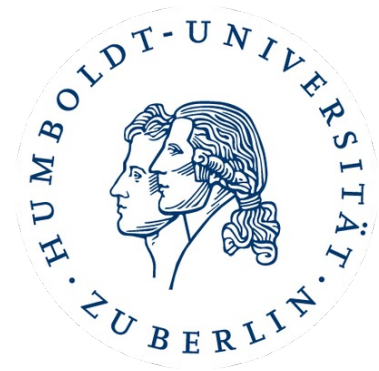


Standards Academy Webinar
Geopolitics of ICT Standardisation



Cooperation and Contestation: China's Evolving Role in International Standardisation

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29 January 2024


Recent Publications

**Daniel Fuchs, Sascha Klotzbücher,
Andrea Riemenschnitter,
Lena Springer, Felix Wemheuer (Hg.)**

DIE ZUKUNFT MIT CHINA DENKEN

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Alex Veit, Daniel Fuchs (Hg.)



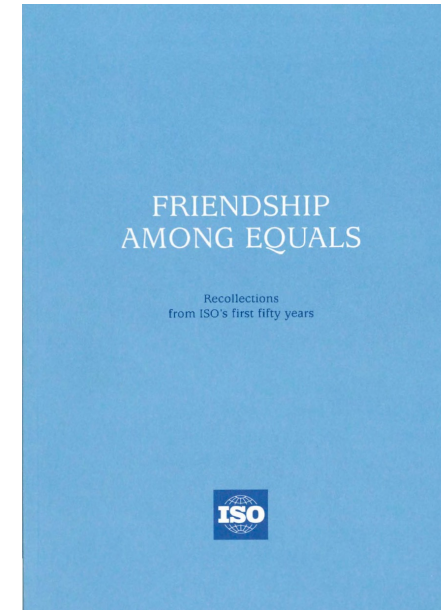
EINE GERECHTE WELTWIRTSCHAFTS- ORDNUNG?

Die »New International Economic Order«
und die Zukunft der Süd-Nord-Beziehungen

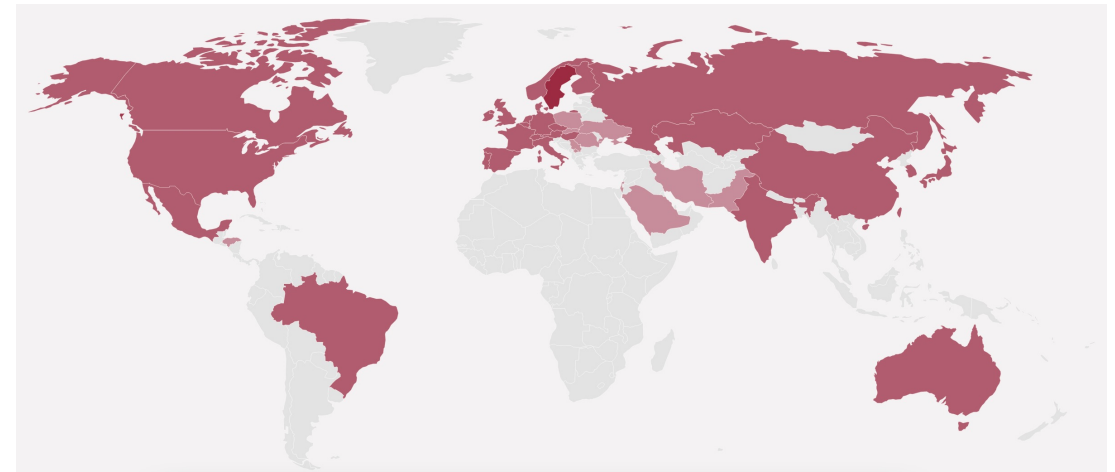
[transcript] Neue Ökonomie

Putting the “China challenge” into perspective

- Stakeholders from the Global North have an outsize influence in international standardisation
 - Holding the most leadership positions in TCs, SCs and working groups within the ISO and IEC
- Aspiration vs. Reality
 - Principles of „openness“ and „inclusivity“ vs. reality of an „exclusive club“
- “Powerful economic interests based in the advanced industrialized economies use international standardization to consolidate and enhance global advantage, and to regulate the terms on which countries and their firms are inserted into the global economy” (Wood 2012: 83)



