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# METZE's MONTHLY ©

## Selection of Reading

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*Issue Nr. 2, February 2007*

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journalist, historian, author*

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### **Note from the editor**

*Metze's Monthly Selection of Reading* contains references to, and summaries of, books, reports and articles which the editor considers to be 'extremely interesting reading'. The selection is updated monthly, and will never exceed five references per issue.

Your suggestions to [marcel@metze.nl](mailto:marcel@metze.nl) are highly appreciated.

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## **1**

### **Has Rupert Murdoch decided to support Hillary Clinton?**

The New Yorker published a report about media tycoon Rupert Murdoch (owner of five British newspapers, The New York Post, and Fox News, to name a few) and his influence on the election of British and American politicians like Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair, Ronald Reagan and New York mayor Ed Koch. The article, which appeared last October, has become all the more interesting since Hillary Clinton announced that she will enter the race for the presidency. Author John Cassidy shows that Murdoch's opinion has made a difference in the past and can still exert considerable influence. At the time of publication the tycoon sounded not unsympathetic to Mrs. Clinton's candidacy, but he hadn't as yet made up his mind as to whether he was going to support her or John McCain, the most likely republican candidate. As Cassidy describes, at various occasion Bill Clinton, fully aware of Murdoch's power, was trying to charm the tycoon into backing his wife. So the question arises: has Murdoch taken his position? Is that why Hillary has decided to give it a go?

*'Murdoch's Game' by John Cassidy is publicly available on The New Yorker website:*

[http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/061016fa\\_fact1](http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/061016fa_fact1)

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## 2

### **Identity and Migration**

By Francis Fukuyama  
In Prospect, February 2007

In the February 2007 issue of Prospect Magazine Fukuyama addresses the question of European identity in the face of increasing immigration. Like The Netherlands, many European countries “tend to conceive of multiculturalism as a framework for the coexistence of separate cultures rather than a transitional mechanism for integrating newcomers into a dominant culture”, he writes. Part of the problem is that, despite postwar efforts, a dominant European culture has never developed. In fact, writes Fukuyama, “postmodern elites, especially in Europe, feel that they have evolved beyond identities defined by religion and nation.” With Islamic self-assuredness on the rise that position may no longer be tenable. Fukuyama: “if our societies cannot assert positive liberal values, they may be challenged by migrants who are more sure of who they are.”

*‘Identity and Migration’ is publicly available on the Prospect website:*

*[http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk:80/article\\_details.php?id=8239](http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk:80/article_details.php?id=8239)*

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## 3

### **Being No. 3 may be more profitable**

By James Surowiecki  
The New Yorker, December 4, 2006

James Surowiecki is one of my favourite authors on business and finance. In this short, one-page article, he describes how, after the introduction of the Sony PlayStation in the early nineties, Nintendo lost its first position in the video-game industry. When Microsoft launched the Xbox, it even lost the second position. But despite GE Jack Welch’s rule that you have to be a market leader in order to survive, Nintendo did not go under. In the no. 3. position, the company “has not just survived out of the spotlight, it has thrived,” Surowiecki writes. Meanwhile Sony is struggling, and losing money on every PlayStation 3 it sells. Thus, Nintendo teaches all megalomaniac C.E.O.’s a lesson: “Markets today are so big (..) that companies can profit even when they’re not on top,” but only “as long as they aren’t trying desperately to get there.”

*‘In praise of third place’ is publicly available on The New Yorker website:*

*[http://www.newyorker.com/talk/content/articles/061204ta\\_talk\\_surowiecki](http://www.newyorker.com/talk/content/articles/061204ta_talk_surowiecki)*

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## 4

*Maintained from the January 2007 selection:*

### **1491. The Americas Before Columbus**

By Charles C. Mann  
Granta Books, London, 2006

*From the back cover:*

“In 1491 Charles C. Mann provides a new and fascinating account of the Americas before Columbus. (..) Both a brilliant report on the recent discoveries made in pre-Colombian America over the last half century, and an examination of the way in which controversial new theories have transformed our understanding of the Americas before and after the Conquest.”

I fully agree. This book is a true eye-opener. It will change your view on human history.

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*From the Preface, by Charles C. Mann:*

“(..) My interest in the peoples who walked the Americas before Columbus only snapped into anything resembling focus in the fall of 1992. By chance one Sunday afternoon I came across a display in a college library of the special Columbian quincentenary issue of the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Curious, I picked up the journal, sank into an armchair, and began to read an article by William Denevan, a geographer at the University of Wisconsin. The article opened with the question: “What was the New World like at the time of Columbus?” Yes, I thought, what *was* it like? Who lived here and what could have passed through their minds when European sails first appeared on the horizon? I finished Denevan's article and went on to others and didn't stop reading until the librarian flicked the lights to signify closing time.

I didn't know it then, but Denevan and a host of fellow researchers had spent their careers trying to answer these questions. The picture they have emerged with is quite different from what most Americans and Europeans link, and still little known outside specialist circles.

A year or two after I read Denevan's article, I attended a panel discussion at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Called something like “New Perspectives on the Amazon,” the session featured William Balée of Tulane University. Balée's talk was about “anthropogenic” forests - forests *created* by Indians centuries or millennia in the past - a concept I'd never heard of before. He also mentioned something that Denevan had discussed: many researchers now believe their predecessors underestimated the number of people in the Americas when Columbus arrived. Indians were more numerous than previously thought, Balée said - much more numerous. Gee, someone ought to put all this stuff together, I thought. It would make a fascinating book.

I kept waiting for that book to appear. The wait grew more frustrating when my son entered school and was taught the same things I had been taught, beliefs I knew had long been sharply questioned. Since nobody else appeared to be writing the book, I finally decided to try it myself. Besides, I was curious to learn more. The book you are holding is the result.”

(..)

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# 5

## **De Angst Reactor. Kalkar, kroniek van een eeuwige belofte**

Door Kees van den Bosch  
Uitgeverij Sun, Amsterdam, 2006

Het debat over kernenergie herleeft. Daarom is het nuttig nog eens te herlezen welke argumenten voor- en tegenstanders tijdens de opkomst van deze technologie, in de jaren vijftig tot en met tachtig van de vorige eeuw, met elkaar wisselden. Ik raad u aan *De Angst Reactor* eens ter hand te nemen, waarin VPRO redacteur Kees van den Bosch de geschiedenis beschrijft van de snelle kweekreactor te Kalkar (Dld), die gebouwd werd maar nooit in bedrijf kwam. Zelf noemt Van den Bosch zijn boek “een techniekvertelling over de geschiedenis van kernenergie,” en “een spannend verhaal over de mensen achter de snelle kweekreactor” Ik heb *De Angst Reactor* gelezen. Her en der ronddwalende terroristen en geheime diensten geven het een thrillerachtig karakter. Belangrijker: Van den Bosch toont nog eens overtuigend aan hoezeer kernenergie verbonden is met kernbewapening. Dat moet politici van de 21<sup>e</sup> eeuw te denken geven.

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