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**100 Years of the CCP – The “long road” and the triumphant advance of the People's Republic and its party**Feldbacher Rainer\* – Gu Shengrong<sup>+</sup> – Guo Shengda<sup>-</sup><sup>1</sup>Associate Professor at the School of History, Capital Normal University, Beijing, China, 100089.<sup>2</sup>Deputy Director of the Xinhua Daily Art Museum, Nanjing, China, 210036.<sup>3</sup>Vice Professor at the Institute of Philosophy, Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing, China, 210023.**Corresponding Author\***

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**Abstract:** This year not only celebrates the founding of the Chinese Communist Party 100 years ago, but it is also the 110th anniversary of the 1911 revolution, which in addition to many developments in this specific phase played a role – such as the May 4th Movement. Another starting point for the development of the CCP were the communist and socialist positions of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels – the two ultimately formulated the idea – as well as Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and later Josef Stalin, the leaders of the first socialist state. From these approaches, Mao Zedong developed an independent strategy adapted to the Chinese situation. This so-called Maoism spread in particular through the so-called “Red Book”. After the successful revolution that led to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party under Mao pursued its own communist path from 1956. In 1960, China and the Soviet Union broke completely because of Khrushchev's policy of de-

Stalinization. This development culminated in the Chinese Cultural Revolution initiated by Mao from 1966 onwards. It was based on the theory of a permanent revolutionary transformation of society; the communist ideals should be anchored throughout the Chinese people.

From 1979, under Deng Xiaoping, an economic change of course took shape (keyword special economic zones), which led to the opening to capitalist economic forms without having to abandon the CCP's claim to leadership at the political level, but enabled rapid economic, technological and scientific advances that up to stop today. At the same time, the CCP is endeavoring to alleviate the poverty of migrant workers in the coming periods, to solve the ecological challenges in the course of economic growth and at the same time to close the world with the aid of the Silk Road, which once connected continents – now under the title "One Road, One Belt". This global cooperation now seems all the more necessary as in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, the party successfully shows and should prove how this crisis can be contained – for the benefit of the economy, society and health.

**Keywords:** Chinese Republic, May Fourth Movement, Kuomintang, Comintern, Marxism, CPC

## INTRODUCTION

China had lived in a feudal economy for millennia. Its economic basis was agriculture. Thus, China was socially divided. The country lacked a strong organization and a conscious political life. Especially from the second half of the 19th century, China was at the mercy of Western foreign powers, and the people realized that this was not least due to the corruption and corruption of their own government. And it realized that defending their country against foreign powers would be impossible without a decisive change in the entire political system in China.

This led to the revolution of 1911, which gave the masses the opportunity to work directly on the political reconstruction of the country. As China found itself in a state of political and economic oppression by foreign states, the Chinese masses had to skip the stage of simple reforms of their state administrative apparatus and immediately enter the stage of the revolution, which issues slogans and calls for democratic power in order to become their own to enter political life and to be able to develop their organizational powers. The 1911 revolution overturned China's traditional monarchy that had lasted millennia and ushered in a new era in China's political history. The revolution should have two tasks – on the one hand, the overthrow of the foreign Manchu rulers and, on the other hand, the liberation from foreign oppression and the conversion to an independent state. In this last project, the goal of the revolution was to create the appropriate preconditions for the industrial development of China within a framework of ethnic and national independence. The revolution of 1911 marked the transition from the political system of the feudal state to a democratic regime. But there was still a long way to go.

### **Birth of the young Chinese republic and consequences of global conflicts**

The so-called father of the Chinese Republic, Doctor Sun Yat-sen, had already worked out a program for the Kuomintang movement in the years before the revolution, which was supposed to represent a combination of Western political thinking and Chinese traditions that were considered worth preserving. The result were those three basic tenets – the national, the democratic, and the social principle. The Kuomintang Party, led by Sun, had three very different elements from the start: A left-wing consisting of intellectuals and manual workers had vaguely defined socialist institutions in mind. The liberals of the middle took the political institutions of the United States as their model, and the right-wing followed nationalist slogans. The latter in particular set itself the goal of eliminating all foreign influence. However, all three groups submitted to the authority of Sun Yat-Sens, who leaned towards the left-wing for himself.

