

Holiday Tips; Speaking to Trumpists—and to Muslims

December 6, 2016



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Nine tips for a “You don’t need to buy this” holiday

1. Decide with members of your family/ friends that no one will buy a gift that costs more than a set amount, say 25 dollars.
2. No one gets more than one gift. Each person brings one gift; pile them up and give them a number. Then let people draw the numbers and get the gift that corresponds to the number they drew. Allow “trading”, so that 12-year-old Rachel, for example, can ‘trade’ the bottle of wine she won with grandma, who drew an iTunes gift card.
3. Tell the kids that buying a holiday card, is lame, but making one is cool. Ditto for as many other gifts as busy people can make.
4. Rather than toss or let them rot, ‘recycle’ gifts—but fess up and explain it is all for a good

cause.

5. Those family heirlooms you wanted to pass along to the next generation—make it this year.

6. Give time: babysitting, walking the dog, visiting family members who are in nursing homes or too ill to leave home.

7. Pot luck dinners are fun; cooking for all those guests is not.

8. Use all the time you saved by not shopping and by not fussing about who gets what, to do good. Volunteer at a soup kitchen; usher at a local theater; serve as a chaperon on a school trip.

9. Consider sharing this message with others, to avoid holidays from being turned into a shopping orgy.

For more, click [here](#) to watch our video "You Don't Need to Buy This" on YouTube.

To Save 25,000 Syrian Children

Last year we outlined a proposal for 25,000 Syrian children under the age of 10 to be welcomed into American foster homes for the duration of the war. To learn more, see the following articles in *The Huffington Post*: [Needed Now: A Syrian Kinder-Transport](#) and [To Save 25,000 Syrian Children](#). We are delighted to report that Layth Elhassani of Covington & Burling LLP drafted a bill to this effect, to be shared with members of Congress. He did this on a pro bono basis for which we give many thanks. Click [here](#) to read the draft bill.

Editorials

"We Must Not Be Enemies"

The question is not only whether a new progressive movement can appeal to the less extreme elements of the Trump constituencies, but also whether progressives can understand the legitimate anger and frustration that many Trump voters felt and still feel, in the hope of creating a more workable, just, and peaceable society.

Published in *The American Scholar*: click [here](#) for the full article. Comments are already being made at the end of the piece—you might consider adding your own.

Democrats, Avoid the Deficit Trap

The Democrats have responded to Republican criticism that they are burdening future generations with debt by making great effort to reduce deficits; this often entailed capping social expenditures. The following Republican administrations then used the slack created by the lower deficits to pay for huge tax benefits to the rich and to balloon the deficit...We are about to witness another round of this same sequence

Published in *The Huffington Post*: click [here](#) for the full article.

Syria: The Next U.S. President's First 100 Days

As I see it, the first step ought to be a declaration that the United States is no longer seeking coercive regime change, but rather—for now—only a cessation of hostilities, leading to a negotiated settlement among the main parties involved. For the first four years of this tragic civil war, the United States insisted that President Assad had to leave

as a precondition for negotiations; for the last year and a half, the United States has continued to hold this position but rephrased it to allow for some wiggle room. Published in *The National Interest*: click [here](#) for the full article.

Academic Articles

[Talking to the Muslim World: With Whom and How?](#)

The struggle against terrorism in the Middle East has led to a quest to find ways to counter the normative appeal of violent extremists, especially the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The challenge posed by ISIS's normative position is part of a much greater challenge concerning how the West should speak to and with the Muslim world.

Published in *International Affairs*; click [here](#) for the full text.

[Reining in Private Agents](#)

Major segments of Western political and social philosophy, public disclosure, and policymaking hold the private sector to be basically the realm of freedom—and the government as the power that needs to be checked and reined in. However, this Article presents evidence that at least in three major areas, the said restraints on governmental power are circumvented, on a very large scale, by private agents carrying out—for the government—activities that government is banned from undertaking. These areas concern surveillance, policing, and military interventions overseas.

Published in the *Minnesota Law Review Headnotes*: click [here](#) for the full text.

[Keeping AI Legal](#)

AI programs make numerous decisions on their own, lack transparency, and may change frequently. Hence, unassisted human agents, such as auditors, accountants, inspectors, and police, cannot ensure that AI-guided instruments will abide by the law. This Article suggests that human agents need the assistance of AI oversight programs that analyze and oversee operational AI programs. This Article asks whether operational AI programs should be programmed to enable human users to override them; without that, such a move would undermine the legal order. This Article also points out that AI operational programs provide high surveillance capacities and, therefore, are essential for protecting individual rights in the cyber age. This Article closes by discussing the argument that AI-guided instruments, like robots, lead to endangering much more than the legal order—that they may turn on their makers, or even destroy humanity.

Published in the *Vanderbilt Journal of Entertainment and Technology Law*, click [here](#) for the full text.

I Read

In his *New York Times* [column](#), David Brooks called for America to repair its moral capital in light of Trump's rhetoric, and, in [a separate piece](#), encouraged Americans to draw on Martin Buber's conception of I-Thou relationships (as opposed to I-It) in order to repair communication and bring America through its current period of distrust.

In *The Washington Post*, Erin Cunningham highlighted the problems with the United

States' infrastructure projects in Afghanistan. The US spent \$3 billion on roads, which "were hailed as key to bringing economic growth and security, even when they eventually became too dangerous for travel." Many roads are damaged or destroyed; a symbol of progress has become a symbol of US failure. For more, see our article "[COIN: A Study of Strategic Illusion](#)" published in *Small Wars and Insurgencies*.

Ian Turner published two articles on a communitarian approach to terrorism: [A Positive, Communitarian Right to Security in the Age of Super-Terrorism](#) and [A Communitarian Justification for Measures to Prevent Terrorism in the UK](#).

Communitarian News

We have a new endorser, Professor Daniel Bell of Tsinghua University, for our platform of Mutually Assured Restraint. Learn more by reading the [position paper](#), see a [list of the endorsers](#), and consider endorsing it yourself!

Video

Check out our video "[Five Lessons for Activists](#)" on YouTube!



Recent Tweets

If we cry 'the world is ending' every time Trump moves, soon people will become inured, & ignore when the s*** really hits the fan

If you regret not voting or voting 3rd party, share regrets with others who are remorseful using #ApologiesForTrump

Fair Americans recognize that everyone--Hilary included--are innocent until proven guilty. Investigation ≠ conviction

Reminder to those who say not EVERYTHING Trumps says is dangerous, offensive or irrational: even a broken clock is right twice a day.

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