Map of Participant Countries in ISO/TC 299: Robotics



Source: <https://www.iso.org/committee/5915511.html?view=participation>

China's transition from rule-taker to rule-maker

- Aims: In 2015, the central government set the goal of becoming a “world standards power” (世界标准强国) by 2020 (State Council 2015)
- The focus on moving from rule-taker to rule-maker in standardisation is closely linked to industrial policy
 - Strategic efforts to capture first-mover advantages in high-tech sectors
 - Release of MiC 2025 and Internet Plus policies led to substantial increase of state funding for research on technical standards linked to smart manufacturing and digital technologies more broadly
 - View that „first tier companies make standards; second-tier companies make technology; third-tier companies make products“ (一流企业做标准, 二流企业做技术, 三流企业做产品)



Zhao Houlin, first Chinese Secretary General of the ITU (2015-2022)



Zhang Xiaogang, First Chinese president of the ISO (2015-2018)



Shu Yinbiao, first Chinese president of the IEC (2019-2022)

China's standardisation strategy: Domestic dimensions

- Ongoing reform of domestic standard-setting system (2014-)
- Efforts to make standard-setting more market-driven
- Standardisation Law 2017: Reduce share of top-down, “mandatory” standards developed by the SAC, expand bottom-up, voluntary standards from industry associations
- Oct. 2021: “National Standardisation Development Outline” with a strong focus on domestic capacity-building
 - 50 national technical standards innovation bases planned



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中共中央 国务院印发《国家标准化发展纲要》

2021-10-10 19:42 来源: 新华社

【字体: 大 中 小】 打印 分享

中共中央 国务院
印发《国家标准化发展纲要》

新华社北京10月10日电 近日, 中共中央、国务院印发了《国家标准化发展纲要》, 并发出通知, 要求各地区各部门结合实际认真贯彻落实。

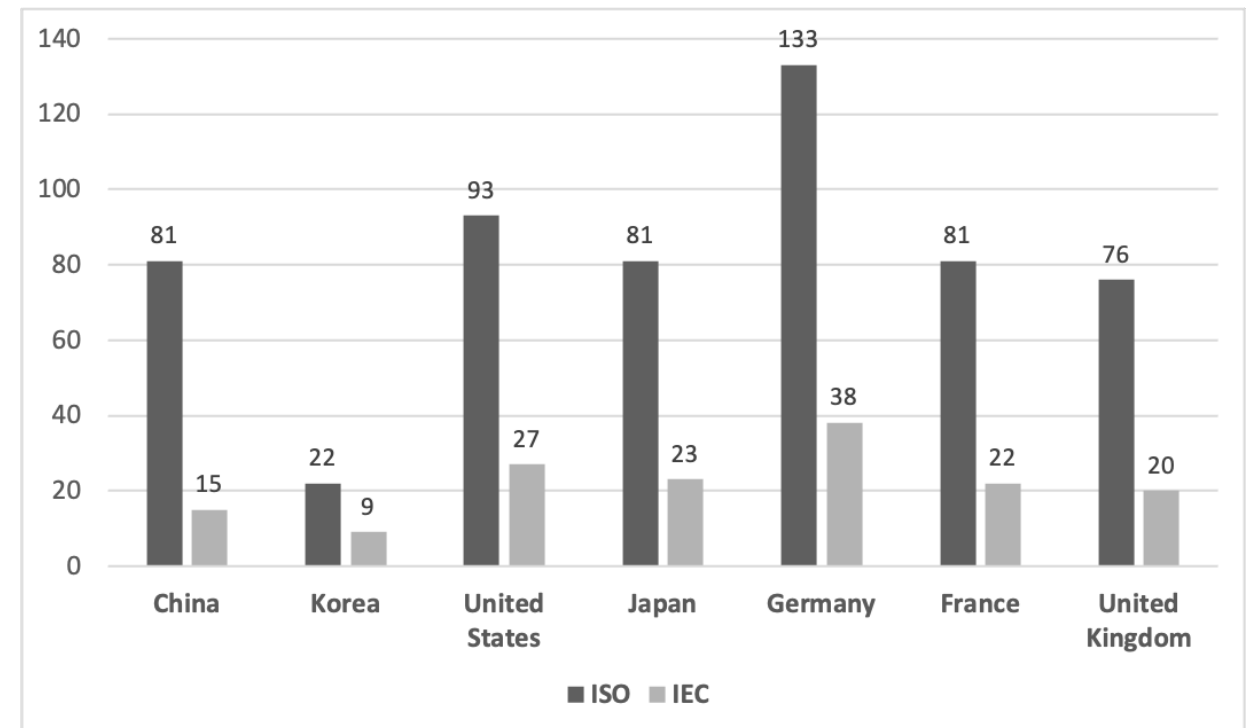
《国家标准化发展纲要》主要内容如下。

标准是经济活动和社会发展的技术支撑, 是国家基础性制度的重要方面。标准化在推进国家治理体系和治理能力现代化中

China's standardisation strategy: International dimensions

- On the one hand: Focus on expanding influence in established international SDOs
 - Significantly increasing participation in ISO TCs & SCs
 - Placing Chinese officials in key leadership positions
 - Providing state subsidies and quantitative benchmarks for the submission of standards proposals
 - Increasingly focusing on the area of „critical and emerging“ technologies (see input by Prof Lee)

