership. ([AFP, 25.9.2019](#)). Against this background, Taipei could serve as a model, not least for the mainland Chinese who, to the annoyance of Beijing, enjoy a democratic and pluralistic language policy ([Zhao / Liu 2021](#)).

## 2. Orwell's "WAR IS PEACE": China's Nationalism Targets Taiwan

The restrictive character of the People's Republic of China towards any political and cultural pluralism makes it clear that Beijing clings to its national self-image, which was introduced in 1949 with the communist system. It survived the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its alliance of states in Eastern Europe probably also because it never broke with Stalinism. While the former Eastern Bloc abandoned this totalitarian model at the end of the 1950s – a prerequisite for the system change of 1990 – the CCP continued to perpetuate the leader cult around Josef Stalin and his doctrine. About 100 years ago, the former Soviet Commissar for Nationalities, Josef Stalin, had incorporated into the new model of socialist society the nationalist ideology from the 19th century, which granted political participation rights primarily according to membership of a cultural or linguistic community (principle of nationalities, see Riedel 2015: 66).

Stalin's model, which under the CCP became the state doctrine of the People's Republic of China, saw itself as an ideological alternative to the model of the national state political terms that had become popular at the time. This is based on democratic values and cultural pluralism, which includes not only a multi-party system but also the free choice of a cultural identity. According to the conception of nationhood in modern democracies, such as Taiwan, politics and culture are separate spheres, i.e. citizens are guaranteed rights by the constitution regardless of their mother tongue, denomination or ethnic origin (cf. Art. 1-5 of the [constitution 1946](#)). The nationalist ideology can be recognised by the fact that it does not accept this principle of separation. There are two main political objectives behind this: Domestically, it can be used to control the population: Through the cultural-ethnic determination of the concept of nationhood, cultural "minorities" are created and thus an instrument for playing off population groups against each other. In foreign policy, the nationalist ideology serves to justify border revisions with neighbouring states.

The People's Republic's claim to power on Taiwan is an indication of its adherence to Chinese nationalism. This is reflected in the One China policy and its doctrine, according to which there can only be one China in the world and thus only one state of Chinese identity. Based on this thesis, the political autonomy or independence of Taiwan is called into question with the help of international law positions. From a political science

point of view, it can be said that today there are different and contradicting narratives on the Taiwan question because they relate to different legal and power-political contexts ([Heuser 1980: 64](#)). International law can therefore not offer a solution to the conflict, at best it can show the political actors the way to a peaceful solution if they are at all willing.

Some historical facts are quite helpful to understand the lines of conflict: Under the name Formosa, Taiwan lost its independence with the beginning of the colonial rule of the Portuguese and Dutch in the 16th century. It was not until the end of the 17th century that it passed to the Chinese Empire for 200 years, only to fall under the rule of Japan in 1895. Ownership changed again at the end of the Second World War, which Japan had lost. It had to make a waiver of Taiwan in its surrender document. However, this restitution only became binding under international law with the San Francisco Peace Treaty (15 June 1951). In fact, the Republic of China had already taken possession of the island in 1945 and incorporated it into its national territory as a separate province (cf. Figure 3). The Taiwan question only became an issue of national and international politics when the Chinese communists under the leadership of Mao Tse-tung won the military and proclaimed the People's Republic of China (1 October 1949). The defeated ruling Kuomintang under Chiang Kai-shek withdrew to the island of Taiwan, which was administered by the USA until the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty by the Republic of China (5.8.1952, [taiwantoday.tw](#), 1.3.2012).

The People's Republic of China, on the other hand, was not a party to this agreement, because the newly founded United Nations had accepted the Republic of China's (Taiwan) sole right of representation and included it in its Security Council. This was not to change until 22 years later: At the request of Albania, Beijing's closest ally in Europe until 1990, the UN General Assembly voted on 25 October 1971 on whether the People's Republic should represent China as a whole instead of Taiwan: a majority of 59 percent of the UN members decided to adopt Resolution 2758. It not only resulted in the People's Republic becoming a UN member, but also representing it as one of the five veto powers in the Security Council. Taiwan was de facto forced out of the UN and its bodies, even though it had offered no pretext for doing so. With this resolution, the General Assembly violated its own statutes and applicable international law. Because resolutions of the General Assembly are not binding ([auswaertiges-amt.de 2021](#)). Moreo-

ver, the suspension of a member requires a unanimous decision by the Security Council: "The absence of agreement among the major powers makes the imposition of expulsion and suspension impossible." (Ohse 1971: 103f.).

Nevertheless, Taiwan bears a share of the responsibility for its international isolation. For the Kuomintang, which ruled alone until 1990, as well as Beijing, uncompromisingly adhered to the One

China policy. A UN membership as a second Chinese state, under whatever name, was out of the question for Taipei at that time. After the lifting of martial law (1987) and the subsequent democratisation of the country with the emergence of a multi-party system did it gradually give up its claim to sole representation. But this required another bitter experience. In 1990, the year of upheaval and system changes in Eastern Europe,

Figure 3

### History of the conflict between the PR China and the Republic of China (Taiwan)



Taiwan was apparently still hoping for rapprochement and reconciliation with the People's Republic. On the initiative of the president, a National Reunification Council was created with the aim of working out compromise proposals and submit-

Figure 4

#### Speech by the Chinese President Xi Jinping, 1.2.2019

On Jan. 1, 1979, the National People's Congress Standing Committee issued the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan. It was considered a declaration of the [mainland's policy for peaceful reunification](#). [...]

On Wednesday, Xi raised a five-point proposal for peaceful reunification.

He said the principles of "peaceful reunification" and "[one country, two systems](#)" are the best approach to realizing national reunification. [...]

While stressing that the "Chinese don't fight Chinese," Xi said, "[We make no promise to renounce the use of force](#) and reserve the option of taking all necessary means."

This targets only the [interference of external forces](#) and the very small number of "[Taiwan independence](#)" separatists and their activities, he added. [...]

"Taiwan independence" goes against the trend of history and will lead to a dead end," Xi said.

The president said achieving the country's greatness, [national rejuvenation and cross-Straits reunification is the trend of history](#), which can never be blocked by anyone or any force. [...]

Xi said the Taiwan question is China's internal affair and allows no external interference. [...]

