



China: Our Enemy?

[A collection of gems on the relationship that is transforming our strategic landscape](#) December 31, 2012

Review by Evan Ellis

The book that Burn Loeffke has written exudes the same elegant simplicity, clarity, and sense of purpose that marks the General and Doctor as a person. It is, in part, an autobiography, humbly told, of a man whose remarkable life is interwoven with the senior military leadership of both the United States and the PRC. The book combines first-hand perspectives, unpretentiously told, rarely found in a single man--on combat leadership and military medicine; on the White House fellows program and life in China; accounts of activities and decisions at highest levels of military leadership, and on a compelling bond between father and son.

Beyond the sheer readability of the book, its topic is arguably the most important phenomenon in the current global landscape: the re-emergence of China onto the world stage within a global order dominated by the United States. The argument which Loeffke puts before the reader from page one, is arguably the most important challenge facing both the US and the PRC: how to avoid that the process does not end in War...

If "China: Our Enemy" were a painting, its style is best characterized as pointillism. In form, it is somewhere between autobiography, analytical essay, and poetry reader; it is a collection of quotations, anecdotes, memories, and teachings, each of which contains a pearl of wisdom, but the connection between which only becomes evident as the reader progresses. The book is surprisingly easy and enjoyable to read, even for those with no background knowledge of such heavy topics as the modern history of China, the history of US military involvement in Southeast Asia, or programs for the best-and-brightest inside the Washington beltway such as the White House Executive Fellows program.

The brief accounts in the book almost flow together with poetic rhythm, such that, only when the reader ceases to focus on how it all fits together, the philosophic clarity emerges, linking the explanation of a Chinese word, to the story of the first US astronaut to orbit the earth, to a dinner party with the daughter of Mao Zedong, to the training of West Point cadets, to a race between swimmers in Northern China. The book does not argue for friendship with China, so much as it illustrates shared values and possible places to begin, through the words of an author who speaks with a unique combination of great authority, and yet, a surprising kindness...leading the reader to understand that finding a peaceful way to accommodate China in the current global order is not only imperative...it just may be possible.

I know of no other book that, upon finishing it, one feels to have done something enjoyable, learned about China, US history, warfare and values...Not to mention an inexplicable desire to go out and get in better physical shape. At the end of reading China: Our Enemy?, one feels to have seen the world through the eyes of a great man, and yet, one you would love to invite over for for a barbecue with the kids and the dog. I highly recommend this book for all audiences.