

Book Synopsis

After living in Taipei, Taiwan for 10 years, author Troy Parfitt heads off to China to test the theory that it is rising to a position of global hegemony. Three months and twenty-two provinces later, he concludes that China's great rise is a "great illusion" and utilizes personal observation, commentary on Chinese history and culture, and explanations regarding the national psyche to illustrate why.

Main Arguments

- Not only is the China-set-to-rule-the-world argument extraordinarily simplistic, it is extremely misleading. It brings us no closer to understanding China's true nature, intentions, or its role in the world of tomorrow.
- China's economic advances and strategic importance cannot be denied. However, advocates of China's impending reign hold that its culture and mindset are as exportable as its goods. Their message is that China has something to teach the rest of the world, but just what this is is never articulated.
- The Confucian hierarchy, or Confucian paradigm, is the chief social structure in Chinese society. It is a rigid, top-down rubric, one that makes for a way of doing things that is patently incompatible with the Western way of doing things.
- China is constantly portrayed as inscrutable, but its traditional composition makes it all too knowable.
- If you want to understand what China is and where it is headed, you have to understand something of its past.
- China, as a topic, is riddled with myths – that there is a Great Wall, that the character for 'crisis' is comprised of the elements for 'danger' plus 'opportunity,' that dozens of students were mowed down at Tiananmen Square, etc. The truths behind such myths are more interesting and revealing than the myths themselves, and myths only work to obscure a proper analysis. China's ruling the world is the latest myth.
- Because China has begun to physically resemble the West, a cursory inspection has led many to conclude it is becoming western, but becoming western hinges on mindset.
- Most educated Chinese people do not want democracy.
- The path that China must adhere to if it is ever to become a truly great nation and the path that it is on presently are not the same.
- It is unlikely that China will ever enter into a meaningful relationship with the West because of its Confucian outlook and because it blames the West for many of its problems.
- China is a totalitarian state, one that doesn't even meet the definition of a modern country. How it is going to rule the world, or why it should be permitted to do so, needs to be explained by those who subscribe to the theory of its imminent global influence.