

49 Myths about China

By Marte Kjær Galtung, Stig Stenslie

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Communism is dead in China. "China Inc." is buying up the world. China has the United States over a barrel. The Chinese are just copycats. China is an environmental baddie, China is colonizing Africa. Mao was a monster. The end of the Communist regime is near. The 21st century belongs to China. Or does it? Marte Kjær Galtung and Stig Stenslie highlight 49 prevalent myths about China's past, present, and future and weigh their truth or fiction. Leading an enlightening and entertaining tour, the authors debunk widespread "knowledge" about Chinese culture, society, politics, and economy. In some cases, Chinese themselves encourage mistaken impressions. But many of these myths are really about how we Westerners see ourselves, inasmuch as China or the Chinese people are depicted as what we are *not*. Western perceptions of the empire in the East have for centuries oscillated between sinophilia and sinophobia, influenced by historical changes in the West as much as by events in China. This timely and provocative book offers an engaging and compelling window on a rising power we often misunderstand.

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Editorial Review

Review
From the foreword:

Galtung and Stenslie offer a spirited, enjoyable way to improve our insight. It will be a rare reader who doesn't believe, perhaps unconsciously, in quite a few of the myths skewered in this book. Test yourself by looking at the table of contents and asking how you would disprove these propositions before you go on to read what the authors say. Then see how Galtung and Stenslie correct your mistakes. But don't worry. They will not make you feel stupid, because they offer not opposing myths but nuanced truths. Their deft approach will be fun for beginners and informative for experts. At the end of reading their forty-ninth essay, one will stand disabused of a bonus, fiftieth myth: the dangerous idea that outsiders cannot understand China. (Andrew J. Nathan, Columbia University)

This enlightening book highlights 49 prevalent myths about China's past, present, and future and weighs their truth or fiction. Leading a thoughtful and entertaining tour, the authors debunk widespread "knowledge" about Chinese culture, society, politics, and economy. In some cases, Chinese themselves encourage mistaken impressions. But many of these myths are really about how we Westerners see ourselves, inasmuch as China or the Chinese people are depicted as what we are *not*. Western perceptions of the empire in the East have for centuries oscillated between sinophilia and sinophobia, influenced by historical changes in the West as much as by events in China. This timely and provocative book offers an engaging and compelling window on a rising power we often misunderstand.

About the Author
Marte Kjær Galtung is a China analyst at the Norwegian Defence Staff. She has previously worked on China with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; as a cultural attaché at the Norwegian embassy in Beijing, and subsequently on the Norwegian government's China strategy. She is the author of *China: People, History, Politics, and Culture*.

Stig Stenslie is head of the Asia Branch of the Norwegian Defence Staff. He has been visiting scholar at, among others, the Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies, National University in Singapore, and Columbia University in New York. He is the author of several books on contemporary China and the Middle East, most recently *Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia: The Challenge of Succession* and *Stability and Change in the Modern Middle East*.

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