#### Präsident Tsai delivers a speech on the National Day 2021, 10.10.2021

[...] We hope for an [easing of cross-strait relations](#) [with the PR China] and will not act rashly, but there should be absolutely [no illusions that the Taiwanese people will bow to pressure](#). We will continue to bolster our national defense and demonstrate our determination to defend ourselves in order to ensure that nobody can force Taiwan to take the path China has laid out for us. This is because the path that China has laid out offers neither a free and democratic way of life for Taiwan, nor sovereignty for our 23 million people. [...]

Let us here renew with one another our enduring [commitment to a free and democratic constitutional system](#), our commitment that the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China should not be subordinate to each other, our commitment [to resist annexation or encroachment upon our sovereignty](#), and our commitment that the future of the Republic of China (Taiwan) must be decided in accordance with the will of the Taiwanese people.

Sources: Xinhua Headlines: Xi says "China must be, will be reunified" as key anniversary marked, ([xinhuanet.com, 1.2.2019](#); President Tsai delivers 2021 National Day Address, [president.gov.tw, 10.10.2021](#). [Translation and highlighting blue: S.R.].

ting them to Beijing. According to Taiwanese sources, Taipei had indeed reached a consensus on the reunification issue in 1992 ([taiwantoday.tw, 30.8.2011](#)), which Beijing always denied.

The People's Republic's statement of 30 January 1995 on the subject about reunification provided clarity. In it, President Jiang Zemin listed eight principles which he formulated diplomatically as proposals to Taipei. He not only confirmed Beijing's One China policy, but also clearly rejected a future "two-state solution". In his view, the independence of Taiwan "undermine the process of peaceful reunification more unscrupulously" ([mfa.gov.cn, 23.10.2003](#), point 2). He justified this position with arguments of Chinese nationalism: "The 21 million compatriots in Taiwan, whether born there or in other provinces, are all Chinese and our own flesh and blood." ([a.a.O., Punkt 7](#)) The cultural, linguistic and ethnic pluralism of the Taiwanese is not only ignored by Beijing. It is even denied in order to exclude the possibility of the emergence of a political nation in Taiwan from the outset. Under these circumstances, Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui made a last attempt at compromise in 1999 and launched the formula "One China – Two States" ([dw.com, 24.10.2013](#)).

But from Beijing's point of view, a two-state solution would mean the end of "peaceful reunification". This claim, however, contradicts the experiences of other countries. One should remember the reunification of North and South Vietnam in 1976 or plans to reunify North and South Korea, which, in contrast to the Vietnamese example, have been UN members since 1991. ([Wefer, 1.3.2020](#)). German history during the Cold War can also be used as a positive example. Even under the difficult conditions of system competition, the Federal Republic of Germany had found a compromise with the then German Democratic Republic despite its claim to sole representation ([Grundlagenvertrag 1972](#)). This treaty laid the foundation for the admission of both states to the UN (1973, [Schönhoven 2013](#)). One can therefore say that this political rapprochement by no means blocked the way for the later reunification of the two German states (1990); it was possibly a prerequisite for later developments.

The German experience can be made fruitful for the current tensions between Beijing and Taipei in another respect: The admission of both German states to the UN was embedded in a policy of détente that extended far beyond Germany and Europe. From this it can be seen that the international recognition of Taiwan is linked to the question of a security structure in the Asia-Pacific

region. From this perspective, too, bilateral relations between the People's Republic and Taiwan are by no means just an intra-Chinese matter. Rather, they decide about war and peace in the entire region. This is evidenced by Beijing's repeated threat to use military force to achieve "peaceful reunification" in case of international recognition of Taiwan ([xinhuanet.com](http://xinhuanet.com), 1.2.2019, cf. quote in Figure 4). In addition, Taiwanese politicians who, like Prime Minister Su Tseng Chang, strive for Taiwan's UN membership, are intimidated. The People's Republic put them on a recently published "blacklist" of people who face diplomatic isolation as well as criminal prosecution after reunification ([dw.com](http://dw.com), 5.11.2021).

Despite all adversities, the incumbent President of Taiwan since 2016, Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), is defending her country's independent path. In contrast to her political rival Han Kuo-Yu from the Kuomintang (KMT), who is calling for talks with Beijing without preconditions, Tsai demands a rejection of any use of force ([handelsblatt.com](http://handelsblatt.com), 12.1.2020). She refers to Taiwan's political independence with a free and democratic constitutional system. This obliges her to respect the will of the majority of the Taiwanese ([president.gov.tw](http://president.gov.tw), 10.10.2021, cf. quote in Figure 4). In September 2015, opinion polls by the non-governmental organisation Taiwan Competitiveness Forum (TCF) confirmed that a majority of 82.3 percent of respondents were in favour of "maintaining the status quo", i.e. at that time they still rejected reunification as well as independence, which could lead to a violent conflict ([taiwanheute.tw](http://taiwanheute.tw), 30.9.2015). In the meantime, the mood among the population has become much more critical of Beijing's demands for unification. According to opinion polls from August 2021, only half of the Taiwanese support the status quo, while 90 percent of the respondents declared their support for Taiwanese identity. Two-thirds were even prepared to defend Taiwan's political statehood in the event of a military conflict. ([taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com), 11.8.2021).

### 3. Orwell's: „FREEDOM IS SLAVERY“: Taiwan as a Symbol of Free World Trade

The People's Republic's claims to power on Taiwan have their roots in Chinese nationalism. Its motives, on the other hand, are closely interwoven with the socialist doctrine of rule, which has been in force since its founding in 1949 until today. Article 1 of the constitution already states: "The People's Republic of China is a socialist state under the people's democratic dictatorship." ([Constitution1982](http://Constitution1982)) This "people's rule" is under

## Abbildung 5

### Words of the Chairman Mao Tse-tung

*On the correct treatment of the Contradictions among the People (27 February 1957)*

In the country, as far as property is concerned, the socialist transformation has essentially been completed and the extensive and tumultuous class struggles of the masses, characteristic of the period of the revolution, are essentially over; but remnants of the overthrown classes of landlords and compradors are still there, the bourgeoisie still exists, and the petty bourgeoisie is just beginning to re-educate itself. The class struggle is not over yet. The class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the ideological field will continue for a long time and will be entangled and sometimes even become very sharp. The proletariat seeks to transform the world according to its own world view, and the bourgeoisie does the same. In this respect, the question of 'who whom' in the struggle between socialism and capitalism is still not finally decided. [...]