In terms of actual power, however, Sun Yat-sen and the Kuomintang government were overshadowed by provincial military rulers from 1912 to 1922. In addition, the great powers began to consider the division of China as early as 1912: Great Britain supported the separation of Tibet, Russian influence was strong in Outer Mongolia, and the Japanese had the upper hand in Manchuria. In 1915, the latter presented and imposed 21 demands on the Chinese government, the fulfillment of which would have practically made Japan master of all of China, which was even recognized by the USA in 1917, until it put an end to the Japanese expansion of power, at least in theory, in an agreement of 1922 (Kuhn, 2007: 147).

But the Chinese people realized that they were too much of a plaything for foreign powers: In the course of the First World War, Great Britain had agreed to a military alliance with Japan aimed at limiting German colonial gains in the east. The Japanese Empire joined the Allied Powers when it saw the opportunity to expand its sphere of influence by conquering German possessions in China and the Pacific. The Qing Empire had previously been ineffective, forcing the Shandong area, known as the “Kiautschou Bay Concession”, to be ceded to Germany from 1898 to 1914. The German authorities used Qingdao (Tsingtao) is a strategically important port. For example, Japanese Imperial troops occupied the city and the surrounding province during the siege of Tsingtao after Japan's declaration of war on Germany according to the Anglo-Japanese alliance. China protested against Japan's violation of its neutrality but was unable to interfere in the military operations. The city came under Chinese control only in December 1922 under the control of the Republic of China. Nevertheless, Japan retained its economic dominance of the railways and thus of the entire province (Griswold, 1938: 326-328). The decision of the Paris Peace Conference and the Versailles negotiations, including the awarding of German and Ottoman overseas properties as “mandates”, mainly to Great Britain and France. The decision to leave Qingdao to the Japanese instead of the Chinese people, who are also allied with the victorious powers, led to the May 4th Movement (1919) as a symbol of anti-imperialism, nationalism, and cultural identity in China, which the government eventually put under pressure to refuse to sign the Treaty of Versailles. The Chinese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference was the only one who did not sign the treaty at the signing ceremony (MacMillan, 2002: 322–345). This movement sparked a stronger national feeling, borne primarily by the people.<sup>1</sup>

### **Origin and founding of the CPC**

Their emergence is based on various interrelationships. As described above, China has suffered almost continuously from civil wars and states of war since the middle of the 19th century. In the first decade of the 20th century, the empire of the Manchu emperors was characterized by total impotence on the outside and increasing dissolution on the inside.

This situation did not change after the last imperial government abdicated in February 1912 and a republic was proclaimed. Not least because the great powers saw China as the arena for the settlement of their conflicts of interest. The high compensation that China had to raise after the Boxer Rebellion brought the traditional economic structure to collapse completely. Military rulers in the provinces plundered the areas entrusted to them, maintained their own armed forces, and began to wage war among themselves and against the government.

The emperors had relied on the property. Well, after the Manchu fell, the upper class remained in possession of the land. However, it became increasingly impoverished as a result of the general economic decline. For this reason, the landowners allied themselves with the warlords in the provinces, because they tried desperately to maintain a basically feudal order. They faced three main classes: first, a

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<sup>1</sup> A longer lecture on the First World War and its international consequences was given by the first author in Shanghai on the 100th anniversary of the end of the World War: Rainer Feldbacher, 100 years "Republic of Austria" – on the sherds of its empire. International Symposium: World War I and China in Global Perspective, organized by the Department of History, College of Liberal Arts, Shanghai University, November 3-4, 2018, unpublished.

nascent predominantly urban middle class, in which the intellectuals and small businessmen set the tone; secondly, an industrial proletariat, which is still numerically weak and therefore of little importance, which the enterprises of foreign big capital let arise in the big port cities; and third, the countless millions of Chinese farmers who were poor, illiterate, and without any interest in politics. But for decades they had been ready to follow anyone who promised them to put an end to the unbearable plundering through taxes and leases.

