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The Beijing Consensus: How China's Authoritarian Model Will Dominate the Twenty-First Century by Stefan Halper, Basic Books, 2010

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The Beijing Consensus: How China's Authoritarian Model Will Dominate the Twenty-First Century

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Reviewed by Su-Mei Ooi

Halper's book does a brilliant job of providing the reader with a clear picture of how China's economic clout is now coupled with a growing sophistication in international diplomacy. Nevertheless, while Halper provides a convincing account of how China's economic rise is allowing many developing countries to circumvent governance requirements attached to Western aid and loans he fails to convince the reader that there is such a thing as a "Beijing Consensus." What is clearly a convergence of interests amongst those who do not agree with Washington can hardly qualify as a counter-hegemonic ideological consensus. What of course interests many countries is China's ability thus far to decouple political from economic development. While Halper discusses the complexities of China's modernization in Chapter 5, he refrains from predicting if this decoupling is merely temporary and suggests only that existing social pressures will remain contained largely by continued economic growth. If the "China model" will dominate the twenty-first century, however, China's socio-political stability must at least last that long. All in all, Halper's book is accessible, enjoyable and a good introduction to China and its role in our world today, but leaves some crucial questions unanswered.

- Su-Mei Ooi is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Butler University.