Source: Mao Tse-tung, Worte des Vorsitzenden Mao Tse-tung, Erste Auflage, 1. Nachdruck, Peking 1967, S. 21f. [Translation, Highlighting blue: S.R.].

### Verfassung der Volksrepublik China, 4.12.1982

#### „Präambel

[...] Taiwan is part of the sacred territory of the People's Republic of China. It is the inviolable duty of all Chinese people, including our compatriots in Taiwan, to accomplish the great task of reunifying the motherland.

In building socialism it is essential to rely on workers, peasants and intellectuals and to unite all forces that can be united. In the long years of revolution and construction, there has been formed under the leadership of the Communist Party of China a broad patriotic united front which is composed of the democratic parties and people's organizations and which embraces all socialist working people, all builders of socialism, all patriots who support socialism, and all patriots who stand for the reunification of the motherland. [...]

Art. 1. The People's Republic of China is a socialist state under the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants.

The socialist system is the basic system of the People's Republic of China. Disruption of the socialist system by any organization or individual is prohibited. [...]

Art. 6. The basis of the socialist economic system of the People's Republic of China is socialist public ownership of the means of production, namely, ownership by the whole people and collective ownership by the working people. [...]

Art. 15. The State practises socialist market economy. [Constitutional reform of 29.3.1993]

Source: Constitution of the People's Republic of China, [Constitution 1982](http://Constitution1982) [Highlighting blue: S.R.].

the direct "leadership of the Communist Party of China" (CCP). In contrast to the political system of the Republic of China (Taiwan), the CCP controls not only politics but also all economic processes, i.e. "socialist public ownership of the means of production" (Art. 6, Constitution 1982). Consequently, Taiwan is not only seen as a renegade province of "the sacred territory of the People's Republic of China" (Preamble of the Constitution 1982), but also as a "class enemy", a representative of the "bourgeoisie" and the "petty bourgeoisie" who are to be re-educated according to Mao Tse-tung's words (cf. Figure 5).

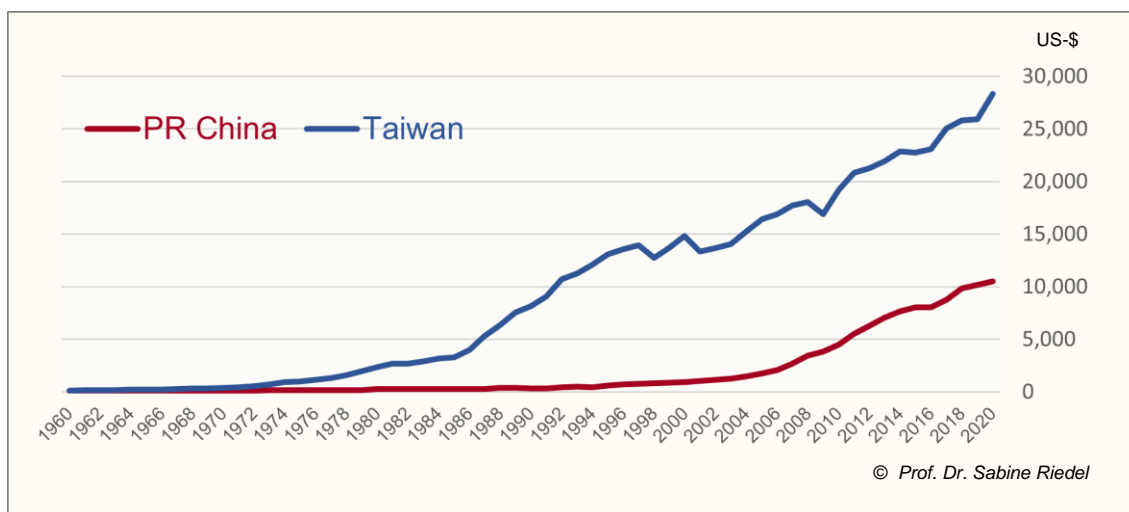
According to socialist theory, Taiwan should have fallen into slavery and dependence on the capitalist system long ago because of its desire for freedom and its resistance to such collective coercive measures. The real economic data, however, contradict this ideological narrative across the board. Despite its worldwide diplomatic isolation, Taiwan, together with Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea, has developed into a so-called Asian tiger with above-average growth rates since the 1960s. Even under the Corona Crisis, gross domestic product (GDP) continued to rise and in 2020 reached the previous high of 28,358 US dollars per capita (countryeconomy.com, 30.11.2021). In the People's Republic of China, on the contrary, economic growth comparable to this did not set in until decades later. It was the result of economic reforms in the 1990s, which

were reflected in constitutional reforms. Apparently following the Taiwanese success story, "individual and private sectors of the economy [...]" constitute an important component of the socialist market economy in the People's Republic as well (cf. Art. 11, Constitution 1982). Nevertheless, the GDP per capita in the People's Republic today is only 10,511 US dollars, which corresponds to about 37 per cent of the Taiwanese level (cf. Figure 6).

With a reform of Article 15 of the Constitution (29.3.1993), the People's Republic transformed its planned economy based on socialist common property into a system of "socialist market economy" (Constitution 1982). This terminology alone indicates that, contrary to its official propaganda, Beijing looks up to the "class enemy" Taiwan and learns from it. As a former developing country, Taiwan has in the meantime caught up with the Western industrialised countries. In their market economies, people are protected from loss of income, illness and poverty by various social security systems. Some authors, such as representatives of the German model of the social market economy, even see a direct connection between social security and economic prosperity (kas.de, Entwicklungsländer). Taiwan seems to confirm this assumption, as it has both a successful market organisation and an insurance system that prevents income disparities from drifting apart (ssa.gov, bli.gov.tw, 20.8.2021).