However, there was neither a unified central government nor had the semi-feudal social conditions and semi-colonial dependence on countries such as Germany, France, England, the USA, and especially Japan changed. After the end of the First World War, Japan was granted German colonial possession in China by the Treaty of Versailles (see above), although China had fought alongside the Allies against Germany, making China the only winner in the First World War to record territorial losses. The Chinese bourgeoisie, and especially the Chinese intellectual youth, were outraged. This outrage found expression in the so-called May Fourth Movement (Spence, 1982). In Russia, the tsarist empire had already been smashed by the October Revolution in 1917 and the newly formed Russia appeared to some Chinese intellectuals as a model for a new China. Reports of the Russian Revolution were enthusiastically received by students and professors alike.

Marxism had not received widespread attention in China until the end of the First World War, but as early as 1918, Marxist study groups had formed among intellectual circles in Beijing and elsewhere. However, in desperation at the country's chaotic state, many Chinese intellectuals finally turned their attention to the Russian October Revolution. The first communist cells were established at Peking University in 1919, but it was not until 1921 that the Chinese Communist Party was formally founded (see below). It gained supporters all over the country, but remained numerically weak until 1923 and followed the instructions of the Communist International (Comintern) exactly. This was founded in 1919 by the Russian Communist Party in Moscow as an international alliance of communist parties to form a global joint organization, which based its program and objectives on Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. From the mid-1920s, in the wake of the so-called Bolshevization of the communist parties, the Comintern was largely dominated by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and served as an instrument of influence on communist parties and organizations in other countries (Weber, 1986). It should be mentioned here that the most important section outside of the Soviet Union was the Communist Party of Germany (“KPD”, until the KPD and the SPD (Socialist Party of Germany) both lost and were banned when Hitler and the National Socialists came to power in 1933). The Comintern is still considered to be one of the most important political organizations of the first half of the 20th century<sup>2</sup>, whose original goal was a proletarian world revolution, which – based on individual national revolutions – was to seize all countries on earth. When this did not happen, not least in connection with the First World War, Lenin and Trotsky adapted their previous strategy and the communist parties organized in the Comintern now looked for allies in other parties within the political left under the slogan of the “united front”.<sup>3</sup> In order

<sup>2</sup> On May 15, 1943, the Executive Committee of the Communist International finally passed the resolution to dissolve the Comintern on June 10 as a concession to the Western allies in the anti-Hitler coalition. Leonhard, 2005: 203.

<sup>3</sup> Following the III. World Congress, Lenin had developed a united front tactic, which the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) adopted in December 1921. This term came from that Congress to overcome the ideological

to support the Russian Revolution, contacts should be made with the growing national independence strivings in Asia (The First Congress of Communist and Revolutionary Organizations in the Far East 1922; Sexton, 2019). In the case of China, Grigori Voitinski was sent to China to look for possible allies. This made contact with Sun Yat-sen – the founder and then chairman of the Kuomintang (KMT), but also with the editors of the magazine "New Youth", the two professors Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu, the more offensive positions in relation to national China's liberation and the necessary social transformations in the country represented as the KMT. With great qualifications, one could call them the first Chinese Marxists. With the participation of these two professors and with the help of Voitinski, a communist party cell was formed in Shanghai in the summer of 1920, then another in September in Beijing, and by the spring of 1921 four cells had been set up in Changsha, Guangdong, Wuhan, and Jinan. There were also other Chinese communist groups in European capitals such as Paris, Berlin, Moscow, and Hong Kong, which at that time had no connection with each other or with China itself.

