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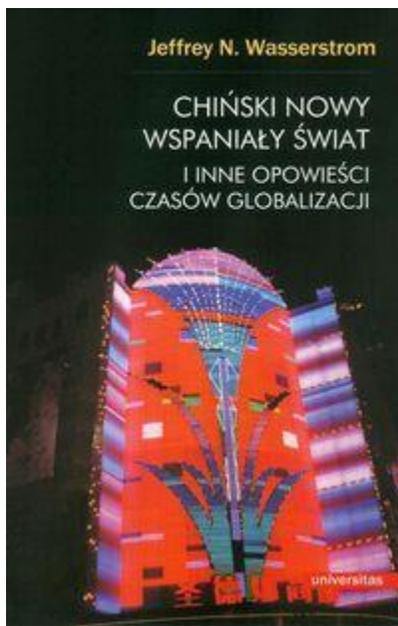
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Reading Round-Up: China in the World

April 21, 2010 in [China Around the World](#), [The Five-List Plan](#) by [The China Beat](#) | [1 comment](#)

A grab bag of readings around the web that we wanted to share — loosely connected by a “China in the world” theme that the site editors have been thinking about a lot lately, as we’ve begun discussing the possibility of a second *China Beat* book to follow up *China in 2008: A Year of Great Significance*. Though it’s presently more an idea than a plan, now it seems that everywhere we look, we see China Beatniks being talked about in different parts of the world, connecting China with different parts of the world, and simply moving from writing about China to writing about different parts of the world . . .

1. Two *China Beat* consulting editors have new translations of their work available: as we’ve previously mentioned, Ken Pomeranz’s *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* was recently released in [a French edition](#), which received a lengthy review in *Le Monde* earlier this month. And last week, [the Polish translation](#) of Jeff Wasserstrom’s 2007 book *China’s Brave New World—And Other Tales for Global Times* was published, with an appropriately Huxleyan cover photo:



2. Some interesting readings from Australia: the latest issue of *China Heritage Quarterly* focuses on [“The Architectural Heritage of Tianjin,”](#) and features articles by Maurizio Marinelli, Michael Szonyi, and Elizabeth LaCouture. In the *Sydney Morning Herald*, John Garnaut tells the saga of [“Mao’s Last Farmer,”](#) Yu Changwu, who is fighting for the return of land taken from him by the municipal government in 1994.

3. Howard French has a piece in *The Atlantic*’s May issue discussing China in Africa — [“The Next Empire.”](#) French’s article follows him from Dar es Salaam to central Zambia, as he rides a railway built with Chinese funds in the 1970s. Today, as French notes, the Sino-African relationship is once again marked by a surge of Chinese investment in African countries, though not without controversy (see [Angilee Shah’s review](#) of Deborah Brautigam’s book, *The Dragon’s Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*, for more on the topic):

“The idea that big influxes of wealth will help Africa has never really panned out,” Patrick Keenan, an Africa specialist at the University of Illinois, told me. “When the path to wealth goes through the presidential palace, there are enormous incentives to obtaining power and to holding on to it. This kind of wealth incites politicians to create economically wasteful projects, and it relieves them of the need to make politically difficult choices, like broadening the tax base.”

Indeed, the same objections raised by the Zambian aid critic Dambisa Moyo—that foreign aid breeds corrupt, lazy, and ineffective government—can be applied toward any foreign investments that focus on mineral extraction, especially ones that deliver cash and services directly to governments with no conditions attached. All things considered, resource-based or infrastructure-driven development—even development as massive as the ongoing Chinese wave—appear unlikely to lead to a meaningful African renaissance. . . .

And ironically, while Beijing is extremely well-positioned to help Africa improve its governance—a second area of great need throughout much of the continent—it seems deeply reluctant to do so. No developing country has understood the importance of a strong, results-oriented public administration better than China. But so far, in part because of China’s history of subjugation by Westerners, as well as its defensive stance over its human-rights record, Beijing has remained attached to its rhetoric about noninterference.

Readers in the Connecticut area can hear more about Asian-African relations this weekend at Yale University, where the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies is hosting [a two-day symposium](#) on the topic.

4. Friend of the blog Pankaj Mishra also discusses China’s stance toward Africa, placing it in a broader context of declining Anglo-American hegemony and legitimacy throughout much of the world, in [this essay](#) at *The Guardian*.

5. *China Beat* is co-sponsoring a dialogue between Angilee Shah and Ian Johnson, to be held at UC Irvine on June 7 (more details to come as the date draws closer). Shah has previously written for us about [China-India matters](#), among other topics, and is currently posting (at [her website](#)) about her recent monthlong stay in Indonesia. Johnson, a former reporter for the *Wall Street Journal* and author of *Wild Grass: Three Portraits of Change in Modern China*, will publish *A Mosque in Munich: Nazis, the CIA, and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West* in early May. A schedule of his other tour dates and locations can be found [here](#); you can also read [an interview with him](#) from the early days of *China Beat*.

Tags: [Africa](#), [Angilee Shah](#), [China Heritage Quarterly](#), [Howard French](#), [Ian Johnson](#), [Jeff Wasserstrom](#), [Ken Pomeranz](#), [Tianjin](#)