**Figure 6**

**Gross domestic product per capita in US dollars of Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (1960-2020)**



Source: Own compilation from: countryeconomy.com, 30.11.2021

The People's Republic of China has introduced market economy elements into its planned economy system, but its social systems have remained in the hands of state institutions. Based on the terminology, one might assume that China's *socialist* market economy offers people more and higher standards than Taiwan's *social* market economy. However, this stereotypical idea about socialism and its control competence in the social sphere does not apply in the case of China; rather, the opposite can be observed. For example, the Asian Development Bank stated that today "in the communist People's Republic [...] incomes are distributed more unequally" than in Taiwan ([bertelsmann-stiftung.de](http://bertelsmann-stiftung.de), 27.4.2016). As a result, Beijing has bought its rapid economic growth with a rise in social inequality. While the number of billionaires in 2011 was 116, in 2018 it was already 373, a threefold increase in just seven years (Popow 2019: 9, [spiegel.de](http://spiegel.de), 27.10.2021). Even considering that this is a global phenomenon, the People's Republic must face the question of why its reformed social and economic model compares so poorly with Taiwan. If one adds the number of dollar millionaires to the top of the income pyramid, Chinese socialism appears to be a façade: as the latest Credit Suisse Global Wealth Report documents, the People's Republic, with a share of 9 percent of all millionaires worldwide, is directly behind the USA (39 percent) and still ahead of Japan, Germany and Taiwan (around 7,5 and 1 percent, [Report 2021](http://Report 2021): 19, Figure 7).

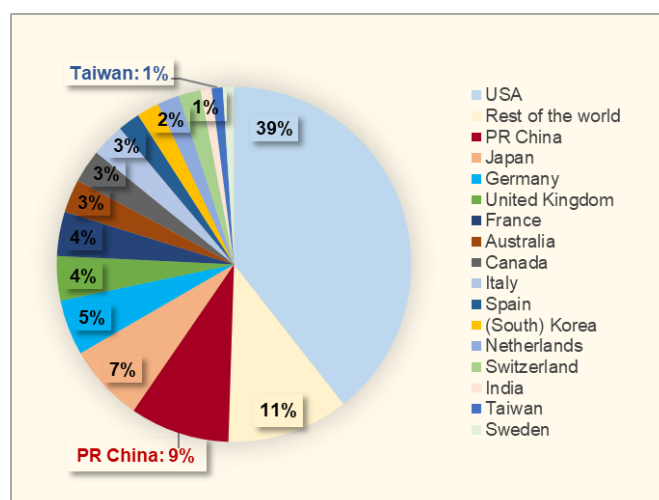
China's socialism clearly lacks the management capacity to reduce the growing gap between rich and poor. Rather, the debate is about suitable instruments and the question of whether state directives alone can compensate for the high income disparities. The major social problems of migrant workers such as low pay, housing shortages and insufficient social protection have not been solved ([spiegel.de](http://spiegel.de), 24.8.2020). Since the economic reforms of the 1990s, the number of migrant workers increased tenfold by 2010 and has stagnated at around 250 million in the past decade ([unfra.org](http://unfra.org), 2018: 3), which corresponds to around 31 per cent of all Chinese workers (801 millionen, [ILO China 2021-1](http://ILO China 2021-1)).

It can be assumed that a significant part of the 1.4 billion Chinese today live in poverty. More precise data on this, however, depends on how poverty is defined. Data from UN organisations, which indirectly bear the signature of the People's Republic, speak of a successful fight against poverty ([ILO China 2021-2](http://ILO China 2021-2), [xinhuanet.com](http://xinhuanet.com), 6.4.2021). Critical analyses point to contradictions here. Beijing has set the poverty line at a daily income of

2.30 US \$, while the World Bank estimates it at 5.50 \$ for China as an emerging economy. According to this threshold, about 40 percent of the population would live in poverty. Indeed, in May 2020, Chinese Prime Minister Le Keqiang named the figure of around 600 million Chinese living on 140 dollars a month, or 4.67 US \$." And he added that this is not even enough to pay the rent for a room in town." ([Post](http://Post), 4/2021)

The People's Republic will hardly get a grip on the poverty phenomenon in the foreseeable future, so that the identity crisis of its socialist system will intensify. One indication of this is the enormous increase in precarious employment in the digital economy. In addition to the few billionaires, it has created a growing low-wage sector, the so-called GIG economy. This is a labour market characterised by flexible employment relationships, mostly for short-term jobs (cf. gigs). Since the contracting parties often pay neither social security contributions for sickness and unemployment nor taxes, and instead bear all the risks themselves, they often belong to the shadow economy, which by definition can hardly be regulated by state institutions. Therefore, these flexible employment relationships have negative consequences, especially for service providers. These GIG workers are mostly so-called "solo self-employed" without a fixed income, who also have to bring the necessary resources for their services themselves, such as vehicles, mobile phones or PCs. ([Deges 2021](http://Deges 2021)).

**Figure 7:**  
**Number of dollar millionaires (% of world total) by country 2020**



Source: Own compilation from:  
Credit Suisse, Global Wealth [Report 2021](http://Report 2021), S. 19

According to current estimates, about 200 million people are employed in the "flourishing GIG economy" in China today ([daxueconsulting.com, 22.9.2021](https://daxueconsulting.com/22.9.2021)). These analyses show how digitalisation promotes a development that opens up simple services to a "labour market" in which the economic power of large companies and the dependencies as well as the needs of job seekers determine the level of their wages. Whether it is car journeys, express deliveries or household help – the transfer of these services into illegal employment increases social pressure and causes growing social problems, including alcoholism ([a.a.O.](#)). All attempts by the government to counteract this are currently having little effect, not least because of the Corona measures since the beginning of 2020. In mid-2021, for example, the World Bank published that as a result of the Corona crisis, the number of people living in absolute poverty, i.e. on less than 1.90 US dollars a day, had risen by 95 million worldwide compared to the previous year, which corresponds to an increase of 11.6 percent ([Worldbank 24.6.2021](https://Worldbank.org/24.6.2021)). Apparently, this global development has affected the People's Republic more than Taiwan. Because of its flexible crisis management, the Republic of China was able to absorb its sensitive setbacks quite quickly ([produktion.de, 22.7.2020](https://produktion.de/22.7.2020)).