A Chinese Communist Party was founded on the initiative of the group in Shanghai, which was supported by the Comintern. The existing groups were invited to Shanghai in July 1921 for the party's founding congress. Since there are no official documents about the meeting, as no statements have been made, the exact date of the meeting can neither be determined nor the completeness of all thirteen delegates at the congress is guaranteed. In the available sources only six, matching names can be found: Li Hanjun and Li Da (Shanghai), Zhang Guotao (Beijing), Chen Gongbo (Wuhan), Mao Zedong (Changsha), and Zhou Fohai (representing the Chinese in Japan). The other names differ in the literature. In addition, two representatives of the Comintern were present: a certain Nikolski and Henk Sneevliet (alias Maring, 馬林 / 马林, Malin). Malin took an active part in the discussion and wanted to convince the nascent party to cooperate with the Comintern, which, according to the overwhelming majority, succeeded. The above-mentioned professors and leading figures in Chinese Marxism at the time – Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu – were absent for reasons unknown. After four days of deliberation, congress had to be interrupted for fear of police spies. A few days later, in the absence of Comintern officials, the establishment of the CCP was ended on a tour boat on Nanhu Lake in Jiaxing, 100 km away. Chen Duxiu was elected secretary of the party in absentia, Zhang Gutao became head of the organizing office, and Li Da head of the agitation office. The party headquarters were located in Shanghai. The party was founded as a conspiratorial, centralist organization. The classless communist society was called for as a long-term political goal. To achieve this, capitalists would first have to be expropriated, the land transferred into social ownership and the dictatorship of the proletariat established. The first steps towards this should be the establishment of training and study circles for workers and the organization of trade unions. Cooperation with the Comintern was agreed upon, but for China, itself cooperation with any other party was categorically excluded. Thus, the actual founding of the communist party begins at a meeting in Shanghai in July 1921, and its preparations have already been made. The influential dean of the Faculty of Literature and History at Peking University, from which the May 4th Movement began in 1919, was present at a small

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and organizational division of the labor movement that has existed since the 19th century and especially since 1914/1918. The slogan associated with the implementation of the united front line was "Approach the masses!" And the motto "March separately – strike together!" Bergmann, 1997: Col. 194–199.



conference that had already taken place in Shanghai in September 1920.<sup>4</sup> A few words should be said about this movement: It united intellectual-literary-political currents of the movement for a new politics and culture. The May Fourth Movement is considered the first mass political movement in Chinese history and for many political currents as a point of reference for identifying and legitimizing the Chinese people. After all, it also found support in all classes of Chinese society. The aim of the movement was to question the old Confucian social order and to introduce western values in China, such as democracy, equality, and freedom. For the first time people from different classes could express their wishes together, and this was just the beginning. In the course of these movements, organizations such as the Young China Association<sup>5</sup> emerged, but also led to more reflections within Marxist ideas.

The earliest public announcements by the Chinese Communist Party were ultimately the first manifesto on the present situation and the manifesto of the CCP's second national congress in June and July 1922. The decision to refuse to cooperate with any other party has already been repealed as proposed by the Comintern. But its main meaning lies in the raised demands for a "democratic united front of workers, poor peasants, and petty bourgeoisie". National unity, independence, and social reforms should be achieved in close cooperation with the KMT. The communists proposed to convene a joint conference with the other revolutionary elements – especially insofar as they belonged to the Kuomintang – in order to establish this united front.

More important was the implementation of the manifesto, which summarized the following points (taken from Brandt - Schwartz – Fairbank, 1955: 40-42):

The CCP is the party of the proletariat, its task is to organize the proletariat and fight for the dictatorship of labor and peasants, the abolition of private property, and the gradual construction of a communist society. the CCP must, in the interests of the workers and small farmers, get the workers to support the democratic revolution in order to build a democratic united front of workers, poor peasants and petty bourgeoisie. The CCP is fighting within the united front for the following goals in the interests of the workers:

1. The suppression of internal unrest, the overthrow of the military cliques, the restoration of internal peace
2. Liberation from the pressures of international imperialism and the complete national independence of China

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<sup>4</sup> In the course of the "peace conference" in Paris in 1919 (for more details see: Feldbacher – Guo 2021, 68-69), a Vietnamese worker who later called himself Ho Chi Minh and helped communism in Vietnam to victory, tried the US American President Wilson to hand over a petition calling for an end to French colonialism in Indochina, but was disappointed by the Western powers as well as the Chinese allies who watched Japan win the former German colony of Qingdao.

