Daniel Fuchs / Sascha Klotzbücher / Andrea Riemenschnitter / Lena Springer / Felix Wemheuer (eds), *Die Zukunft mit China denken*. Vienna / Berlin: Mandelbaum-Verlag, 2023. 384 pages, €28.00. ISBN 9-783-9913-6026-1

Few academics have been honoured with a commemorative volume like the one presented here. It originated from a conference in Vienna in 2020 celebrating the emeritus status of Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, professor of Sinology and current programme director for China at the Vienna think tank "Center for Strategic Analysis". As Daniel Fuchs and Felix Wemheuer, two of the editors, state in their introduction, this volume is indeed not a *Kessel Buntes* ("Colourful Pot", p. 15) of contributions, but rather resembles a thematic issue, where former students and colleagues, along with the honoree herself, ponder a topic that has hitherto scarcely been in the focus of China research: the future.

With the title *Die Zukunft mit China denken* (*Thinking the Future with China*), the editors indirectly reference the core thesis of Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik's recently published book *China und die Neuordnung der Welt* (*China and the Reordering of the World*, Vienna: Brandstätter, 2023), in which she calls for recognising China as a world power and systematically incorporating the country into the multipolar world. The anthology achieves more than its title promises: it not only shows how to think about the future with China, but also aims to outline different Chinese visions of the future from history and the present.

In the introduction, Fuchs and Wemheuer reflect on the transformation of Western perceptions of China and address the increasingly authoritarian development of China since Xi Jinping's assumption of office. The increasing confrontation between China and the "West" is a consequence both of Western perceptions of threat and the Chinese self-perception of exceptionalism (p. 14).

The second part of the introduction provides a concise overview of the contributions in the volume (pp. 15–23).

Chapter I presents three contributions on political futurology against the backdrop of China's rise to world power and the emerging geopolitical reordering of the world. The first contribution is by Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik herself. She examines the geopolitical dynamics of the major powers: the USA, China and Russia, advocating for a mediating role of the European Union in the face of crises such as Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine. However, she argues that the EU can only assume this role once it has developed a common strategy towards China and accepts its own role as a major power in the new multipolar world. Wolfgang Schwentker offers an exceedingly enlightening analysis of the China policy of the Japanese government under Shinzō Abe (2006–2007 and 2012–2020), to which he ascribes a kind of ambivalent dual strategy: containment in political terms, yet also dialogue and flourishing trade relations. The chapter concludes with Viren Murthy's reflective considerations on the global adaptability of Zhao Tingyang's Tianxia concept, which outlines the contours of a new global order. Viren Murthy takes Zhao Tingyang's utopia of a world community beyond nation-states (perhaps too) seriously, identifying in the concept significant starting points for the elimination of inequalities in a post-capitalist world.

The subsequent chapters II to V, through a total of nine individual contributions, explore Chinese visions of the future in both history and the present. Chapter II focuses on political visions of the future in Chinese history through empirically rich contributions from Timothy Cheek, Felix Wemheuer and Helmut Opletal. Building on Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik's thesis of the declining hegemonic capability of official historiography, Timothy Cheek investigates efforts to establish a new master narrative under Xi Jinping. Following legal scholar Jiang Shigong, this is reflected in a re-periodisation of Chinese contemporary history. At the same time, he emphasises that from the mid-1990s until 2015, intellectuals also offered identity-forming interpretations. Particularly impressive from a historical perspective is the subsequent contribution by Felix Wemheuer, who deals with the future planning of the party leaderships from the 1950s to the present, starting from the socialist logic of catching up and overtaking. With its very concise contribution, Wemheuer's essay not only serves as an exemplary showcase of the source-rich foundation of the individual contributions of this anthology but also highlights the analytical added value of research on futurology in the history and present of the People's Republic of China. Similarly enlightening is Helmut Opletal's contribution on the history of the Chinese democracy movement from 1978 to 1981, which completes Chapter II. Opletal argues convincingly that attitudes towards the democracy movement within the party leadership were contentious, and he vividly shows how Deng Xiaoping's stance fundamentally changed.

Chapter III delves into economic development strategies and labour struggles from a social science perspective, featuring contributions from David Zweig and Daniel Fuchs. Zweig emphasises the critical importance of the political leadership's decision in 2013 to pursue the state capitalist path with the "Made in China 2025" strategy, rather than opting for the liberalisation of competition. This decision has significantly intensified the systemic rivalry with the United States. Fuchs shifts the focus to the history and present of labour struggles. Contrary to expectations, recent years have not seen the formation of long-term stable forms of labour organisation, a trend Fuchs attributes primarily to the increase in repression.

Plans and designs for Chinese environmental policy are discussed in Chapter IV. Benjamin Steuer, drawing on his own field research, reveals that official figures on recycling capacities largely overlook the potential of informal recyclers, despite their significance for the circular economy. This insight underscores the value of a closer examination of the circular economy, as it affects not only socioeconomic stability, which directly impacts the political legitimacy of the Party, but also factors such as resource scarcity and environmental stress. Julia Marinaccio provides an innovative analysis of Chinese forest policy since 1949, reflecting on transformative future visions. She explores how visions of the future are represented in narratives about forest conservation to mobilise the population. Since the 1980s, forest conservation has been ideologically exalted, a stance that has mixed consequences: the success in reforestation over recent decades has become a symbol of the rise of the Chinese nation, yet this glorification, far removed from pragmatic interests in controlling forest resources, also increases the risk of a potential rollback.

The book then turns, in Chapter V, to the role of literature in societal futurology (Irmy Schweiger) and futurology in literature (Andrea Riemenschnitter). As contributions from the field of literary studies, both texts stand out distinctly, yet they open new perspectives on the history and present of Chinese visions of the future as an emerging field of research. Irmy Schweiger examines the formation of Taiwanese identity and the development of future visions since the 1990s through the anthology *Ein Jahrhundert: Taiwanliteratur in Geschichten 1900–2000* (*A Century: Stories of Taiwan Literature 1900–2000*). Andrea Riemenschnitter investigates selected novels by Ge Fei (b. 1964) for his critical reflections on the belief in progress and the promises of the future of socialism.

Chapter VI, finally, elevates the discussion to a meta-reflective level, presenting contributions by Mechthild Leutner and Sascha Klotzbücher on the historical and present (self-)reflection of Sinology, as well as a critical reflection by Weina Zhao on her politicisation as a post-migrant activist.

All in all, this commemorative volume is a fitting tribute to Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik. It assembles empirically rich, analytical and (self-)reflective contributions, intertwining history, present and future, without shying away from

occasionally taking a clear stance. Thus, the publication is a mirror image of the scholarly work of the honoree, as described by Felix Wemheuer in his concluding chapter. The credit for this anthology, however, goes primarily to the editors. With this volume, the editors provide an important starting point for further multidisciplinary engagement with the promising research field of future thinking, planning and acting in China. It is an extremely readable volume that can be highly recommended for both experts and interested laypeople.

Stefan Messingschlager