Taiwan's economic success is likely to be another motive for the People's Republic to bring the island under its political control. The Taiwanese chip manufacturer TSMC is the world market leader in semiconductor technology. As a supplier for PC manufacturers and automobile groups, it has a global market share of 55 per cent, ahead of Samsung and Intel. ([deutschlandfunk.de, 18.10.2021](https://deutschlandfunk.de/18.10.2021)). Due to the US government's sanctions policy, TSMC had to stop its business with the Chinese IT company Huawei ([winfuture.de, 17.7.2020](https://winfuture.de/17.7.2020)), which had hit China's IT industry. Beijing then started an offensive and invested billions to expand domestic chip production. According to the plan, it wants to become self-sufficient by 2025 and produce 70 percent domestically. After Taiwan's incorporation, it would not only be able to cover its demand for skilled workers in this industry ([handelsblatt.com, 20.6.2021](https://handelsblatt.com/20.6.2021)). The People's Republic would then also have a key position in an industry that is highly relevant to security policy. This is one of the motives of the USA to stand by Taiwan in the event of an escalation ([NZZ, 2.12.2021](https://NZZ.ch/2.12.2021)).

The motto "freedom is slavery" from Orwell's novel "1984" apparently also applies to China's dealings with Africa. Officially, Beijing emphasises that its relations with African states are based

on "friendship" and that joint trade is of mutual benefit ([economist.com, 2.12.2021](https://economist.com/2.12.2021)). However, they are based on an ideological calculation, which is opposed to a completely different reality. China still sees itself in a historical community of fate with the "Afro-Asian peoples", who had "remained backward due to imperialist aggression" but had now awakened and were leading "a powerful revolutionary struggle" (Kulturrevolution 1969: 388). To this day, China invokes the "unbreakable brotherhood [with Africa] in the struggle against imperialism and colonialism". ([news.cn, 29.11.2021](https://news.cn/29.11.2021)). These words of Chinese President Xi Jinping can also be understood as a threat that African countries will revert to slavery if they break their "friendship" with China. It already has a key position in this respect: with more than 200 billion US \$ per year, it is Africa's largest trading partner and, with a total volume of more than 300 billion, also its largest investor ([forbes.com, 3.10.2019](https://forbes.com/3.10.2019)). This raises the question of whether behind the façade of a win-win situation there is not a new colonialism ([theguardian, 31.7.2018](https://theguardian.com/31.7.2018)).

#### 4. Orwell's: "IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH": Cultural Revolution and not Human Rights

There are various indications that China and the African states are not on an equal footing, but are dominated by new structures of dependency. More than a decade ago, a global race to acquire agricultural land began. Countries with a large population, such as China, or with little agricultural land for food production, such as the Gulf States, increased their investments in Africa, for example in Kenya, Tanzania and Sudan ([zeit.de, 18.8.2009](https://zeit.de/18.8.2009)). They bought lease and ownership rights to land with the financing and construction of urban infrastructure. Recent studies show that such large-scale projects hardly fulfilled the hopes of African states for sustainable economic development. The rapid building densification in the big cities increases the flight from the rural regions. According to UN forecasts, the growth centres of the urban population on a global scale by 2030 will be in sub-Saharan Africa ([population.un.org, 2018](https://population.un.org/2018)). This increases the proportion of the population that has to live in urban slums ([bundestag.de, 9.12.2020](https://bundestag.de/9.12.2020): 11). In addition, the affected African countries are losing important land areas, so that they will hardly be able to feed their own population adequately.

A recent study by the Christian aid organisation Misereor puts its finger on the problem and shows that such deals between African governments and foreign states offer the population little chance of escaping this poverty trap. ([cidse.org](https://cidse.org/),

18.6.2021). However, critical voices against these new structures of dependency can only be heard weakly, however, publications too strongly dominate the discourse that are produced by scientific institutes, but are financed by third parties or private individuals and are therefore guided by interests. They fulfil the motto "ignorance is strength" from Orwell's science fiction "1984" when they ignore the political context and above all the question of whether China's policy in Africa does not contradict its own identity as a socialist country. According to their political analyses, this is "not Chinese colonialism, but a common interest in growth" (Spiegel, 9.9.2018). Other reports explicitly contradict the exploitation thesis, claiming in a euphemistic undertone that the Chinese are actually cultivating Africa's fields: "Without them, the continent would be much worse off." (faz.net, 15.12.2015) This was the opinion of the director of the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) in Berlin. Publications of the Berlin Marx-Engels Centre also bear the signature of the Chinese government. There, the accusation of "land grabbing" is refuted with the claim that Chinese investors in Africa are pursuing "sustainable economic development" and are convinced that this is "the best antidote for dealing with conflict and instability. [...] This is the strategy that China is using in its own country and it is the basis of their current strategic engagement in Africa." (mez-berlin.de, 4.1.2018)

But public ignorance of the real impact of China's trade policy on the African population is precisely what gives the regime in Beijing so much power in foreign policy right now. It is favoured by the fact that international treaties increasingly contain so-called "secret clauses". This is even confirmed by sources who do not see any danger of growing dependence on China. Here one encounters the argument that this is common practice in international trade relations. For example, one reads the argument: "African countries could, however, could imply change the rules of the game by imposing transparency on credit agreements on themselves" (dw.com, 4.6.2021). On the other hand, It can be argued that it is precisely economic dependency that creates loyalties, so that the affected countries often keep quiet in order not to be worse off in the international rankings. This is possibly the reason why the poorest African countries refrained from debt relief by the G20 during the Corona crisis, even though rising health costs brought them "a good step closer to financial collapse". (dw.com, 8.8.2020).

Since the adoption of the Trade Secrets Directive 2016/943 of 8 June 2016, EU contracts

are also affected by secrecy clauses (mueller-hof.de, 2017), such as the CETA agreement with Canada (bpb.de, 9.11.2016) or the contracts of the EU Commission with the manufacturers of Corona vaccines. (br.de, 7.1.2021). Thus, the European public is also not sufficiently informed about how far China's arm is already reaching into Europe and especially into the EU and Germany.

Figure 8

Federal Association of German Industry (BDI):

#### Investment Agreement EU – China 2021 [...].

##### What can the agreement not do?

The CAI does not resolve structural imbalances in market access. The Chinese system of negative lists will remain in place, as will numerous opportunities for the Chinese authorities to intervene and block access. Conversely, the EU guarantees China the openness of its own market for an indefinite period of time, which can be seen as a major negotiating success for Beijing. The German industry is therefore demanding from the European Commission to maintain the pressure on China to make further concessions towards reciprocity and a level playing field. The list of continuing restrictions is still long.