<sup>5</sup> The association was founded on June 30, 1918, but was not given a formal framework and statutes until one year later, on July 1, 1919. The establishment of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921 revealed the heterogeneity and weakness of the loosely organized and ideologically heterogeneous Young China Association, as the CCP had a clear ideological program and a tight organization from the start. At the July 1-4, 1921 congress in Nanjing, the division of this organization became apparent and continued at the following meetings, so that the association was practically incapable of making decisions or acting. The last meeting took place from July 17 to July 20, 1925 in Nanjing and ended without result and resulted in the official dissolution. Hirayama, 2018.

3. the amalgamation of China, including Manchuria, to form a real democratic republic
4. The creation of a true democratic republic through the liberation of Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang
5. The establishment of a Chinese Federal Republic through the amalgamation of China, Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang into a free union
6. The unlimited right to vote of all workers and peasants, regardless of gender, in all assemblies and local councils as well as complete freedom of speech, assembly, press, and association and the right to strike
7. Protection laws for workers, peasants, and women, which have been divided into
  - a) Better treatment of workers, abolition of piecework, 8 hours a day, the establishment of hospitals for employees and of sanitary facilities in factories, accident insurance, protection of women and child labor, unemployment benefits
  - b) Abolition of the high poll and traffic tax, collection in the state or municipal property tax
  - c) Abolition of the Likin system and all special levies, levying of a progressive income tax
  - d) Legislation to reduce rent
  - e) Abolition of all legal restrictions on women's rights
  - f) Improvement of the educational system

Much has been implemented in a relatively short time, and now that the People's Republic is celebrating the centenary of the Communist Party, it can boast of implementing many more points.

From 1923 to 1927, Communist functionaries were also active in leading positions in the institutions and management bodies of the KMT, which was also reorganized under the influence of the Comintern and provided with large funds by the Comintern.

### **External and internal aggression – the Japanese offensive and ongoing civil war from 1927-1949 until the CCP's victory**

In the early 1920s, various attempts by Sun Yat-sen to the alliance with the military rulers in the southern provinces and to unite the country with their help had already failed. His calls for help to the great powers were only heard in Moscow. The Soviet government promised to provide advisers to reorganize the Chinese government, the party apparatus, and the Kuomintang armed forces. The Chinese communists had formed an alliance with the Kuomintang on instructions from Moscow. They had hoped to seize the leadership of the revolutionary movement from within, but this soon led to a conflict with Chiang Kai Shek, who increasingly relied on the army and the right-wing of the Kuomintang, and who in April 1927 had his own Established right-wing government in Nanjing as a counter-government to that of the left-wing in Hankau.

In May 1927, Chiang Kai Shek was responsible for a massacre among demonstrating workers in Shanghai and insurgent farmers in the provinces. In doing so, he dashed the hope of any social reform.

The CCP was banned, its members and supporters who could be caught were captured, and most of them were executed (Snow, 1970: 14). Then Chiang Kai Shek took action against the strongest communist cell in the whole country in Shanghai and other major cities. The Russian advisors soon left the country (Brandt – Schwartz – Fairbank, 1955: 14-15). In the following years, the Kuomintang campaigns against the armed forces of the communists followed.