TC Secretariats in the ISO & IEC, January 2024



Source: ISO & IEC Websites

China's standardisation strategy: International dimensions

- On the other hand: Attempts to promote Chinese national standards in the Global South
 - 中国标准走出去
- Key role of the “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI)
 - „Action Plans“ in 2015 and 2017
 - 44 bilateral cooperation agreements with 36 states (end of 2021)
 - Multilateral initiatives
 - Standard Information Platform
 - Training Bases
 - Idea of a “BRI Regional Standards Forum“ put on halt
- 坚定不移推进共建“一带一路”高质量发展
走深走实的愿景与行动——共建“一带一路”
未来十年发展展望 (November 2023)
 - Focus on cooperation with international SDOs
 - Participation of foreign firms in the development of Chinese standards



The case of the *Sino-German Industrie 4.0 Cooperation*

- Since 2015: Bilateral cooperation based on the SWG Industrie 4.0/Intelligent Manufacturing of the Sino-German Standardisation Cooperation Committee
- Aims: Development and submission of mutually supported standard proposals to international SDOs
- Technical expert groups on topics such as IT security, AI & predictive maintenance
- Experts on both sides highlight the successes:
 - “Compared to all other international collaborations ... it is the most successful, and it is already quite transparent when measured against the usual standards and Chinese conditions. They [Chinese participants] have definitely started to put concepts on the table that they would not otherwise share in order to get the opinion of the German experts” (Interview, German standardisation expert, July 2020).



Containment through cooperation?

- Motives for the Sino-German I4.0 cooperation? (see Fuchs/Eaton 2022; and Fuchs/Eaton forthcoming)
- Chinese aims: The diffusion of standardisation practice
 - Learning the „rules of the game“ in international standardisation “
 - Overcoming language/discursive barriers
 - Improving technical knowledge
 - Acquiring knowledge about the existing standards canon
- Motives of German participants
 - Integrating & “socialising” China into global SDOs
 - Securing market access for German firms in China

“There was a time when people used to say: *Oh my god, the Chinese are coming, now we must quickly close all the doors and the windows too. That way we keep [them] out.* Then people saw the Chinese doing their own thing. Then they said, *For God’s sake, now they are doing their own thing!* But what are the Chinese supposed to do when we close all the doors and windows?
(Interview, German SDO representative)

“We want China to stay in the system, but not go their own way...China wants to establish their own Belt and Road Standards Forum...but we don’t see that happening yet. So we want to keep the international system attractive for them, so [they] don’t need to go to another way”
(Interview, European SDO representative).

The Case of the *US-EU Trade and Technology Council*

- Prospects of transatlantic cooperation on technical standards? (see Eaton/Fuchs/Triolo 2022; and Eaton/Fuchs/Triolo forthcoming)
- Working Group 1 of the TTC, established in 2021: Technology Standards
- Results so far: Establishment of a Strategic Standardisation Information System; definition of priority areas for transatlantic cooperation; development of metrics for AI trustworthiness and risks
- The TTC as part of US-led efforts to establish an alliance of “like-minded partners” in order to contain China’s growing standards power



Containment through transatlantic alliance building?

- Stakeholders generally welcome governments' new attention to the "China Challenge" in international standardisation
- However...
 - European business and SDO representatives are worried about the possibility of fragmentation of the international standardization system
 - European business and SDO representatives highlight their concerns about the possibility of undermining the European/German "bottom-up" approach to standardisation

"The main issue is not to break the whole system. Europe is lucky here – lucky that standardisation is strong in Europe. If conditions deteriorate, then the importance of Europe in this context will diminish" (Interview, European business representative)

"We don't want to create parallel worlds where resources are wasted unnecessarily. So it's much better to engage with everybody in the same platform... Of course, they [China] are the second-largest economy, they're entitled to influence in the community" (Interview, European SDO representative).

Thank you for your attention!