##### What does it mean for European business associations in China?

Annex II of the EU-China Investment Agreement (CAI) contains Article 9 on "non-profit organisations", which is currently causing uncertainty. It is feared that the CAI would give the Chinese leadership the right to appoint the heads of branches of European NGOs in China.

The annex lists policy areas which, despite the investment agreement, remain in the autonomy of the contracting parties and are therefore not regulated in the investment agreement. Article 9 states that despite the CAI, China retains the right to decide on investments by foreign investors in non-profit organisations. At the same time, China retains the right to adopt a legal regulation that forces the management of such non-profit organisations to be staffed with Chinese citizens.

Through Article 9, China insists on being able to further restrict the scope of action of foreign NGOs at will. With this, China is sending another political signal that it wants to bring foreign NGOs more and more under Chinese control. This would also affect representatives of the open Western model of society, such as business associations and political foundations. Such a move is not in the interest of the economy. The [German] federal government and the EU must take action here and prevent this potential restriction. The relevant section should be deleted from the agreement. [...]

Source: bdi.eu, 9.6.2021. Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie, BDI, Investitionsabkommen zwischen der EU und China – Was gewinnt die deutsche Industrie?.. [Highlighting bold in original, blue: S.R.].

A decisive turning point came in 2016, when Greece, in financial distress, placed its Athens port of Piraeus in the hands of Chinese investors. Since then, it has become a geostrategic hub for Beijing's trade with the EU and Africa ([tagesspiegel.de, 14.9.2020](https://www.tagesspiegel.de/14.9.2020)). Under the global rules of fair competition, this would not be an issue. But it is gradually becoming clear that in this way Chinese state-owned enterprises, which are endowed with ample subsidies, get market access to the EU member states, while the EU is denied corresponding opportunities in China. The CAI investment agreement between China and the EU, which had already been negotiated, failed in the summer of 2021 as a result of this important question of the lack of reciprocity. Because this agreement was also kept secret by the EU Commission ([wiwo.de, 31.12.2020](https://www.wiwo.de/31.12.2020)), Europe's citizens and above all entrepreneurs learned nothing about it for a long time, until business associations sounded the alarm. According to the text of the agreement that has now become known, they have to fear, among other things, that the management positions of their representations in China will be occupied by the Beijing government ([bdi.eu, 9.6.2021](https://www.bdi.eu/9.6.2021), Figure 8).

Like the Greek port of Piraeus, the German ports of Hamburg and Bremerhaven also play a strategic role in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, also: "New Silk Road", see map under: [wikipedia, 1.1.2020](https://www.wikipedia/1.1.2020)). According to the Chamber of

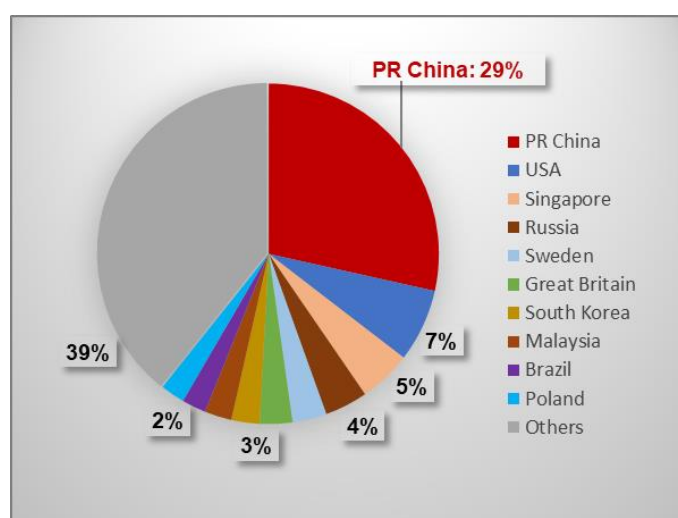
Commerce, the Port of Hamburg is "one of the leading China locations in Germany and a central node of the 'New Silk Road' in Northern Europe." ([hk24.de](https://www.hk24.de), BRI, [hk24.de](https://www.hk24.de), Hamburg) In the list of the top ten partner countries, China takes first place with 28.5 per cent of container throughput in 2020, or 2.4 million tonnes TEU (20-foot standard container, [Hafen Hamburg](https://www.hafen-hamburg.de), Figure 9). That is why the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Germany (CHKD) opened its first representative office in Hamburg on 10 March 2017 with the aim of bringing business and politics together ([chk-de.org](https://www.chk-de.org), Aktuell). While the people of Hamburg seem to have few worries, elsewhere there is growing concern about China's increasing dominance. For the increasing economic dependence is followed by direct influence on society, among others on the public broadcasters or bookstore chains such as Thalia ([rnd.de, 28.4.2021](https://www.rnd.de)).

More and more political decision-makers are becoming aware of how the Chinese model is also threatening free societies in Europe with growing trade contacts. This can already be seen in the fact that the European Commission only published the secret CAI agreement under pressure from MEPs ([trade.ec.europa.eu, 22.1.2021](https://trade.ec.europa.eu/22.1.2021)). This revealed that not only representatives of business associations but also those of non-profit NGOs would be subject to Beijing's state censure. In fact, the ratification process was stopped after China reacted to sanctions measures for its human rights policy with corresponding counter-measures and imposed sanctions "against several EU citizens and institutions, including five MEPs" ([europarl.europa.eu, 20.5.2021](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/20.5.2021)).

If Brussels had renounced its secret diplomacy and made UN human rights standards the benchmark of its negotiations with China from the start, it would have had a greater impact. After all, at the end of 2020 China was elected to the UN Human Rights Council for a three-years ([mfa.gov.cn, 15.10.2020](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/15.10.2020)). This would, of course, have required an examination of China's political system and not only of one single aspect, the treatment with Muslim minorities ([faz.net, 14.10.2020](https://www.faz.net/14.10.2020), [zvn, 6/2020](https://www.zvn/6/2020)). Finally, the 18 UN human rights documents as a whole are based on universal values ([UN Treaty Body Database 2021](https://www.un.org/treaty-body-database/2021)). Although the People's Republic of China has not signed the Pact on Civil and Political Rights, so that it cannot be held accountable, it did sign the second human rights pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2001) and even the Convention against Torture (1988, cf. [a.a.o.](https://www.a.a.o/), China).