Even before the rift between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party occurred in 1927, Mao Tse-tung had submitted a report on the peasant uprisings in Hunan to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, in which he openly contradicted the party line of those days. However, after the disasters of 1928, it became clear that the rural areas he organized in Kiangsi Province were the only ones where communism prevailed. Since Moscow's Communist International's interest in the Communist Party in China had noticeably waned, the movement in China developed under Mao's leadership according to its own laws. The Soviet Republic was proclaimed a democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants.

When the Japanese occupied Manchuria in 1931, a great wave of nationalism swept over China. The country had to endure the Japanese invasion and then the ongoing civil war until 1949, when the central people's government of the People's Republic of China was finally proclaimed in Beijing on October 1 of that year. The Chinese Communist Party came to power with the help of the peasants and intellectuals. They succeeded against the basic communist doctrine that a communist revolution can only be successful if it relies primarily on the industrial proletariat.

Starting in the summer of 1927, the CCP had organized the establishment of its own armed units in the hope that individual successful revolts would lead to uprisings across the country against warlords, large landowners, as well as domestic and foreign capitalists, and thus lead to a nationwide revolution. This also succeeded because, with the help of the oppressed and exploited peasants, independent base areas were established.

From 1928 onwards, the formation of council areas (Soviet areas) became more of a focus of Comintern and CCP politics, but attempts were made to capture medium and large cities to promote the revolution until 1930. This development was linked to a stronger orientation of the party to the solution of the peasant question and associated land reform (a division of the landed property of the nobility and the large and middle peasants to the small peasants and landless tenants). But neither the Comintern nor the CCP's Politburo saw the peasants as a revolutionary subject (as "petty-bourgeois" they were incapable of a comprehensive social revolution), at best they could support the revolution of the proletariat. Mao, however, defined small and landless peasants as the proletariat and postulated that they could thus be the leading force in the Chinese revolution. This view was in complete contrast to the "Marxist-Leninist" doctrine proclaimed from the Soviet Union by the Comintern and its representatives in China, and also in contrast to many adherents of this doctrine in the CCP itself. It took years before the Central Committee was established the majority of the CCP followed Mao's view.

The first years were difficult for the communists: the Soviet area of Jiangxi had to be given up in 1934. The situation had become economically and militarily untenable. The leadership of the CCP, which had been based here since 1931 and of which Mao Zedong was not a member at the time, ordered the withdrawal of the government and its troops. The later so-called Long March began here in October



1934, initially with the aim of uniting the units with those of Zhang Guotao in the province of Sichuan in southwest China. During the Long March, Mao took over military command of the force withdrawing from Jiangxi in early 1935 and became part of the leadership of the CCP. The remnants of this army arrived a year later in the northern Chinese province of Shaanxi, where another small communist base area already existed at that time.

Japan's pursuit of hegemony, which increasingly threatened China, led again to the alliance between the Kuomintang and the CCP in 1936. The Sino-Japanese War – which marked the beginning of World War II in Asia in 1937 and lasted until 1945 – saw both parties fight the Japanese army in mainland Asia during World War II. As early as 1941, the Communist Party regained considerable influence, starting from the area into which it had been pushed back during the civil war since 1927 – the mountainous region of southern China, which remained inaccessible to the Japanese enemy during the entire course of the war.

After the victory over Japan, the civil war in China lasted four years, from which the communists under Mao finally emerged victorious and were able to proclaim the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. Ultimately, the civil war also claimed millions of more lives. After their defeat, the Kuomintang withdrew to the island of Formosa, better known as the province of Taiwan, where in 1950 they retained the national Chinese "Republic of China" (often also referred to as "national China"), a Chinese state oriented towards the political west.

### **The long road – isolation and triumph within the communist party**

After the de-Stalinization by Khrushchev in the Soviet Union, a serious ideological conflict arose between China under Mao Zedong or the CCP and the USSR or the CPSU from 1957 at the latest, in which the CCP rejected the dominance of the CPSU over the global communist movement. In addition, Mao, with his own ideology, Maoism, interpreted Marxism-Leninism differently than the CPSU.<sup>6</sup> Mao had prepared his ideology for the general public in the so-called "Mao Bible".

