



## The Writing on the Wall: Why We Must Embrace China as a Partner or Face It as an Enemy

*Will Hutton*

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## **The Writing on the Wall: Why We Must Embrace China as a Partner or Face It as an Enemy Will Hutton**

The prevailing view of China is that the country is an economic juggernaut sure to become the dominant power of the twenty-first century. In this provocative and stimulating book critically acclaimed author Will Hutton warns instead that China is running up against a set of daunting challenges from within its own political and economic system that could well derail its rise, leading to a massive shock to the global economy. The United States, he argues, must recognize that it has a vital stake in working to assure this doesn't happen, for if China's political liberalization and economic growth collapse, the United States will suffer crippling consequences.

In today's highly globalized world economy, so much of the economic health of the United States -- our low inflation, high profits, and cheap credit -- rests upon China's economic growth and its massive investment in the United States. A great deal has been said about the economic and military threat China poses. But rather than provoking China with the military hawkishness of recent years and resisting Chinese economic supremacy with the saber rattling of protectionist antitrade policies -- twenty such bills have been introduced in Congress in just the last year -- the United States must build a strong relationship that will foster China's transition from an antiquated Communist state beset with profound problems to a fully modern, enlightened, and open society. Doing so will require understanding and engagement, not enmity and suspicion.

China's current economic model, Hutton explains, is unsustainable, premised as it is on the myriad contradictions and dysfunctions of an authoritarian state attempting to control an economy in its transition to capitalism. If the twenty-first century is to be the China century, the Chinese will have to embrace the features of modern Western nations that have spurred the political stability and economic power of the United States and Europe: the rule of law, an independent judiciary, freedom of the press, and authentic representative government that is accountable to the people. Whether or not China does so rests in large part on how well the United States manages the relationship and persuades the Chinese of the virtues of an open, enlightened democratic system. The danger is that fearmongering will intensify animosities, leading both countries down a path of peril.

Turning conventional wisdom on its head, this brilliantly argued book is vital reading at a crucial juncture in world affairs.

## **The Writing on the Wall: Why We Must Embrace China as a Partner or Face It as an Enemy Details**

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Author : Will Hutton

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## **From Reader Review The Writing on the Wall: Why We Must Embrace China as a Partner or Face It as an Enemy for online ebook**

### **Paul says**

Very interesting anecdotes and a uniquely critical analysis of China's rise up to the present and into the future.

Hutton's book is strongest in the opening chapters where it identifies key stories in the evolution of China since Mao. The book benefits tremendously from an unending supply of counter-intuitive statistics and insights.

However, half way through the focus shifts onto the United States (and Britain to a lesser extent). These chapters drag a little and say nothing new.

Overall Hutton's book is a stimulating read and a different yet plausible analysis of China's rise.

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### **Mike Wigal says**

Slightly dated since it was written before the Great Recession. Would be interested in Hutton's thoughts since then. This is actually two books. The first half focuses on China. The second on the US and the West. Having spent a considerable amount of time in China (and of course the US where I live) I found it spot on.

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### **Andrew says**

Review of Writing On The Wall by Will Hutton  
Published: 10 Jan 2008 by Century

Will Hutton is always so incisive, a clever guy but also - although I've never met him - seemingly, a nice one. A cuddly economist, I'd venture, tackling complex subjects with a sense we'll stay with him and can get it but also with the emphasis on social justice. He speaks openly and simply about complex ideas. The prospect of an exploration of China's rise and rise plus a look at the economics of its future was very intriguing. And all in all the book delivered, it was clear on the history of China, explaining well how we get from the feudal, Confucian past to China's rapidly evolving state driven modern economy. The cynical pragmatism of the new Deng Xiaoping era, post-Tiananmen Square contrasts interestingly with the rampant insanity of the personality cult of Mao.

I learnt loads, there is a wonderfully simple description of why state-run economies like the old Soviet Block fail, nothing to do with political ideology, just simply to do with the sheer complexity of managing an economy. My only difficulty with the book, something I noticed after I'd purchased it, was it's publication date. Being before the smash and grab raid on the world's financial system by the bankers, it's feels ever-so-slightly out of date. It's not even that Mr Hutton doesn't intimate that a fall is coming, but with so much

economical water under the bridge and the different world we are living in now even just four years on there's a sense that this book is speaking to us from a different era.

If stars are your thing and five is great, I'd give this four, which means it's worth a read. For a book on economics I actually found it very hard to put down.

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### **Alistair Rae says**

This guy's writing is like a laser it cuts out all the waffle and the result adds real knowledge to the truth seeker. This is an important book and a must read for anyone interested in their world

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### **Brendan Nee says**

The first half of the book is a good overview of Chinese history and culture as it relates to its current status with the US. It suggests that China is facing large internal problems and the fears that many in the US of China "stealing" jobs" it are not likely to be realized. The last half of the book doesn't really address the first half and almost seems like it was written separately.

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### **Richard O'Brien says**

An informative read on chinese economics and their relationship with the rest of the world.

Full of data and facts which I found really enlightening. After finishing, it left me feeling really positive & optimistic for the future of our planet.

A recommended read to all world leaders especially to Presidents Barack & Hu

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### **Phil says**

The subtitle to this book is a little misleading: although it contains excellent background to the rise of China as a global economic power, it is at least as much about the United States as it is the so-called People's Republic.