**Figure 9:**

**Port of Hamburg – Top 10 Partner countries  
Container throughput 2020 in thousand TEU\***



Source: Own compilation from:  
[Hafen Hamburg](https://www.hafen-hamburg.de), Statistiken, Handelspartner, 2020  
Note: \* TEU = 20-Fuß-Standardcontainer

China's relationship with the UN's human rights documents is extremely tense for another reason. As outlined above, the People's Republic was admitted to the UN in 1971 and accepted as China's sole representative in place of Taiwan. This occurred in the midst of the Maoist Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), which was estimated to have affected up to 80 million people, including about 3 million deaths ([gfbv.de, 10.5.2016](#)). Whether this was done deliberately or out of ignorance of the cruel fate of these people, a majority of UN members obviously trusted Beijing's sincerity

when it signed the Charter of the United Nations (1945) and reaffirmed "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person" ([UN-Charta 1945](#)). But, with an undisguised view of the events of the Cultural Revolution, China acquired its UN membership under false pretences. Moreover, the UN has never investigated the crimes of that period, which today would be condemned as genocide, and none of the CCP's leadership cadre ever held accountable. This is in contrast to other UN members who have been threatened with sanctions and expulsion for similar offences ([un.org, Sanctions](#)). Apparently, China also dealt self-righteously with this issue in the UN Security Council.

In China itself, too, the CCP's narrative persists that Mao Tse-tung's leadership slipped away in the course of the Cultural Revolution. In the resolution of 11.11.2021, the Central Committee of the Party boasts of its act of smashing the "Gang of Four" in October 1976 and ending the Cultural Revolution ([gov.cn, 16.11.2021](#)). With this label Mao himself had shifted his personal responsibility for the millions of victims to four people, including his wife Jiang Qing and General Lin Biao, the editor of the famous "Mao Bible" ([sued-deutsche.de, 9.12.2016](#)). Thus, the personality cult around Mao and his power techniques remained in the dark. The current president, Xi Jinping, benefits from this when he picks up on elements of the Cultural Revolution. This concerns both structural issues, such as the delimitation of his term of office ([zeit.de, 11.3.2018](#)) as well as the ideological orientation of the party (cf. [Riedel 2021](#)).

A slogan from the Cultural Revolution plays a dubious role, namely that of the "rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" ([dw.com, 11.11.2021](#)), which is presented in its continuity as a "historical inevitability" ([china.org.cn, 11.8.2021](#)). In this way, the ruling elite endows itself with a temporally unlimited power, while expecting everyone else to be willing to change. On closer examination, this slogan proves to be an element of discipline in order to subordinate all areas of politics to the party course. Its wording is also reminiscent of the instrumentalisation of youth against any criticism of the system. They were incited by the party elite against the older and more experienced generation ([gfbV 292 1 2016](#), Figure 10). Whereas wall newspapers were the decisive medium back then, China's socialist ideology is now carried around the world by mobile phones.

Figure 10

### Cultural revolution spreads fear and terror across the country

Ulrich Delius, Referent for Asia of Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker [Society for Threatened Peoples]

#### „Pupils and students are mobilised

Using tried and tested tactics, he initially did not criticize them in public himself, but launched a [defamation campaign against less influential followers of the party leadership in the cultural sector](#). After this blow against the cultural bureaucracy, he let professors and students agitate at the university in Beijing from May 1966. Wall newspapers and defamation were used to [hunt down alleged "deviants" among the professors](#). In the summer of 1966, the movement spread to schools and other cities. The Beijing party leadership was massively weakened by the agitation when Mao returned to the capital after a long absence in order to later intervene personally in the fight for the party leadership.

But first Mao waited, ordered the [schools and universities to be closed – they were not to open their doors again for two years](#) – and let the young Red Guards unleashed by him freely live out their violence and power mania. They brought untold suffering to hundreds of thousands of families. No one was safe from their terror. Those who defamed alleged counter-revolutionaries today could be pilloried with a "disgrace" on their head and lose job, reputation and entire livelihood. [The violence was not only directed against a specific person, but also regularly affected family members, friends, co-workers and companions](#). Defamation triggered a chain reaction. Leading officials and ministers were not spared either. Many influential cadres were afraid to stay at home at night [for fear of being tracked down and pilloried by marauding Red Guards](#). [...]"

Source: Ulrich Delius, Kulturrevolution verbreitet Angst und Schrecken, in: [gfbV 292 1 2016](#), Zeitschrift "bedrohte Völker - pogrom", 50 Jahre Kulturrevolution, Nr. 292 1 2016 [Highlighting blue: S.R.].

## 5. Conclusion: <sup>2</sup>

### Orwell's „NEWSPEAK“ serving the language planners of the PR of China

- ♦ All modern official languages are the result of a standardisation of selected language norms (grammar, orthography, lexis). Such a standardisation process is a sociolinguistic precondition for the alphabetisation of the broad population. It is developed by social organisations or state language commissions and implemented through the respective national education systems.
- ♦ China embarked on this path of modernisation at the end of the empire in 1912. The new Republic of China charged a commission with the creation of universally valid language standard. In 1920, it published the first dictionary of the modern Chinese standard language, which since 1932 has been called Guóyǔ (en. national language) or Huáyǔ (en. language of the Chinese).
- ♦ This did not go far enough for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Since the founding of the People's Republic (1.10.1949), it has steered language development in favour of its socialist system. But its attempts to introduce the Latin script met with resistance. What remained was a standardisation of the transliteration, which has been internationally recognized as an ISO standard under the name Pinyin since 1982.
- ♦ As an authoritarian regime, the People's Republic of China regards language reform as a continuous process. The CCP uses them to assert its leadership power in all areas of society. Since 1956, the Ministry of Education has published a list of selected standard characters for public use, initially with 2200 and today with 8,300 characters. This standard is called Pǔtōnghuà (common language).
- ♦ The Republic of China (Taiwan) also pursues a language policy within the framework of its democratic system. It accepts the standard of the People's Republic (Pǔtōnghuà, Mandarin), but also adheres to the standard from the first half of the 20th century (Guóyǔ). Taiwanese Mandarin transmits the approx. 100,000 surviving characters with their more complex typeface and entirely dispenses with language prohibitions.
- ♦ Taipei is not only tolerant of the two Mandarin language norms. In addition, the Republic of China has broken with Chinese nationalism in recent years and allowed regional minority languages to become official languages. This policy of multilingualism spills over into the People's Republic of China, especially into Hong Kong and Macau. Beijing sees this as a threat to its claim to cultural leadership.

