The basic unit of the Chinese language is the zi (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each zi has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string zi together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about the Cold War

霸 means seize/dominant. 霸王 (ba wang = dominating-king) means conqueror dominating neighboring region. In 戰國時代 (zhan guo shi dai = Warring-States-Period) 秦國 (Qin guo = the State of Qin) became 霸主 (ba zhu = conquering-master = hegemonous overlord) over other states.

Usurper 霸佔 (ba zhan = seizes-occupies) throne. 惡霸 (e ba = fierce-bullies) 橫行霸道 (heng xing ba dao = crosswise-walk-bullying-principal = openly violate law and order). Successful brands 雄霸市場 (xiong ba shi chang = powerfully-dominate-market).

In 1970s two 超級大國 (chao ji da guo = super-class-big-state = superpowers) US and USSR爭霸 (zheng ba = compete-for-hegemony); China asserted 不稱霸 (bu cheng ba = no-claim-hegemony = will not seek hegemony).

Pronunciation: ba (Putonghua, 4th tone), ba (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: seize, dominate, bully, hegemony