Although the Chinese history and economic analysis is detailed and compelling, and the international context necessary and well set out - particularly Hutton's central argument that effective capitalism depends on a network of preexisting civil society institutions which China does not possess - as a survey of the horizon it runs out of steam about halfway through. In his eagerness to emphasise the need for the West to accommodate itself to China and set it a good example economically and diplomatically, Hutton falls into a lengthy and not completely pertinent account of the various misdemeanours and mistakes of US trade and foreign policy over the last century, winding up with a polemical conclusion some of whose assertions - for example that US protectionism is necessarily self-defeating, and that the EU is an almost-unmitigated

success - which may be respectable arguments, but are by no means irrefutable.

There's also the problem that the book was published in 2007, just predating the 2008 economic crisis, some of whose outriders Hutton, to his credit, spotted correctly. Similarly, the top-heavy and heavily-regulated Chinese stock market has lately undergone some serious restructuring, as he said it must, but without the administrative liberalisation he considered the sine qua non of such an adjustment. Many of the barriers to China's full participation in world markets remain as Hutton identified them, and some of the potential flashpoints with other polities persist. It remains to be seen how accurate and prescient this analysis will be.

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### **Alexis says**

I saw this book in the Hong Kong airport and decided I had to read it. It's basically an analysis of the economic systems of the United States and China, and the history and development of the two nations. I only absorbed about half of it because it's very technical, but I still think it was worth reading.

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### **Jose says**

good reading . author never lived for a long time there which is noticeable .

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### **Anna says**

Very accessible book about the current state of China. It's a bit America-heavy, but it makes sense because he's talking a lot about the global balance of power and China-America is the relationship everyone's looking at.

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### **James Stewart says**

Reading the introductory first chapter I was worried that Hutton's reputation for careful analysis may have left him, as he appeared to offer an overly simple thesis and an embrace of the United States' system of government that was too uncritical.

Thankfully that chapter is misleading as Hutton leads his readers through a detailed analysis of China's economy that is equal parts illuminating and disturbing, and begins to build explanation on his desire to see US-style enlightenment institutions develop in China, while being very open about the fact that several of those institutions are in severe decline within the USA.

Some of that coverage of the USA, its history, institutions and current situation, feels like it would have made sense as a separate book, slimming down this volume considerably and potentially making the material much more accessible for those with limited time. But the intertwined themes do make sense and the reader is considerably better placed to judge the material when we have both parts together.

At times there is certainly still a sense that Hutton is calling for a form of cultural imperialism. The merits of the institutions he outlines are clear, but they have grown out of a lengthy philosophical tradition which

China does not share and it is vital that any such institutions are contextualised if they are to succeed in China.

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### **Robin says**

Bit of a jumble...Supposed to be about China but the last two chapters are almost entirely about the US and the UK. Dead wrong on 'peak oil'. The economic discussion is rather confused. And some irritating errors: Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 (not 1989), and China did sign the Kyoto Protocol. On the other hand, it is quite prescient (for a book published in 2007), more about the West than China, on the rise of 'fake news', polarisation and anti-globalisation.

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### **Stephen says**

Socialist Party Councillor Stephen Jolly reviews Will Hutton's new book on China...

British economist Will Hutton's new book *The Writing on the Wall: China and the West in the 21st Century* is a cold shower to those who think that country will be an ever-ending and ever-growing source of profits; is fundamentally capitalist; and has a fast diminishing Communist Party (CP) government control over the economy.

For rest of review go to: <http://www.socialistpartyaustralia.or...>

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### **Si says**

Educational read.

Focuses a lot less on China than I would have thought.

He takes the reader through the history of China over the last few centuries, from Confucianism, the Qin dynasty and colonial rule, through to communist rule.

He discusses the difficulties that lie ahead for China, politically, but more so economically, describing the current set up, how so much GDP is due to western companies constructing stuff there, rather than Chinese companies innovating, how state owned enterprises rule the roost, how every company has to have a party member on the board...

He discusses just how unsustainable the current system is without moving towards an "enlightenment" set up with pluralism, independent judiciary, transparency, accountability, and other independent institutions.

He then goes on to discuss how these things have helped the US and the UK, and how, particularly in the US, these things are being neglected to the detriment of America and indeed the world. Similarly how globalisation is being avoided and protectionism is growing again, again detrimentally.

He points out that China's effect is not negative, indeed the fear the west has of China is irrational and we should embrace China and open up to them more, to our own benefit and theirs.

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In conclusion, we should all be more open, pluralist, and economically open. And we should all have a big group hug.

More reviews and comments here: <http://unfebucketinglievable.wordpress....>

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### **David Cheshire says**

This book is not about China. Or rather, not just. Several brilliant chapters chart US development and also develop "Huttonism". Basically this is the notion that in the development of capitalism, free markets need more than just markets to work properly. Indeed they need "countervailing" institutions like a free press and anti-market fixing regulation to make them truly "free." Hutton calls these "Enlightenment beliefs", his point being that China lacks them; but without them its so-far spectacular speed of development will inevitably stumble and falter. He summarises their importance as providing mechanisms of "accountabilty and justification".

He also argues persuasively that the recent overwhelming emphasis put upon the "bottom line" is both new and destructively short-termist. The notion of building a company has given way to profits and share-price before all, the new gods: here is the triumph of the conservative right over our current economic culture. Hutton's rejection of this new culture is obviously similar to (but much deeper than) Ed Miliband's condemnation of "predatory capitalism".

I experienced just one moment of doubt. Historian Fukuyama famously reckoned western democratic capitalism was "the end of history." Isn't Huttonism an updated version of this? Or rather, the Hutton-approved Enlightenment model of capitalism? I can see this 'western Enlightenment'-centric thesis getting the Chinese's (and other developing countries') backs up. Yet I found it a powerful and compelling argument. Something has clearly gone wrong with our economic system. Hutton may well be the one who knows what. These non-China chapters almost merit separate publication. Ed, and everybody else, should take a long and careful look.

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