### Orwell's „WAR IS PEACE“: China's Nationalism Targets Taiwan

- ♦ The hegemonic claim of the People's Republic to the Chinese culture and language goes back to the Soviet model. It bears the hallmark of the Commissar for Nationalities Josef Stalin, who had integrated nationalism into the socialist state doctrine. Beijing still adheres to this model today, while Taiwan has been turning away from nationalism since the 1990s.
- ♦ Until 1990, both sides advocated the one-China doctrine. With the founding of the United Nations (UN), Taiwan was initially accepted with its claim to sole representation and became a member of the UN Security Council. It was not until 1971 that the UN General Assembly followed the People's Republic's claim to sole representation, which had ousted Taiwan from the UN and the Security Council.
- ♦ This history of the conflict shows that the Taiwan question has concerned international politics from the very beginning. Beijing's argument that it is an internal Chinese affair does not apply and even divides international law: UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 (25.10.1971) was not binding, unlike the decisions of the Security Council. Moreover, Taiwan was not guilty of anything.
- ♦ In 1990, Taiwan founded a National Reunification Council in the hope of a reconciliation with Beijing. According to Kuomintang representatives, there was a "consensus" in 1992, which Beijing denies to this day. In 1995, China's President Jiang Zemin reasserted the ownership of Taiwan in eight principles. Taipei then set five conditions of its own.
- ♦ Since the anti-secession law of 2005, the People's Republic of China has been increasing pressure on Taiwan with the aim of reunification along the lines of Hong Kong (1997) and Macau (1999). The Republic of China then considered the option of seeking its own UN membership as the second Chinese state (Taiwan), which Beijing interprets as an attempt of secession.
- ♦ In contrast to the Kuomintang (KMT), which is ready for talks with Beijing, the current president of Taiwan, Tsai Ing-wen (Democratic Progressive Party DPP), named preconditions: Talks on reunification would only be considered if the People's Republic renounced the use of force and respected the will of the Taiwanese.

### Orwell's „FREEDOM IS SLAVERY“: Taiwan as a Symbol of Free World Trade

- ♦ According to socialist theory, Taiwan should have fallen into slavery and dependence on other

<sup>2</sup> This conclusion was published separately as Topic in Focus 6/2021 in the same website.

states because of its desire for freedom. This narrative is contradicted by the fact that, despite diplomatic isolation since 1971, Taiwan has developed into an **Asian tiger with high growth rates - even during the Corona crisis - and a system of social security**.

- ♦ In the People's Republic of China, similar economic growth did not begin until 40 years later. **Constitutional reforms since the beginning of the 1990s** allow forms of private ownership that **were supposed to transform the centrally planned system into a "socialist market economy"**. Beijing obviously wanted to copy the Taiwanese success story.
- ♦ In contrast to Taiwan, **social inequality in the People's Republic** increased enormously. According to the Credit Suisse Report 2021, it is right behind the USA with 9 percent of all millionaires worldwide. At the same time, **the number of migrant workers rose to 250 million (31 percent of all workers)**. According to the World Bank's definition, 40 percent live in poverty (under 5.50 US dollars a day).
- ♦ The People's Republic is also seeking reunification with **Taiwan** for economic reasons. **With its company TSMC, the island is the world market leader in semiconductor technology**. In contrast, Beijing is dependent on foreign countries for chip production. According to the plan, it could only become self-sufficient in 2025. But the **interest in Taiwanese specialists** remains high.
- ♦ The conflict between the People's Republic and Taiwan in chip production is relevant for security policy in the region as well as worldwide: **If Taiwan would lose its market position, the People's Republic would have a key position in a highly sensitive branch of industry in terms of security policy**. This is a reason for the USA to stand by Taiwan in the event of an escalation.
- ♦ As Beijing's relations with Africa show, **the ideologically based friendship between the "Afro-Asian peoples" has given way to economic dependency structures**. China uses its position as a monopoly provider of infrastructure to acquire land for food production, to the disadvantage of the African population.

### Orwell's "IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH": Cultural Revolution and not Human Rights

- ♦ The socialist ideology of the People's Republic blocks the view of real political development. Africa is an example of the great divergence between expectations and reality. For example, **the construction activity of Chinese investors favours urbanisation and the rise of poverty settlements (slums)**. In addition, Africa is losing its own arable land in these deals.
- ♦ The arm of Chinese government institutions reaches so far into global networks that even **ac-**

**ademic institutions "set the record straight" on any negative images**, such as the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) or the Berlin Marx Engels Centre. **They dispel any doubts about Beijing's self-serving motives in trade with Africa and Europe.**

- ♦ Journalists report, however, that much is not made public because **Beijing wants to keep the trade agreements under wraps**. Since the adoption of the EU's Trade Secrets Directive (2016), **this lack of transparency has also become a practice in the European Commission**, for example with the trade agreement with Canada (CETA), vaccine manufacturers (2020) and the **investment agreement with China (CAI)**.
- ♦ It was only after pressure from business associations and members of the European Parliament that the Commission had to announce **details of the EU-China agreement** at the beginning of 2021. According to the agreement, **Beijing has the right to fill management positions in the representative offices of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in China with its own staff**. After that, the negotiations were put on hold.
- ♦ The ignorance of the international community about the **crimes of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1967), which claimed the lives of about 80 million people**, has far-reaching consequences. This was known when the People's Republic was admitted to the UN (1971), yet **Beijing was never held responsible**. Its commitment to the "fundamental rights of man" (UN Charter) was only pretended.
- ♦ This ignorance gives strength to China's **party leadership**. It **blames the crimes of the Cultural Revolution on the "Gang of Four" to maintain the personality cult around Mao**. This is what President Xi Jinping is currently building on when he revives the **old phrase of "national rejuvenation"** in order to discipline the entire society, including Taiwan.

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