The conflict between the two largest communist parties in the world led to a further split in the national communist parties and to the establishment of Maoist parties in some other countries. With Maoist China, alongside the USSR, a second communist superpower had entered the world political stage of the Cold War, relatively isolated for a while, but before the end of the Vietnam War, the US and President Richard Nixon established diplomatic contacts with the People's Republic of China for the first time which initiated a certain détente policy in war and crisis-torn Southeast Asia, which, however, also pursued the goal of reducing the influence of the USSR in the region.

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<sup>6</sup> This is reminiscent of the mocking remark made by Marx himself that he was not a Marxist. He was referring to a problem that occurs frequently – the problem of the founder and the followers. the message of the founder of a successful philosophical or religious movement is seldom simple. it attracts many people precisely because it has numerous aspects, but the followers each put different aspects in the foreground depending on their interests and their own situation. Even more fundamental is the problem of the internal conflict within a tradition, i.e. the inevitable conflict between universal rules and the specific, constantly changing situations (for more details, see: Burke, 2005: 120).

This trend became even stronger when, from 1978 onwards, the CCP – now under Deng Xiaoping – introduced reforms with the so-called "Four Modernizations", which also opened up China to foreign countries. Industrial production increased and the supply of the population improved rapidly.

In the People's Republic of China, at the latest since the 16th Party Congress under the then General Secretary and President Jiang Zemin, the Communist Party has adapted its ideology to such an extent that market-economy elements are permitted, while at the same time political power remains in the hands of the party. The CCP now sees itself as a people's party, is open to farmers, workers, and now also to the (even private) entrepreneurs. For the USA and the European Union, China has become an economically sought-after important sales market since its economic opening. At the 17th party congress in 2007, a scientific development concept was also adopted, which should enable balanced and sustainable economic development.

### **Conclusion: Aftermath and sustainability**

The Chinese philosopher Yan Fu (1854-1921 – one could celebrate a centenary in his honor, too) recalled a century full of humiliations of China by Western barbarians – from the Opium Wars to the destruction of the Summer Palace in Beijing, and concluded: "The only reason why we did not devour their flesh and sleep on their skin was our lack of strength." (Quote from Mishra, 2013: 12). In 1895 he described the clear differences between China and the West: "China protects the three [family] ties the highest, while in the West equality takes precedence. In China, relatives are preferred, in the West those who are worthy. China rules the empire on the basis of respect for parents, the West on the basis of impartiality. China values the ruler, while the West values the people. China praises the one way, while the West prefers diversity (...) in education, China relies on a broad education, the West on human strength." (Huters, 2005: 50). Yan Fu realized that China could only survive if it took over some of the Western virtues, but at the same time to preserve Confucianism in order not to endanger the political and social foundation, in other words, Confucianism had to be reinvented to save it.

Yan was one of the handful of Chinese who knew the West from personal experience. His translations introduced many Chinese thinkers to contemporary Western philosophers, and in particular to the social Darwinist explanation of history in terms of survival of the fittest. He became obsessed with how China could accumulate enough wealth and power to survive. "It is the struggle for existence that leads to natural selection and the survival of the fittest – and thus in the human realm to the greatest possible realization of human abilities." (Schwartz, 1964: 55).

Ultimately, the Chinese state managed to incorporate the best of its own experience, tradition, and innovations as well as external ideas and philosophies, especially those of Marx and Engels, in order to be richer and more influential than ever at the beginning of the 21st century. This accumulation of wealth and the expansion of infrastructure can now be seen in the Silk Road project, not least by the poverty alleviation in even remote regions of the People's Republic (Nilsson 2021). And even the global challenge that COVID poses is being solved by the Communist Party in a way that strengthens internal social cohesion. In addition, the Chinese economy is the only one in the world to boast positive numbers in times of the pandemic. In keeping with the centenary, the party is proving that crises can often be overcome more easily with a strong leading hand.

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